



## **Seminar - Exchange of Experiences on LME-related data and information issues**

**Buenos Aires Argentina 11-13 June 2013**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Data and information play a crucial role in all phases of the policy cycle, from decision-making via implementation and monitoring to analysis and advice: decisions should be taken upon the best available information. The information should be reliable and as much as possible reflect the actual conditions of ecosystems and environment. For this purpose, several countries and international organisations carry out monitoring programmes. In order to facilitate the integration of the data from these programmes into a consistent basis for decision making, there is need for harmonization between these monitoring activities. This relates to the technologies and methodologies used for acquisition and analysis, as well as for the processing methods used to generate indicators for decision making.

Organisations such as IOC, FAO, UNEP, WMO and others have developed standardized methods for certain environmental measurements and observations. However, these are not always well known and therefore not always applied. It is important to achieve a better promotion of these standards and building of capacity concerning their application.

In order to be able to determine temporal trends, it is important that measurements and observations are carried out not only with the same standardized methods but also with a certain frequency and at the same locations. This is the difference between monitoring and ad-hoc measurements. Most scientific measurements and observations belong to the latter category. In order to be able to provide governance with adequate data and information, the emphasis should be on monitoring, particularly in these times of rapid climatic changes, when climatologies from the past are only of limited value.

Local communities often possess information that very well complements the information obtained by the scientific community. It is important to seek ways to actively include this type of information in the established data and information channels and processes serving governance.

Quality of data is a key issue, especially in the context of determining trends and geospatial variations. Key to this is calibration and intercalibration at national and regional levels. This implies the need for facilities and established procedures for calibration and intercalibration of ecosystem and environment measurements and observations, in order to ensure compatibility and comparability of data from different locations and acquired at different moments in time.

Institutional management of data and information on environment and ecosystems should form part of a wider concept of institutional data and information management. The presence of institutional procedures and guidelines for data and information management positively contributes to the availability of adequate data and information for the governance process. It is also key to issues such as: data rescue, long term archival and exchange.

Governance seldom is interested in the past, more in the present and even more in the future. This puts a heavy responsibility on data and information managers to ensure that adequate information is available to decision makers at the right moment, and in the right form. This includes also the scientific community developing numerical models, because these models are needed to make forecasts, and allow the decision makers to make simulations of various scenario's for their interventions, measures and actions, and select the best alternative.



Indicators fulfil an important role in the governance process, providing the decision makers with a summary of the actual situation of processes, stress reduction and ecosystem/environmental status. It is the task of data and information managers to ensure the availability of reliable, updated data and information required to generate these indicators at the moment of need.

In the region strong reservations exist with respect to the sharing of data and information. This seriously hampers the availability of updated and detailed data and information on essential aspects of ecosystems and environment, which could negatively impact upon the quality of decisions. In this context, a common Data Policy aimed to facilitate sharing of data and information is essential as a crucial element for an effective underpinning of the governance process.

IOC and its programme IODE, based upon their long-standing experience with marine data and information management issues, provide a valuable contribution, helping to streamline and harmonize the data and information chains from the monitoring in the field to the final data and information product for the decision makers.

Data and information has an important role in all phases of the policy cycle, providing information to each phase but also collecting information on the impacts of measures and actions, as a lesson learnt to be considered when developing policy actions in the future (adaptive management).

From a governance perspective, it is essential to have a baseline condition on ecosystems, environment, and related issues, against which to measure the success or failure of interventions and actions, for instance to recover depleted fish stocks, restore degraded habitats, and reduce and control coastal pollution and nutrient over-enrichment. It is important for each LME to identify in how far this baseline is available, what is still missing and how it can be completed and updated.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The aims of the meeting are to:

- exchange experiences and lessons learnt related to data and information issues relevant for LME projects
- discuss issues and needs of common interest related to data and information for LME projects, including:
  - harmonisation
  - standards for data acquisition
  - importance of monitoring
  - information from local communities
  - data quality: calibration and intercalibration
  - standards for data archival and data management
  - institutional data and information management
  - generation of dedicated data and information products for decision making: indicators
  - data exchange and data sharing: data policy issues
- provide a contribution to the preparations for the data and information component of the LME Governance project