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Item 4.1 of the 4th Revised Revised Provisional Agenda

**UPDATED PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECADE
ROADMAP OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF OCEAN SCIENCE
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING RESULTS OF THE REVIEW OF
TWO VERSIONS OF THE DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Summary

In accordance with Resolution A/RES/72/73 of the UN General Assembly, and IOC Resolution EC-LI.1, the preparation of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) has continued apace between June 2019 and December 2020. This document describes actions undertaken by the Secretariat and the Decade Executive Planning Group (EPG) established in November 2018 as an advisory body to IOC governing bodies, building on the guidance of the UN Decade Roadmap (IOC/EC-LI/2 Annex 3 and Corr), as well as next steps towards the launch of the Decade in 2021.

Financial implications: paragraphs 55-56.

Decision proposed: as referenced in Draft Resolution EC-53/[4.1] in the Action Paper (document IOC/EC-53/AP Rev.2 Add&Corr.).

Introduction

1. The period from June 2019 to December 2020 represented a critical time in the preparation phase for the Decade. Activities have been conducted to engage stakeholders through 11 regional workshops and a number of thematic meetings as well as dedicated sessions and side events on the margins of international and regional conferences. Communication and outreach activities have been implemented to inform Member States, potential partners and other stakeholders of the preparatory phase, with the aim of inviting input to the preparation of the Implementation Plan, as well as to communicate the vision, rationale, and expected results of the Decade. This period culminated in the preparation and presentation of Version 2.0 of the Implementation Plan to the United Nations General Assembly at its 75th session in December 2020.

2. In December 2017, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030 (hereafter, the Decade), building on the efforts of IOC Member States and the IOC Secretariat. The Decade is a once in a life-time opportunity to deliver a step-change in ocean science and to influence how countries invest, utilize, and participate in science and innovation to embrace societal goals and align research investment to contribute to common goals. The period from 2018 to 2020 is focusing on the preparation of the Decade. This work is led by IOC, in consultation with Member States and all relevant stakeholders.

3. At its 30th session, the IOC Assembly under [Resolution XXX-1](#) requested the IOC Executive Secretary to:

- (i) report on the implementation of the current version of the Decade Roadmap at the 53rd session of the IOC Executive Council in 2020;
- (ii) further develop the governance arrangements for the implementation phase (2021–2030) based on the inputs received on documents IOC-XXX/2 Annex 3 and Addendum;
- (iii) make the draft implementation plan available and invite its review by Member States; and
- (iv) report to the IOC Executive Council at its 53rd session, on comments received and plans for finalizing the implementation plan, prior to its submission to the UNGA;

4. This document provides an overview of the activities conducted throughout the period from June 2019 to December 2020 as part of the preparation phase.

Executive Planning Group

5. The Executive Planning Group continued to make significant contributions to the preparation phase of the Decade throughout this period. In October 2019, five task groups were established comprising members of the EPG to focus on specific issues of the preparation of the Decade Implementation Plan namely: governance; scientific framework; private sector engagement; Early Career Ocean Professionals; and communications. The work of the task groups culminated in a meeting of the Executive Planning Group in Paris from 15–17 January 2020 to review progress of the preparation of the Implementation Plan and to provide strategic advice to the IOC Secretariat for the completion of the draft plan. The first day of the meeting benefitted from the participation of the IOC Officers who interacted with the group. EPG members continued their involvement in the drafting and review of iterative versions of the draft Implementation Plan following the January 2020 meeting, and participated in two webinars in March and April 2020 to present the draft Implementation Plan to Decade partners. Between April and December 2020, regular online meetings of the EPG were held to discuss and solicit input to the Implementation Plan and other elements of the Decade preparation phase.

ENGAGEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

UN organizations and UN-Oceans

6. Six meetings of the UN-Oceans contact group for the Decade were held during this period including an in-person meeting in February 2020 on the sidelines of the preparatory conference for the 2020 UN Ocean Conference. These meetings provided a forum for the IOC Secretariat to present the development process of the Implementation Plan and seek feedback on specific issues contained in the draft Plan including the scientific framework of the Plan, the governance and coordination framework, and resource mobilization and financing modalities. Discussions also aimed to solicit contributions and commitments to the Decade from UN agencies. Several UN entities made formal written submissions to the peer review of the zero draft of the Implementation Plan and the review of Version 1.0 of the Plan. Discussions are ongoing between UNESCO, IOC, United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to identify potential areas of synergy and collaboration between the Decade and the parallel UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration which is being coordinated by UNEP and FAO. UN DOALOS coordinated a virtual presentation of Version 2.0 of the Implementation Plan to UN Member States on 15 October 2020.

Scientific community

7. The scientific community remained a focus of engagement efforts during this period. A request for submissions to inform the development of the scientific framework of the Decade was sent to partner organizations by the Executive Secretary of the IOC in September 2019. Over 55 written submissions were received in response to this request. The results were used as a primary input to a meeting of the EPG task group on the scientific framework that was held in Washington DC in November 2019. The scientific community represented the majority of participants in the 11 regional planning meetings held in this period; this process was particularly important in engaging regional and national research institutions and organizations. Finally, this community was also targeted during the peer review of the zero draft of the Implementation Plan and represented the majority of respondents.

8. In February 2020, IOC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Science Council (ISC) with a view to effectively promoting the Decade and its activities through ISC's membership and communities such as international scientific unions and associations, national and regional academies of science and research councils, and international initiatives. ISC and IOC have jointly organised events as part of the [Ocean Decade Virtual Series](#) in the context of this MoU.

9. The Decade was the subject of discussions during dedicated sessions, meetings, and side events at a number of ocean science meetings that took place in the period to March 2020 before travel restrictions became widespread due to the Covid-19 pandemic and in a large number of online meetings and events from March onwards. Key international in-person meetings included: OceanObs' 19 September 2019, Honolulu, Hawaii; Our Ocean Conference, October 2019, Oslo, Norway; Oceans'19 MTS, October 2019, Washington, US; AGU Town Hall meeting, San Francisco, USA, December 2019, online AGU Townhall, December 2020; All-Atlantic Ocean Research Forum - Brussels, Belgium, February 2020; and Ocean Science Meeting 2020 - San Diego, USA, February 2020.

Foundations and philanthropic organizations

10. Several preliminary meetings with a number of philanthropic foundations and several consultations with them were organized in 2019. Common understanding and language emerged. This created the basis for the Foundations Dialogue Event, which IOC organized in partnership with The Velux Foundations (Denmark) at the Danish Royal Academy of Science and Letters in Copenhagen on 27–28 February 2020. Twenty-one philanthropic and corporate foundations and one-funder network participated in this event to discuss how to best create the partnerships and funding models that will stimulate an attractive funding environment for the Decade. Following this

Dialogue event, one partnership agreement has been signed and several other partnership agreements are under negotiation with the objective to catalyze and organize complementary commitments and resources to meet the Decade's challenges. The foundations that participated in the event as well as other foundations with an interest in the Decade have been invited to join the Ocean Decade Alliance, a resource mobilization mechanism for the Decade that focuses on large-scale voluntary commitments. The Alliance will provide its members with an entry point to support priority actions of the Decade.

11. The Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection will host the second meeting of the Foundations Dialogue in late 2021 to pursue the dialogue, synergise new partnerships established, present entry point for support to Decade Actions, and invite other foundations to join the Ocean Decade. A first preparation meeting for this event was held online in November 2020 with a number of Foundations and this discussion will be continued throughout 2021 via a series of regular online meeting with key philanthropic partners.

Private sector

12. Ongoing private sector engagement activities aim at stimulating active participation in the Decade in areas such as ocean research, innovation, ocean literacy, data management and sharing, as well as engagement in the Ocean Decade Alliance. An EPG task group has been established and preliminary analyses have been conducted to identify activities with private sector stakeholders that aim to raise awareness on the Decade.

13. Building on cooperation established since the beginning of the preparatory phase with the Sustainable Ocean Business Action Platform of UN Global Compact, which brings together more than 9,500 corporate participants committed to catalyze action towards the 2030 Agenda, a number of joint activities continued to take place over this period. A side event *Forging Transformative Partnerships towards the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030)* focusing on private sector and youth engagement was organized at the Our Ocean Conference in Oslo, October 24, 2019. It followed the announcement of the IOC voluntary commitment at that conference to launch the Ocean Decade Alliance. IOC and the Action Platform also joined forces to develop a Business Brief [Advancing Science for Sustainable Ocean Business: A Unique Opportunity for the Private Sector on the role of industry in the Decade](#). The Brief was launched during a virtual event on 4th June 2020. IOC contributed to the review process of [UN Global Compact's Ocean Stewardship Report 2030](#) published on 2 June 2020 that offers a roadmap for how ocean-related industries and policymakers can jointly secure a healthy and productive ocean by 2030 and which highlights the importance of the Decade in support of the proposed roadmap. IOC also contributed to the work of the Covid-19 Task Force "sprint" organized by the UN Global Compact that led to the release of the [Blue Resilience Brief](#) which outlines areas where scaling-up joint science-industry action could enhance the resilience of the blue economy and contribute towards a more sustainable future.

14. Recognizing the importance of science-industry collaboration, the IOC and the UN Global Compact reinforced their shared commitment to work together by signing a letter of intent in August 2020 to pursue joint activities aimed at mobilizing the private sector around the Decade's framework. IOC participated in the [2020 UN Global Compact CEO roundtable – Ocean Stewardship Annual Review](#) in September 2020, in particular in relation to data collection and sharing. Building on the outcomes of the CEO roundtable, the IOC and the Action Platform will establish a task force in early 2021 to explore the role of industry as a beneficiary and contributor to the data component of the Decade.

15. IOC also presented the Decade at the World Ocean Council's 7th Sustainable Ocean Summit (SOS) in Paris in November 2019 which had the theme "Investing in Ocean Futures: Finance and Innovation for the Blue Economy" and which brought together about 300 industry participants. IOC also participated in the 2020 8th SOS (Ocean Vision 2030) a virtual event composed of a series of working sessions to discuss priority and develop outputs to drive industry and investment action

on the issue.

ECOPs & Gender Mainstreaming

16. An Informal Working Group (IWG) of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP) was established in November 2019. EPG members nominated participants in the group and it now comprises over 50 members with strong geographic and gender diversity. The ECOP IWG coordinated a global survey of over 1,400 ECOPs to ascertain interest in the Decade and generate suggestions for priority support needs and areas of engagement. Based on the results of this survey the ECOP IWG was invited to contribute to the draft Implementation Plan and provided suggestions for future ECOP engagement mechanisms. ECOPs participated in selected EPG task-groups, attended the EPG meeting in January 2020 and subsequent virtual meetings of the EPG, and are participating in the planning of the First International Ocean Decade Conference that is being hosted by the German Government in 2021. ECOPs have also been invited as panelists in a number of meetings and events, including the virtual sessions for the review of the Implementation Plan. The IWG is currently working to develop an ECOP-focused Decade programme that will be submitted for endorsement to the [Call for Decade Actions No. 01/2020](#).

17. Planning of all events took into account the need to ensure gender diversity both in terms of participants and in terms of speakers, moderators, and panelists. Approximately 38% of participants in the regional planning meetings and virtual events to present the Implementation Plan were female. In order to ensure gender diversity in the implementation phase of the Decade, the Implementation Plan contains specific strategies to ensure barriers to diversity are overcome in the planning of Decade actions and in the establishment of governance and coordination structures. A virtual session on gender diversity and equity during the Ocean Decade was held as part of the Ocean Decade Virtual Series in October 2020 and was attended by over 380 participants from 67 countries.

Informal Working Group for Monitoring and Evaluation

18. An Informal Working Group for Monitoring and Evaluation for the Decade was established in November 2019. This Group comprises 12 experts from a diversity of sectors including industry, NGOs, Member States, scientific community and ECOPs. The mandate of the group is to prepare a discussion paper on the proposed Decade monitoring and evaluation framework for presentation to the Decade Advisory Board in 2021.

19. Regional and National Decade Initiatives

20. More than 1,900 experts participated in 11 regional consultation workshops co-organized by IOC (including strong engagement of the IOC regional sub-commissions), and institutional partners hosted by the governments of France, Japan, Italy, Brazil, Canada, India, Kenya, Norway, United States of America, and Mexico. The first three regional workshops focused on the Pacific Ocean, starting in July 2019 and were followed by workshops for the northern and western Indian Ocean, the North Atlantic, the Arctic, the South Atlantic, and the Southern Ocean. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a virtual Western Tropical Atlantic Workshop closed the series in April 2020, gathering more than 350 participants, and 4,200 viewers of the live streaming of the event. Organized around the Decade societal outcomes, the workshops allowed for regional interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder discussions to assess the status of regional ocean research and to co-design mission-oriented research strategies in line with the regional policy requirements. They focused on regional needs and priorities in data and capacity-development and reflected on the potential of transforming knowledge systems, accelerating transfer of technology, and enabling training and education. The regional consultations resulted in the production of a series of individual workshop reports and a synthesis report (The Ocean Decade Series, 15).

21. Regional taskforces/planning committees have emerged in the Arctic, Southern Ocean, Western Tropical Atlantic and Mediterranean regions. These self-organised groups will build on the discussions in the regional workshops to convene regional stakeholders, and to trigger the development of regional action plans/programmes that will guide the development of Decade Actions.

22. As part of the Ocean Decade Virtual Series, webinars were organised in October 2020 in six regions to explore opportunities, challenges and approaches to co-design of Decade Actions at the regional level. The outcomes of these events will inform the design of Decade Actions at the regional level, and will be used in the development of a publication to provide guidance on co-design approaches throughout the Decade.

23. National Decade Committees have been established in Brazil, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States and committees are emerging in a number of other countries including India, Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Russian Federation. National Decade Committees will coordinate activities and convene stakeholders at the national level to contribute to the Decade priorities. Operational guidance will be prepared in coming months to guide establishment of these Committees in other countries.

Ocean Literacy

24. The development of an Ocean Literacy Strategy for the UN Decade of Ocean Science commenced in September 2019. The process involved a series of stakeholder consultations, including an open questionnaire with over 300 respondents from across the world, a participatory multi-stakeholder workshop as well as bibliographical review. The draft strategy preparation culminated in a workshop held in Venice in December 2019, that was attended by 37 people from 34 countries and developed a set of recommendations for the strategy including a focus on four priority areas, namely: mainstreaming Ocean Literacy in policy formulation; formal education; corporate action; and community engagement. The Strategy is being finalised and will be released in early 2021 to provide a framework for ocean literacy related Decade Actions undertaken by stakeholders throughout the Decade.

Data management

25. The IOC's IODE programme convened the first "Workshop on data sharing between UN agencies as a contribution to the UN decade of ocean science for sustainable development" as an online meeting on 20 April 2020. The meeting was attended by FAO, IOC, ISA, UNDP, UNEP, UN ESCAP, UFGCC, UN Statistics, WCMC and WMO in their capacity as members of the UN-Oceans. A second similar meeting was held with non-UN agencies in September 2020 and included representatives of private sector, philanthropic Foundations, NGOs. Prior to the meetings participants were invited to provide descriptions of their online data and information products and services and enter these into the ODISCat Catalogue of Sources (<http://odiscat.odis.org>) which now includes almost 1,000 descriptions.

26. During the meetings the participants shared information on the ocean related-data and information held or coordinated by their organization and discussed needs, challenges and opportunities presented by the Decade in relation to data sharing and use. UN agencies agreed to establish working groups that will follow-up on issues related to improved sharing of data and information. These include: (i) working group on ODISCat development; (ii) working group on a conceptual framework; and (iii) working group to identify stakeholders to invite non-UN, IGO, NGO and private sector workshop. After the meetings a number of participants became members of the inter-sessional working group to propose a strategy on ocean data and information stewardship for the UN ocean decade (IWG-SODIS).

Planning for 2021 Launch Events

27. Planning for a series of virtual Decade launch events in early 2021 is underway. A high-level supporters event is planned for January 2021 which will showcase Member State, philanthropic and private sector support for the Decade.

28. Following the offer by Germany to host the first international conference for the Decade in Berlin in 2021 (31 May–2 June 2021) the IOC Secretariat has been working closely with the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) to plan the conference which will have an essential role in the launch of the Decade. Representatives from BMBF attended the EPG meeting in January 2020 and presented an update on progress in conference planning. Following that meeting, several members of the EPG were appointed as co-chairs of the six International Expert Groups that are driving planning of the conference sessions. IOC Secretariat staff participate in regular calls of an international planning group, and are currently working with BMBF to develop a revised structure for the conference, involving a significant virtual component, to respond to the ongoing sanitary situation.

29. Egypt has offered to host a regional kick-off conference for Africa. Planning for this conference is underway with the involvement of colleagues from the IOC Sub-Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States. The dates and format of this conference are currently under discussion in the light of the sanitary situation.

30. Thailand has offered to host a regional kick-off conference for Asia in August 2021. Planning for this conference is underway with colleagues from the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific.

Communication, partnerships, and outreach activities

31. The current reporting period was fundamental in building a solid foundation for Decade communication and outreach. While the continuous evolution of the implementation framework of the Decade proved challenging, the Secretariat succeeded in developing a solid strategic framework and global standards for use of the Decade brand that have provided coherence for increasing levels of outreach among global and national stakeholders.

32. **Communications Strategy:** The first version of the Decade [Communications Strategy for the Decade](#) was finalized in January 2020. The Strategy is based on three main pillars: a public-facing global communications campaign under the sub-brand “Generation Ocean”; key Decade challenges to create ocean-based solutions for major global issues (e.g. public health crisis, climate change, food security, etc.); and the Ocean Decade Alliance. An updated version of the strategy is currently under preparation focusing on communications activities during the implementation phase of the Decade.

33. **Global Communications Campaign – Generation Ocean:** The first key pillar of the Decade Communications Strategy, the “Generation Ocean” Communications Campaign is in the early stages of scoping and definition. A [Request for Proposals \(RFP\)](#) was launched by the IOC Secretariat between February and March 2020, resulting in receipt of over 20 offers from communications and marketing firms worldwide to conceptualize, design and launch the global campaign. A final contractor was selected and commenced work in September 2020. A brand concept and logo are currently being finalised, and the launch of the communications campaign is planned in mid-2021.

34. **Communications Infrastructure & Assets:** The official Decade website was launched in June 2019. Since its launch, <http://oceandecade.org> has been the main entry point for stakeholders worldwide seeking the latest developments and news about Decade preparations, upcoming events, and resources. Between December 2019 and December 2020 approximately 60,500 visitors accessed the website resulting in 220,000 page views. This compares to 6,200 visitors and 28,900

page views in the same period in 2018/2019. 660 partners are now registered on the website to receive updates on Decade progress. Conceived for the final two years of the preparatory phase (2019–2020), the website will be restructured to respond to specific needs of the Implementation Phase, including through the integration of online architecture to facilitate stakeholder engagement and monitoring of Decade progress. A Request for Proposals was launched for this work in October 2020, and work is expected to start in January 2021.

35. The IOC Secretariat is finalising brand guidelines, which orients partners and stakeholders on the appropriate manners and processes required to use and appropriate (to the degree possible) the Decade brand, including its logo, slogan, colour palette, typeface, and other graphic guidelines.

36. Since June 2019, the IOC Secretariat also invested heavily—by itself and with partners—in the production of key videos and institutional publications to showcase the Decade and highlight its benefits to society. This includes a series of videos for which a full up-to-date list of publicly-available Decade videos can be found on the UNESCO Youtube Channel account, under a [dedicated playlist](#) and brochures, with an updated version of the official [Decade brochure](#).

37. **Global, Regional and Partner Events:** Communications and outreach activities supported global, regional and partner-led Decade events during the current period, including the high-profile Our Ocean Conference, Norway, October 2019 and OceanObs'19, United States, September 2019. Communications were also crucial to support and ensure the success of the 11 regional Decade workshops undertaken since July 2019, the virtual sessions for the review of the Implementation Plan in March and April 2020, and the Ocean Decade Virtual Series. Communications and outreach activities for each event typically included inputs to the event concept and agenda, framing of event messaging, design and production of event dissemination materials, event promotion via social media platforms, and post-event write up of news releases.

38. Where made possible by partner engagement and availability of resources, the IOC Secretariat organized specific communications Decade events, notably the media training workshops organized on the margins of the Pacific Community Decade workshop (July 2019) and the *Conexão Oceano* (September 2019) media event organized in partnership with the Boticario Group Foundation in the Museum of Tomorrow (Rio de Janeiro), which aimed at kick starting a national debate in Brazil about the Decade by engaging the country's top media personalities around a series of interactive panels.

39. **Media Coverage and Partnerships:** The IOC Secretariat has been actively pursuing media partnerships to grow the organic coverage and overall media interest in the upcoming Decade. Conversations are underway to enlist more active participation in the Decade from major global media, including BBC and The Economist (through its World Ocean Initiative). The Decade has been particularly well covered by major regional and national media outlets in Brazil, India, Italy, New Zealand, and Portugal, showcasing the need for further media outreach at the national level, preferably via national partners and collaborators who are familiar with the media landscape and many times have direct contacts with members of the press. An editorial partnership has been signed with [Environment Coastal & Offshore \(ECO\) Magazine](#) ensuring a dedicated space for publishing editorials, analytical pieces, or Decade preparatory updates in every issue of ECO Magazine.

40. **Partners' use of Decade logo:** During this period, close to 40 partners were granted use of the logo for Decade-related events including conferences, exhibitions, meetings and virtual events. Partners who used the event were typically scientific organizations or actors in the arts and cultural sectors. In total these events engaged over 850,000 people.

41. **The Ocean Decade Virtual Series:** On September 24, 2020 the Ocean Decade Virtual Series was launched. This series of webinars is convened with diverse partners, to provide high-level and scientific dialogues organized around the Ocean Decade Challenges as well as some key priorities and cross-cutting issues. It features action-oriented dialogues among ocean science experts and speakers from the global ocean community to foster active participation. From

September to December 2020, 12 sessions took place including 9 specifically on co-design at the global and regional levels, as well as sessions on the ocean-human health nexus, gender equality, and partnerships for SIDS. Sessions will continue throughout 2021.

42. **Regional presentation of the Decade to the wider public:** The Decade was presented to the Italian public and media on October 22, 2020. The event aimed to increase awareness on the Decade in the Mediterranean region and several major media partners (including SKYTV24, Forbes) and influencers participated in the event.

Implementation Plan preparation and review

43. At its January 2020 meeting the EPG endorsed the proposed structure of the Implementation Plan. The zero draft of the Implementation Plan was prepared by the IOC Secretariat based on strategic advice provided by the EPG and the results of meetings and discussions described in the previous sections. The zero draft was distributed for peer review between the 20 March and 24 April 2020. The document was distributed to Member States via [Circular Letter 2798](#), and shared with over 450 individuals representing scientific organizations, business and industry, philanthropic and corporate foundations, NGOs and civil society and ECOPs. Member States and peer reviewers were asked to submit feedback to the zero draft via an online survey. 228 responses were received to this process, including 42 from Member States. Excluding the Member States responses, the majority of responses were received from scientific community stakeholders, with responses also received from business and industry, philanthropic foundations, and NGOs. Most submissions were received from Europe, North America and Australia, with more limited input from Latin America and the Caribbean, South America and the Pacific regions.

44. Two webinars were held on the 31 March and 2 April 2020 to present the zero draft Implementation Plan and attracted over 550 participants. Participants at the webinars were asked to provide feedback to the draft Plan during the session and via an online questionnaire. 37 responses were received to that request in addition to the numerous comments and feedback received during the webinars themselves.

45. A detailed analysis of the feedback received via the above processes was carried out by the IOC Secretariat. Reviewers of the plan provided detailed responses and while there were differences in emphasis, the analysis revealed a set of clear and common messages to guide revision of the Plan. Overall, reviewers were supportive of the Plan in terms of content and structure, level of detail and length and ease of reading; although reviewers noted the need for a summary version of the final Plan to be prepared.

46. The feedback received was classified into three categories. The first category identified issues that required substantive changes to the Plan and included comments on the need for: (i) a strengthened mission statement; (ii) the outcomes to better reflect the cultural and human dimension values of the ocean; (iii) a clear set of common priorities to convene stakeholders throughout the Decade; and (iv) a stronger discussion on how the impact and outcomes of the Decade would be evaluated. The second category identified issues that required better articulation or analysis in the Plan and included reference to the need to: (i) increase recognition of ocean–climate interactions; (ii) enhance reference to issues of gender equity, the cultural role of ocean and ocean–human health links; (iii) strengthen the discussion of the role of the ocean in food security and a sustainable ocean economy; (iv) better describe the role of natural and social sciences along all parts of the science value chain; (v) increase the ‘solutions focus’ of the Plan including discussion of the science to solutions interface and role of technology; (vi) increase discussion of the articulation of Decade coordination and activities at the regional and national scales; (vii) reinforce the discussion on the role of indigenous and local knowledge in the Decade; and (viii) better articulate the benefits of engaging in the Decade both for resource providers and proponents of Decade actions. The final category identified issues that required clarification, particularly around Decade structures and processes including the process for endorsement of Decade actions, stakeholder engagement mechanisms, and the governance and coordination framework.

47. The review process culminated in the preparation of the Version 1.0 of the draft Implementation Plan ([IOC/EC-53/4.1.Doc\(2\)](#)) which was reviewed by Member States and UN-Oceans in June–July 2020. The main additions to Version 1.0 of the Implementation Plan compared to the zero draft included: (i) the development of a new mission statement to better reflect the ambition of the Decade; (ii) the inclusion of a seventh outcome “An inspiring and engaging ocean” to reflect the importance of the cultural and educational values of the ocean; (iii) the introduction of 10 Ocean Decade Challenges as the most immediate and pressing needs of the Decade that aim to galvanize stakeholders around common priorities; and (iv) reworking of the discussion on monitoring and evaluation of the Decade to highlight the process that will be followed to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework that will be endorsed by the Decade Board in 2021.

48. Through [Circular Letter 2804](#), IOC Member States were requested to provide comments on Version 1.0 before turning it into Version 2.0 intended for submission to the UN General Assembly on behalf of IOC. Forty-five Member States provided comments in response to that request. Comments that were received were entered into a database for review by the IOC Secretariat. The review process was complemented by an online information session for IOC Member States that was held in the four working languages of the Commission on 9 July 2020. Over 140 representatives of Member States participated in this session. Verbal comments that were received during this session were also taken into account in the review of the Implementation Plan and are reflected below. The review by Member States was also carried out in parallel to a review by members of UN-Oceans. Seven members of UN-Oceans provided comments to the Plan. The majority of these comments were editorial. Issues that required more substantive consideration are reflected in this document. Overall, strong support was expressed from Member States for Version 1.0 of the Implementation Plan, with recognition of the improvements that had been made to the Plan since the zero draft version of the Plan.

49. The analysis and proposed modifications to the Implementation Plan were presented to the EPG in a meeting on 27 July 2020, and in-principle agreement was reached on the changes to be made to transform Version 1.0 of the Plan to Version 2.0.

50. The most significant modifications that were made in the development of Version 2.0 of the Plan included a discussion of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on ocean science and on the Ocean Decade that refers to the effects of the pandemic on the start date and implementation of the Decade, and the role of ocean science under the Decade in post-Covid world. It makes the argument that now more than ever the Ocean Decade is an essential undertaking given the pivotal role that the ocean should play in post-Covid-19 recovery efforts. The Decade objectives were restructured around three objectives that refer to three main elements of the ocean science value chain, i.e. identifying knowledge needs, generating needed knowledge, and using generated knowledge. Simpler language was adopted and attempts have been made to reduce redundancy within the 10 Ocean Decade Challenges, and increase the focus on priority ocean knowledge and solutions. The overlapping and iterative nature of the objectives, and their primary role as a means of structuring different Decade Actions was highlighted. The data, information and knowledge management discussion was reformulated to simplify the language and increase the focus on how the data management objectives of the Decade will be implemented. An analysis of the responses received was documented in [IOC/EC-53/4.1Doc\(1\) Add.](#)

51. Version 2.0 of the Implementation Plan and an accompanying summary version was formally transmitted to the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel in August 2020, who then distributed it to UN Member States in advance of the start of the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly. A virtual information session was held for UN Member States on 15 October 2020. The Implementation Plan is being considered as part of the omnibus resolution on oceans and law of the sea of the Assembly which is expected to be finalised in December 2020.

Call for Decade Actions

52. The first Call for Decade Actions (No. 01/2020) was launched on 15 October 2020 and will remain open until 15 January 2021. This first Call targets large-scale, global or major regional programmes, as well as in-kind or financial contributions to the Decade, including support to coordination costs. A comprehensive communications campaign accompanied the launch of the Call, and two live question and answer sessions were held in October and November that together convened over 350 participants. There has been significant interest in the Call for Decade Actions. The IOC Secretariat, EPG and regional taskforces are playing an active role connecting stakeholders working on similar initiatives. It is envisaged that the first group of potential Decade Actions originating from the Call will be presented to the first meeting of the interim Decade Advisory Board in early 2021.

Decade Governance and Coordination

53. The Implementation Plan envisages a Decade Advisory Board as a strategic advisory body to the IOC governing bodies that will provide strategic advice on Decade implementation but that does not exercise policy-making functions. The Terms of Reference for the Board will be tabled at the 31st session of the IOC Assembly for endorsement. In the interim period it is proposed to extend and expand the Terms of Reference of the EPG to act as an Interim Decade Advisory Board as outlined in [IOC/EC-53/4.1Doc\(3\)](#).

54. The Implementation Plan envisages that different types of decentralised coordination structures will provide support to implementation of the Decade. A number of institutions and Member States have informally indicated their interest in hosting structures of this kind. Draft operational guidance for two of these types of structures – Decade Collaborative Centres and Decade Implementing Partners – has been prepared for information of the Executive Council in IOC/EC-53/3.1.Inf(2).

Financial Implications

55. Overall, the main challenge for the Commission's small Secretariat continues to be the dual task of raising both the extrabudgetary resources necessary to maintain its core operational programmes and the significant additional resources required to lead and coordinate the Decade preparation phase, particularly in the critical period leading up to the launch of the Decade. Until now, most of the funds have been provided through extra-budgetary contributions. The following Member States/organizations have made specific financial contributions to IOC to support planning activities during this period: Belgium, Canada, Japan, Norway, Republic of Korea, Sweden and REV-Ocean. The coordination of Decade activities is being managed by the Head of Marine Policy & Regional Coordination on a part-time basis, with the support of a P4 programme specialist also on a part-time basis, supported by one consultant funded through extra-budgetary funds. The Government of Canada has also loaned one full-time expert (June 2019 to June 2021).

56. Further commitments are needed in order to operationalise the Decade Implementation Plan through a robust and well resourced network of central and decentralised coordination structures. An initial analysis estimates that a minimum of US\$ 1.5–2 million will be needed annually for the operation of the central Decade Coordination Unit that will be housed within the IOC Secretariat. This is based on staffing of the Unit at minimum by a P5 (optimally, a D-1) coordinator, two P4/P3 programme specialists, a communication specialist at P3 level, and an administrative assistant. Currently, none of these positions are sustained.

Next Steps

57. The first six months of 2021 will be a critical period for the Decade both in terms of ensuring global visibility through high-level launch events, and in terms of the establishment of fundamental operational elements including the Decade coordination structures and the online platform that will

form the basis of the Global Stakeholder Forum. This period will also see the first meeting of the interim Decade Advisory Board, the endorsement of the first series of Decade programmes, as well as the launch of a second Call for Decade Actions for programmes and projects. There will need to be a strong focus on securing in-kind and financial contributions from Member States and other relevant organisations during this period.

58. A Call for Expressions of Interest for Member States (and other relevant organizations) to host Decade Coordination Offices and Decade Collaborative Centres will be renewed. The Terms of Reference of the Decade Board will be tabled at the 31st session of the IOC Assembly for endorsement. Staffing of the Decade Coordination Unit will start upon acceptance of the Implementation Plan by the UNGA and subject to the availability of funds.

59. The Commission relies primarily on extra-budgetary funds for its work on the Decade, and in this respect, the continuation of this coordination role beyond 2020 should be carefully assessed in light of available resources both at programmatic and staffing levels. The contribution of Member States and partners will be essential to successfully start and sustain the envisaged central role of the Secretariat in the implementation of the Decade. As highlighted in the draft Implementation Plan and via [Circular Letters 2785](#) and [2798](#), Member States are warmly invited to provide support to the Decade coordination activities including hosting of Decade Coordination Offices and Decade Collaborative Centres, establishment of National Decade Committees, possibly building on existing IOC national committees, membership of the Ocean Decade Alliance, and provision of extra-budgetary resources.