Improving International Relations Through Marine Science Partnerships

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) contains 40 Articles that apply in varying degrees to marine science and technology. UNCLOS signatories and international organizations are encouraged to enter into bilateral and multilateral agreements to create favorable conditions for marine science research. Marine Science has demonstrated its clear utility for providing an improved knowledge base on which informed marine and coastal resource management decisions can and should be based. However, marine science partnerships and cooperation also have great potential to serve as a vehicle for improving international relations, and UNCLOS encourages signatories to promote marine science capacity building in developing countries. A new paradigm for interactions between scientists and resource managers through international marine science partnerships was implemented as part of the Red Sea Marine Peace Park Cooperative Research, Monitoring and Resource Management (RSMPP) Program. The RSMPP Program may serve as a model for improving international relations and building capacity through marine science cooperation. Specific suggestions for sites that may be considered as candidates for this model in other regions of the world are discussed. The value of international science and engineering (S&E) partnerships is also of interest to the U.S. National Science Board (the Board) as it has recently undertaken an effort to examine the role of the U.S.

1 Executive Director, National Science Board, Arlington, Virginia. The views expressed in this manuscript are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the National Science Board. The author’s PowerPoint presentation can be viewed on the accompanying CD.
Government in supporting international S&E partnerships in response to the changes that have occurred in recent years to the global dynamics for S&E research, education, politics, and technical workforce. National Science Board recommendations in this regard will have particular focus on the utility of S&E partnerships to yield more than just excellence in science.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) entered into force in 1994 and currently has 151 Parties, although it remains pending for U.S. Senate ratification. Two of the 17 Parts of UNCLOS specifically apply to marine scientific research (Part XIII) or the development and transfer of marine technology (Part XIV), with 40 specific Articles in the Convention addressing to varying degrees marine science and technology. Foci for some of these UNCLOS Articles include:

- Encourages bilateral and multilateral agreements to create favorable conditions for marine scientific research (Article 243);

- Promotes marine science and technology capacity building, particularly in developing countries (Articles 266, 268, 269);

- Encourages facilitation of international cooperation in marine scientific research and development (Article 270); and

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