

December 2003

Terms of Reference:

In December 2003, the IUCN Commission on Environmental Law approved the establishment of the Specialist Group (SG) for Ocean Law and Governance. The Specialist Group's overall objective is to support biodiversity conservation and sustainable uses of the world's oceans through law and policy initiatives. The SG will seek to coordinate activities with existing IUCN ocean-related projects and programs (particularly the Marine Programme, initiatives by the Environmental Law Centre, and IUCN's regional & country work, including regional and coordination offices, national committees, and regional conservation forums), with the research and educational efforts of the Environmental Law Academy and with marine environmental protection initiatives of NGOs such as the International Ocean Institute. The SG will encourage the establishment of working groups in accord with member interests and IUCN priorities with the first sub-group focusing on Mediterranean ocean issues.

The Specialist Group is expected to address ocean law and governance issues primarily at the global and regional levels. Examples of possible global efforts include:

- Supporting and advising IUCN inputs into intergovernmental conferences and meetings relating to oceans governance, including the United Nations Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS) and the Convention on Biological Diversity
- Addressing governance challenges of areas beyond national jurisdiction, including deep seabed mining and high-seas biodiversity
- Strengthening global agreements and arrangements for sustainable fisheries and the control of seabed activities, shipping and land-based pollution

Regional initiatives might focus on:

- Strengthening legal and institutional arrangements within existing marine regions
- Promoting the integration of regional fisheries and marine environmental protection mechanisms
- Comparing regional experiences and approaches to fisheries management and marine conservation in order to facilitate cross-regional learning and progressive developments in regional cooperation

The Specialist Group may also seek to encourage strengthening of ocean governance at the national level. Guidance on national marine and coastal legislation might be facilitated and national experiences in implementing key sustainable development principles, such as precaution, the ecosystem approach, integration and public participation in the oceans context might be explored.

The Specialist Group will develop and adopt prioritized annual and multi-year programmes of work, based on input from members, direct commitments to undertake specific work, and (where applicable) the availability of funding.