

**UNITED NATIONS OPEN-ENDED INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ON
OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA:
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**Capacity building in ocean science in Developing Countries: Outcomes of the
Consultative Process and their implementation**

by
Olajide Ayinla
Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer
Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research
Lagos

The global ocean is vital to human existence. The economic growth of most developing States depends largely on the resources in the ocean and their sustainable management. Hence the Law of the Sea Convention is an appropriate framework to ensure the sustainable management of the ocean and the resources. Effective management of the ocean requires adequate knowledge and understanding of the natural processes, interactions between the ocean, land and man. Such knowledge requires scientific tools which can be enhanced in developing countries through capacity building.

Capacity development is the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and societies increase their ability to understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner. Sustainable management of the oceans and coasts in developing countries require basic ingredients that will build capacity of scientists, coastal managers, practitioners as well as facilitate the creation of enabling environments in which these managers can work. While many UN agencies and other non UN organizations have tried to address capacity needs in ocean science in developing countries, such initiatives have not achieved much success. Reasons for this include.

- Lack of participatory process to define country needs and priorities for technical, professional and infrastructure needs. Many International capacity programmes are designed from the donor countries without defining the needs of recipient government, institutions and individuals involved in the programme.
- Lack of coordination among providers of assistance to support countries' own programmes of action. Many capacity development programmes are duplicated by several donor countries. This is because donor countries and agencies hold on to their programmes and prefer to retain their national and institutional identities to capacity development programmes.
- Lack of programmes to respond to new longer-term challenges rather than immediate problems. Many International capacity building programmes lack sustainability on the longer term.
- Absolute reliance on imported skills and resources with less attention to local or indigenous resources. Many International capacity building programmes fail to use

locally available knowledge and expertise. Even when such expertise is used, they are not involved in policy and managerial levels.

- Lack of recipient national government funds to support donor funds. The urge for national governments to provide food, shelter and health facilities to their citizens have led to a neglect of capacity building programmes. Though many national governments initially give promises of support, such promises lack financial support.

One of the main objectives for the establishment of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP) in 1999 was to identify areas where coordination and cooperation at the intergovernmental and inter-agency levels should be enhanced. The ICP is a unique framework for the examination of how Capacity building in ocean science can be enhanced especially through effective interagency cooperation and coordination. The past nine sessions of the ICP have discussed various issues that have to do with the sustainability of the ocean within the context of the Law of The Sea Convention.

The overall objectives of any capacity programme for developing world should be one that will not only build indigenous capacity but also develop and improve national, sub regional and regional capacities and capabilities for sustainable ocean and coastal area development with the involvement of the non-governmental sectors. Hence, the coordination and cooperation of all agencies with mandate for the ocean is particularly important if capacity building in ocean science is to be achieved. The ICP has a basic role to play in this context.