

## THE PERFORMANCE OF EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONES (PEEZ)

Performance of Exclusive Economic Zones (PEEZ) constitutes a flagship activity of the international research project on the Institutional Dimensions of Global Environmental Change (IDGEC).

### **Rationale**

The establishment of 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), bringing over a third of the world ocean under the jurisdiction of coastal states, constitutes one of the most far-reaching institutional changes in international society during the twentieth century. Vast ocean areas with an enormous wealth of natural resources that were previously open to all as part of the high seas have been turned into assets of coastal states. A principal justification for this change was the growing sense during the decades leading up to the third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III) that international efforts to manage human uses of marine resources had failed. More than 100 EEZs are currently in force.

The objectives justifying the creation of EEZs have not been fulfilled. The number of overexploited or depleted fish stocks has increased. Pollution levels in many areas are higher than they were before the change. Disagreements over delimitation of marine boundaries abound. And conflicts among multiple uses of ocean resources are on the rise (UN 1998). This state of affairs has been brought about by many factors in addition to the prevailing system of ocean governance. But institutions do play a role in accounting for variance in the condition of marine systems.

### **Assessing the Effects of EEZs**

The principal goal of PEEZ is to analyze the consequences resulting from the change from a regime based on "open access" to the resources of the high seas to enclosure of vast ocean areas into exclusive economic zones from the 1970's onwards.

The core concern of this activity can be stated as:

*How has the establishment of EEZs and the resultant shift in jurisdiction over the marine resources of more than one third of the world ocean affected our ability to use these resources in a sustainable and equitable manner?*

PEEZ seeks to contribute to the work of IDGEC by addressing four prominent clusters of effects associated with EEZ-based regimes: biophysical effects, socioeconomic effects, legal-constitutive effects, and cognitive effects.

*Biophysical Effects:* Why has the creation of EEZ-based regimes failed in general to initiate an era of sustainable fishing practices, and how can we account for variance in the performance of these regimes with regard to different species and different regions in terms of sustainability?

*Socioeconomic effects:* How has the establishment of EEZs affected the distribution of ocean wealth and to what extent have coastal states succeeded in using these assets in an efficient manner.

*Legal-Constitutive Effects:* How have EEZs affected the perceptions of coastal states regarding their roles and interests as well as the practices of states in developing cooperative arrangements that require modifications of traditional views of sovereignty.

*Cognitive Effects:* How do regimes facilitate the introduction of new ideas about resource management and conservation and, in the process, alter the knowledge base of key players in institutional arrangements?

The fact that more than 100 EEZ-based regimes are now in operation opens up attractive opportunities for analysis. Structured, focused case studies selected to encompass the operation of EEZ-based regimes in a variety of geographical, ecological, socioeconomic, and cultural settings constitute one obvious way forward in this realm.

The expectation is that this activity will provide a platform for a number of analysts using the same concepts and data sets but basing their research on different approaches to the demonstration of causal links between institutions and major types of consequences. Over time, this should add significantly to our understanding of the Performance of Exclusive Economic Zones and, more generally, to our knowledge of the ways in which institutions affect human actions relating to largescale environmental matters.

### **Policy Implications**

Understanding why the introduction of EEZ-based regimes has failed to solve problems of stock depletions in major fisheries, for example, should help to guide the adjustments needed to fulfill the original objective underlying this major institutional change. Similarly, knowledge of the consequences of these regimes with regard to matters of equity and efficiency could provide the basis for adjustments in major features of EEZ-based regimes in the future. Accordingly, efforts to develop detailed research designs within the PEEZ framework will include consultations with policymakers and scientists located in intergovernmental agencies (e.g. the FAO), nongovernmental organizations (e.g. ICES), and management agencies located within national governments (e.g. the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in Canada). The result should be a research program responsive to the concerns of managers and policymakers and, in due course, a stream of scientific findings that can help to improve the performance of EEZ-based regimes.