Conclusions and Next Steps from the
International Workshop on Marine Spatial Planning
UNESCO
Paris, France
8-10 November 2006

Background

- *Ocean space is a valuable resource*—one that is increasingly over-used in many places of the world's oceans (e.g., the North Sea) and often poorly managed.

- Ecosystem components of marine areas are not managed; human uses of ocean resources, including the use of ocean space, can be managed.

- Human uses of ocean space often conflict with one another (use-use conflicts) and some human uses are incompatible with maintaining critical ecosystem functions (use-environment conflicts).

- Many of these conflicts can be avoided or reduced through Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) by influencing the *location* of human activities in space and time; other tools are needed to manage the *performance* of human activities.

- Most countries already designate ocean space for marine transportation, oil and gas development, wind farms, aquaculture, waste disposal, etc., on a case-by-case, sector-by-sector basis; comprehensive MSP is rarely practiced today.

Toward a Definition of Marine Spatial Planning

Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in its broadest sense is about analyzing and allocating parts of three-dimensional marine spaces to specific uses, to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives that are usually specified through the political process. MSP is place- or area-based and can provide a practical approach to long-term ecosystem-based management. MSP should be comprehensive, adaptive, and participatory, and resolve conflicts among multiple uses and the ecosystem.

Conclusions from the Workshop

1) A statutory or legislative basis for MSP is beneficial (Germany and China). A legislative basis can provide the authority to prepare a plan and an incentive for cooperation in the planning process; however, as important are clear objectives, rules, and procedures to support MSP initiatives; these objectives and rules should be clear and future-oriented instead of providing ad hoc solutions for temporary problems;

2) MSP should keep the "ecosystem" in ecosystem-based management by employing key ecosystem features, as a template for its planning; ecosystem structure and function should be protected; habitat integrity maintained, connectivity (both spatial and temporal) of populations and key food web connections should be maintained. At the same time, economic and social objectives should have equal weight as the ecological objectives for a true ecological approach to management.

3) The human dimension of MSP usually reduces to a listing of activities (e.g., recreation, oil/gas, fisheries, shipping) that overly simplifies complex human processes. Integrating the human dimension requires the same diversity of disciplines/perspectives as does the ecosystems approach relative to the biophysical environment. Related to this is the perception that the incorporation of human dimensions into MSP will be done by engaging economists and, presumably, the understanding of human behavior by economists. Indeed, economics (e.g., fisheries bioeconomics) reduces the "human dimension" to a single factor such as fishing effort as a result of utility maximization. Other social sciences (e.g., anthropology) have suggested that other processes drive

human behavior. Also, the economy is studied and understood not just through the discipline of economics, it is also the focus of many geographers, anthropologists, and sociologists. Therefore, it is vital that the human dimension is not only reduced to economics, but rather is studied in a multi-disciplinary manner similar to that used to understand biophysical processes.

4) MSP is only one tool of "sea use management". Applications of MSP will be a mix of zoning, other management measures, and regulatory or economic incentives; planning processes will probably be a mix of "bottom up" and "top down", depending on the culture and political process; planning for MPA networks should be an integral part of MSP.

5) Early and continuing engagement of stakeholders in a clear MSP process is critical to success and engenders trust; people matter and can often be agents for change; an effective engagement of stakeholders requires investments of resources and time from the beginning of the MSP process; however, it is a worthwhile investment and will increase capacity, encourage "ownership" of the plan, and reduce future conflicts.

6) MSP should consider the level of knowledge (uncertainty) about the areas and the intensity and character of their existing and predicted uses. Generally, both the knowledge and intensity of use decrease with distance from the coast. In that context, MSPs could have differing levels of detail/generalization and legal status. For example, for areas where knowledge or use intensity is low, plans could be general, strategic documents; on the other hand, for some areas close to shore, or for offshore areas with existing or predicted intense (or diverse) use, the plans could have a similar character and status as statutory land use plans.

7) Lack of scientific knowledge about ecosystem functioning or its components should not be used as an argument for postponing MSP; driving forces for MSP should include biodiversity, security, sustainable management, and the precautionary approach.

8) Political criteria for evaluating MSP proposals are often different from those used by scientists and planners, e.g., time required to implement and see results, clear statement of added value of MSP, risk of legal challenge, resources required to implement, and consensus across government and stakeholders; political will to convert plans to action is essential.

9) Monitoring and evaluation are critical elements of the MSP process—and to broader sea use management activities. They should not be perceived as "add-on" or "once-off" activities.

10) MSP and implementation should be closely linked with integrated coastal zone management activities; this will require effective cooperation and coordination among different responsible bodies.

11) Ecosystem-based, marine (or sea use) management will evolve over the next decade, but MSP is a learning, adaptive process; it is important to start and learn by doing.

Cautionary Notes

1) "Participation" in MSP is important, if not central, to development and implementation of marine spatial plans. However, the meaning of participation is only vaguely defined or understood and methodologies for participation are unspecified. Given the range of participatory research methods and planning techniques that exist, we should aim to ensure wide ranging and innovative approaches to public participation and proactive awareness raising of the MSP process and not just undertake a collation of public comments on completed plans.

2) The fishing industry appears to pose the largest opposition to MSP because it has traditionally been able to fish freely; it is skeptical that it will gain any benefits from MSP, i.e., economic certainty and conflict resolution; engaging the fishing community in the process of MSP is therefore critical.

3) Effective stakeholder participation is critical but not adequate—raising the awareness of the public is also essential and should be considered one of the most important parts of the MSP process that can provide the broad context within which specific engagement occurs.

4) MSP requires comprehensive, spatially explicit data on ecosystem characteristics, human uses, and offshore jurisdictions; these data are not readily available for most marine areas, and can be expensive and time-consuming to collect.

5) Several countries are developing MSP, but no uniform set of procedures or structural elements are available; for example, cooperation in MSP among states bordering "regional seas" is highly recommended to implement an ecosystem approach.

6) "Fuzzy" concepts and terms that have slowed implementation of management practice, particularly in coastal areas, should be avoided in MSP.

7) Climate change is not only a driver of physical and biological change, it will also have economic and social effects that should be considered in MSP; MSP can take account of the effects of climate change through adaptive management.

Next Steps

General
- Continue to develop an international community of MSP researchers and practitioners through the Internet and other communications and build on the work of the "pioneers" in practice.
- Maintain the UNESCO MSP website to continue to follow developments in different countries and regions.
- Identify how MSP is reflected in regional and sectoral legislation, management systems, and regulations as well as what kind of "political levers" exist for moving MSP forward.
- Develop information for the general public and the politicians, especially about the nature of the problem and how MSP can help, i.e., the benefits of MSP.
- Communicate with and learn from terrestrial and coastal zone management examples and planning processes for ecosystem-based spatial planning.
- Work to integrate the human dimensions into MSP in more complex and complete ways. Given the scarcity of social science data gathering, etc., learn from and adapt terrestrial models and methodologies. Develop case studies in developing countries that have pioneered and advanced the integration of community-level participation, local knowledge, and conflict resolution, in MSP (e.g., The Philippines and Mexico)
- Acknowledge and address the first world bias of MSP, i.e., MSP appears to be emerging from the growing need to reserve space for semi-permanent structures such at wind farms, aquaculture, oil/gas platforms, etc. and other competing activities (e.g. industrial fishing, recreation). MSP, so far, addresses these competing activities as activities and interests of equal "actors." In developing countries, many of these activities (e.g. industrial fishing, oil/gas, recreation) are not the activities of local actors. Insofar as MSP is about dividing and allocating common property, just whose commons is being divided and allocated to whom is vital to consider as we develop universal models, typologies, techniques, etc., for MSP.

Meetings/ Workshops
- Convene workshops on political, legal, and economic/financial aspects of MSP, including structural adjustments from costs of MSP to all users (not just fishers); develop improved benefit measures of MSP; identify legal constraints to achieving ecosystem-based MPP.

- Organize meetings with sectoral representatives (i.e., users) to get a reality check on their ideas about MSP.

Documents/Synthesis Reports

- Develop a common vocabulary of MSP terminology; the use of existing groups such as OSPAR Working Groups and EU working groups may be helpful in this endeavor. (note that the Polish language does not have a word for "zoning" and Chinese does not have a word for "governance").

- Develop "how to" guidelines or a list of best practices to assist practitioners in the implementations of MSP. Use lessons learned from as many case studies as possible, emphasizing what works and what doesn't in each MSP experiment. The guidelines could also define a set of marine problems and define how MSP can be used to help solve them as well as provide instructions for identifying and selecting indicators or "measures of success" for MSP efforts.

- Develop an annual report of international achievements and challenges of MSP practice.

- Over next two years, conduct a critical international review of practical MSP experiences.

- Use results of workshop to prepare comments on draft EU "Green Paper on Maritime Policy" before 30 June 2007—the earlier the better—timing is everything.