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INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

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Item 4.1 of the Provisional Agenda

**STATUS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF OCEAN
SCIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (2021–2030)**

Summary

This document provides information on the key outcomes of Ocean Decade implementation across the four main pillars of activity: (i) Decade Actions; (ii) Governance and coordination structures; (iii) Resource mobilization; and (iv) Stakeholder engagement and outreach over the period from June 2021 to May 2022. It identifies remaining challenges and opportunities across the pillars and concludes with a vision and outlook for 2022–2023 and beyond.

An addendum to this document presents the Outcomes of 2nd Decade Call for actions and scope of 3rd Call currently opened until August 2022.

Financial implications: Issues related to resource mobilisation and financial implications are discussed in paragraphs 21-28.

Decision proposed: The Executive Council is invited to consider the draft decision referenced as Dec. EC-55/4.1 in the Provisional Action Paper (document IOC/EC-55/AP).

1. In December 2017, building on the efforts of IOC Member States and the IOC Secretariat, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030 (hereafter, the Decade). The Decade is a once in a life-time opportunity to deliver a step-change in the generation and use of ocean science. It will influence how countries invest in and participate in science and innovation to embrace societal goals and align research investment to contribute to common goals including the 2030 Agenda.

2. In accordance with Resolution A/RES/72/73 of the UN General Assembly, and IOC Resolution EC-LI.1, after the preparatory phase of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) reported upon in documents [IOC-XXX/2 Annex 3](#) (2019), [IOC/EC-53/4.1.Doc\(1\)Rev.](#) (2020), and [IOC/A-31/3.7.Doc\(2\)](#) (2021), the period from June 2021 to May 2022 saw continued intense activity related to the implementation of the Ocean Decade.

Decade Actions

3. In June 2021 the first results of the first Call for Decade Actions (No. 01/2020) that solicited close to 250 potential Decade were announced, with other announcements following throughout the period as submissions were analysed and endorsement decisions made. To date, over 170 Decade Actions have been endorsed. This includes 31 global Decade Programmes, 98 Decade projects, and 42 contributions. In addition, 15 Decade Actions led by UN partners have been registered; the Decade Actions led by IOC are described in IOC/INF-1418.

4. Endorsed Actions cover all ten Ocean Decade Challenges and are being implemented by lead partners from over 40 countries. While geographic coverage of the implementation of Decade Actions is broad, gaps remain in leadership by partners from Least Developed Countries, particularly Africa, and Small Island Developing States.

5. The second Call for Decade Actions No. 02/2021 was launched in October 2021 and closed on 31 January 2022. This Call was scoped with the advice of the Interim Decade Advisory Board and aimed to: (i) fill gaps across the Ocean Decade Challenges where fewer Decade Actions had been endorsed; (ii) contribute knowledge to relevant global policy processes; and (iii) solicit new projects and partners for existing endorsed Decade programmes. Call for Decade Actions No. 02/2021 solicited programmes contributing to Ocean Decade Challenges related to marine pollution, ecosystem management and restoration, and the ocean-climate nexus and solicited projects for 25 endorsed Programmes.

6. In addition, Call for Decade Actions No. 02/2021 piloted two sponsored Calls for Decade Actions as a new resource mobilisation mechanism for the Decade. This involved the integration of funding streams from the AXA Research Fund focusing on coastal resilience, and the MeerWissen Initiative for African German Partnerships for marine knowledge funded by Germany and focusing on nature-based solutions in Africa.

7. Thirty-eight (38) Programme submissions and 134 project submissions from lead partners in 33 countries were received in response to this Call. Approximately 70 additional submissions were received in response to the sponsored elements of the Call. The submissions are currently being reviewed, including the consideration of a first set of programme submissions by the Decade Advisory Board, and a first round of endorsement decisions will be announced on World Oceans Day on 8 June 2022.

8. The scope of the third Call for Decade Actions No. 03/2022 was discussed by the Decade Advisory Board and launched on 15 April 2022. This Call is soliciting programmes contributing to Ocean Decade Challenges related to sustainable blue food and sustainable ocean economy, as well as projects for 16 endorsed Decade programmes. This Call also solicits in-kind or financial contributions to support Decade Actions in Africa and Pacific SIDS. Submissions to Call No. 03/2022 close at the end of August 2022 and endorsement decisions will be announced late in 2022 or early 2023.

9. 'Communities of Practice' are groups of endorsed Decade Actions centred around a common thematic or geographic focus. They aim to facilitate collaboration and co-design, and to identify synergies towards common objectives. Each Community of Practice has a dedicated digital space on the Global Stakeholder Forum. Discussions with the Interim Decade Advisory Board led to an initial list of approximately 20 thematic and regional Communities of Practice to provide a platform for exchange and collaboration between endorsed Decade Actions. 2021 saw the formal launch of the first Community of Practice—Coastal Ecosystem and Community Resilience, and four other Communities of Practice related to deep-sea research and management, capacity development, and ocean stressors are now active. As more Decade Actions are endorsed and additional coordination support in the form of Decade Implementing Partners and Decade Collaborative Centres come online, additional Communities of Practice will be launched.

Governance and Coordination Structures

10. Two meetings of the Interim Decade Advisory Board were held during this period, in September and December 2021. These meetings considered and made recommendations on the endorsement of Decade programmes, as well as providing advice on the conceptual framework for monitoring and evaluation for the Decade and commencing preparation of the second Call for Decade Actions No. 02/2021.

11. The IOC Assembly at its 31st session approved the Terms of Reference for the Decade Advisory Board based on Document [IOC-31/3.7.Doc\(1\)](#), including the selection process of its members. Between 5 July and 22 September 2021, a call for nominations was opened for 15 expert members of the Board. Via this process 243 nominations were put forward either by Member States of IOC-UNESCO, United Nations, United Nations entities, or intergovernmental organizations, as well as self-nominations. A Selection Panel was convened by the IOC Executive Secretary and composed of the IOC Chair and IOC Officers representing the five IOC electoral groups. With the technical support of the Decade Coordination Unit, this Panel selected 15 expert members from 13 countries to be members of the Decade Advisory Board.

12. In its evaluation the Panel undertook to ensure that the expert members have sufficient skills, knowledge, influence and impartiality regarding the vision and objectives of the Decade and are able to undertake the work outlined in the terms of reference. Diversity across sectors was a key consideration including a mix of members from the scientific community, the private sector, philanthropy, and government. Expert members were also selected with due consideration to expertise, geographic, generational, and gender balance.

13. In addition to the 15 expert members, UN Legal Counsel/DOALOS, which is the Secretariat and focal point of UN-Oceans and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, will have one permanent seat on the Decade Advisory Board. The IOC Secretariat as coordinator of the Decade will also have a permanent seat on the Board. Three more seats were reserved for UN Agencies. In January 2022, following a process agreed with UN-Oceans that called for Expressions of Interest from UN Agencies for a rotating seat on the Board, the United Nations Environment Programme, World Meteorological Organization, and the International Seabed Authority were all confirmed as UN Agency representatives for 2022.

14. The Decade Advisory Board was convened in January 2022 for an initial briefing session and then met in-person for its first operational meeting in March 2022 ([IOC/2022/ODS/35](#)). At this meeting, the Board discussed recommendations related to the endorsement of Decade programmes from Call for Decade Actions No. 02/2021 and discussed a range of strategic issues related to measuring progress of the Decade, resource mobilization, the role of indigenous and local knowledge in the Decade, and the means of increasing engagement of Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries. A set of rules and procedures for the Board is presented in IOC/INF-1414.

15. The Decade Coordination Unit, located within the IOC-UNESCO Secretariat, continues to grow with a new secondment from France and a staff loan from Fugro. However, significant capacity gaps remain, and a large part of the work is assured by consultants funded through extra-budgetary contributions. Additional support is required to ensure that the Unit is fully staffed, sustained over the Decade duration and able to fully assure its responsibilities.

16. During this period, Expressions of Interest for seven Decade Collaborative Centres and four Decade Implementing Partners were received (IOC/INF-1413). The Decade Collaborative Centres applications are for both thematic and geographical centres. These applications are currently undergoing review including an independent Feasibility Study as per the process set out in [IOC/2021/ODS/23Rev](#). Two of the four Decade Implementing Partners have been approved and the remaining two applications are being reviewed. IOC is proposing to host three Decade Coordination Offices; one focused on observations linked to GOOS, one focused on data linked to IODE, and one regional coordination office in WESTPAC. These structures are described in IOC/INF-1413, together with information on resource needs for their operationalization.

17. Six regional initiatives are convening partners in the development and operationalization of regional Action Plans and programmes. Regional taskforces are active in the Arctic, Pacific, Mediterranean, Southern Ocean, Western Tropical Atlantic, and West Pacific. An African regional taskforce is being established to oversee implementation of the Ocean Decade [Africa Roadmap](#) that was launched in May 2022 at the African Conference on priority setting and partnership development for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development hosted by the Government of Egypt.

18. Twenty-seven (27) National Decade Committees have been created and are essential voluntary structures that convene national stakeholders, identify national priorities, catalyze future Decade Actions, and mobilize national resources for the Decade. There are fewer National Decade Committees in LDCs and SIDS and discussions are underway with more established Committees to see how they could play a mentorship or support role to encourage the creation of new Committees in these regions. Forty-one (41) Member States responded to a survey gathering information about their Ocean Decade related actions. Of the Member States who replied, 23 already have a National Decade Committee and 8 indicated that they had not yet created a National Decade Committee but intended to do so. 88% stated that they have been actively communicating about the Decade, 68% have carried out initiatives related to the Ocean Decade, and 88% have catalysed new Decade Actions, with 40% helping Actions connect with others. Approximately half of the respondents have supported resource mobilization for the Decade and 45% said that they have had discussions with National Decade Committees and regional taskforces. Despite these efforts, over half the respondents indicated that the Decade is little known at the national level.

19. Meetings of informal working groups on communications, technology and innovation, and monitoring and evaluation provided valuable input during this period. A Data Coordination Group was established as part of the Data Coordination Platform in December 2021 to support development and operationalization of the data, information, and knowledge strategy for the Decade. An Industrial Ocean Data Group is being established as part of the Platform and is expected to be operational in the second half of 2022. A private sector taskforce has been established to support the development of a strategic approach for engagement with industry partners and to identify new opportunities for in-kind and financial support, as well as to engage industry as active players in the co-design of Decade Actions.

20. An Ocean Decade Expert Roster has been established to create a pool of experts to assist the IOC Secretariat with the identification of strategic targets for Ocean Decade Challenges, in the review of Decade programme submissions, and in regular review processes of the Decade, such as the foreseen Second International Ocean Decade Conference to be held in 2023/2024.

Resource Mobilization & Financial Implications

21. The following Member States/organizations have made specific financial contributions to support Decade coordination activities during this period: Belgium, Canada, France, Japan, India, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Research Council of Norway, Sweden and REV-Ocean.

22. Mobilization of in-kind and financial resources remains a key challenge for the successful implementation of the Decade. Resources are needed for coordination costs as the central (i.e. Decade Coordination Unit) and decentralized levels (i.e., Decade Coordination Offices and Decade Collaborative Centres), as well as for Decade Actions, both endorsed and future Decade Actions. IOC/INF-1419 describes the current resource needs of Decade Actions.

23. The [Ocean Decade Alliance](#) has grown during this period and now numbers 9 Patrons and 15 institutional members. Alliance Sherpas meet regularly and are developing a workplan for the Alliance and prepare for strong visibility of this group during the UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon (June 2022).

24. In addition to the sponsored elements included in the Call for Decade Actions No. 02/2021, four sponsored Calls have been developed with ArcticNet, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, JPI Oceans, and the Western Australian Government. Combined close to USD 15 million has been leveraged for Decade Actions via this mechanism which has proved effective with both funders and proponents of Decade Actions. Future sponsored Calls for Decade Actions are in the early stages of discussion, including Calls that could provide a pooled and blended funding opportunity for several partners focusing on a specific theme or geography.

25. There have been significant efforts to engage philanthropic Foundations during this period, and an in-person meeting of the Foundations Dialogue is planned for 1–3 June 2022 in Rabat, Morocco, hosted by the Foundation Mohamed VI for the Protection of the Environment. This event will mobilize approximately 20 grant-making Foundations and will facilitate discussions around new funding opportunities as well as the role of philanthropy in co-design and the science-policy interface.

26. Discussions at the Decade Advisory Board led to recommendations to increase engagement with multilateral development banks, international financing instruments and to develop and implement a more systematic resource mobilization strategy with Member States.

27. To maintain the current momentum and level of activity, additional financial or in-kind resources are urgently required to allow the full resourcing and operation of the Decade Coordination Unit (IOC/INF-1418). Significant mobilization of resources will also be required to support Decade Actions; an updated resource needs assessment for Decade Actions is reported in IOC/INF-1419.

Stakeholder Engagement, Communications and Outreach

28. Engagement with United Nations partners continued throughout this period via participation in regular meetings of UN Oceans and participation in a UN Oceans side event at UNFCCC COP-26 (Glasgow, November 2021). As noted, three UN entities (UNEP, ISA and WMO) are members of the Board in 2022. Increased engagement with UN entities will be a focus of efforts in the next period.

29. A proposed framework to support engagement with indigenous and local knowledge holders is currently being discussed with interested partners, stakeholders, and rights holders. This framework includes the development of a network-of-networks approach and a dedicated community of practice. It also proposes key guiding principles for ethical engagement with Indigenous peoples and local communities throughout the Ocean Decade. National Decade Committees have been involved in these dialogues and will play an important role in supporting this initiative. The network will promote opportunities to elevate the voices of indigenous peoples' and issues with respect to the ocean at various global and regional events and will support synergies with other UN Decades, such as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022–2032.

30. Strong engagement of Early Career Ocean Professionals continues throughout the Decade. The IOC-UNESCO supports a full-time coordinator of the ECOP Decade Programme. Regional nodes have been developed in Africa and Asia and ECOP-focused training courses have been delivered in response to priority needs identified in a global ECOP survey carried out in 2019.

31. There were intensive stakeholder engagement and outreach efforts during this period. In-person or hybrid events focusing on different aspects of the Ocean Decade were held at the IUCN World Conservation Congress (Marseille, September 2021), UNFCCC COP-26 (Glasgow, November 2021), and Monaco Ocean Week (Monaco, March 2022). The Ocean Decade had a central role in the One Ocean Summit in Brest, February 2022. A commitment made by IOC-UNESCO in the context of the Our Ocean Conference (Palau, April 2022) focused on the convening of new partnerships and resources to support implementation of the Ocean Decade in the Pacific SIDS region. The virtual Ocean Decade Laboratory series, supported by Germany as part of the First International Ocean Decade Conference will be completed in early June, and reported at the 2022 UN Ocean Conference (Lisbon, June 2022).

32. In October 2021, IOC-UNESCO launched a new website www.oceandecade.org. Dedicated sections on news, events and resources are regularly updated by a web editor to ensure the widespread promotion of all activities. Table 1 provides information on website use.

Table 1. Website analytics for the period 1 January 2021–22 April 2022

Unique users	Page views	Average session duration	Countries and territories
159,000	539,506	±1min52	233

Source: IOC-UNESCO

33. In parallel an interactive online platform called the Global Stakeholder Forum was launched (forum.oceandecade.org), supported by a full-time community manager. The Global Stakeholder Forum enables people from around the world, across multiple demographics, to engage actively with the Ocean Decade, and has attracted 4,060 users across 139 countries as of April 2022. It serves as the portal for submissions to the Calls for Decade Actions and requests to endorse Decade Contributions and Activities. It also provides a digital home for Communities of Practice, National Decade Committees, informal working groups, as well as other Decade stakeholder groups.

34. During the first 18 months of implementation, the Decade attracted more than 22,500 followers on social media, ranging from science, governments and the private sector to philanthropists and citizens as shown in Table 2. Five media partnerships were also finalised and are resulting in global online and written press coverage for the Ocean Decade.

Table 2: Social media analytics as of 22 April 2022

	Twitter	Facebook	LinkedIn	Instagram
Followers	8,842	2,565	7,633	3,914
Interactions (engagement + clicks)	44,110	26,510	68,022	N/A

Source: IOC-UNESCO

35. The GenOcean communications campaign was launched on 4 April 2022 and is the public facing communications campaign of the Decade. The campaign is organized around three pillars: Action, People, Science. Featuring stories of individuals from different backgrounds and the ways in

which they are taking action for the ocean, GenOcean will use storytelling to grow awareness in the general public around ocean issues and inspire behaviour change rooted in scientific knowledge and research. Since the launch in April 2022, the campaign has attracted nearly 7,000 followers across different social media platforms.

Future Perspectives, Challenges and Perspectives

36. The 2022 UN Ocean Conference (Lisbon, 27 June–1 July 2022) will be a major platform to increase engagement of partners in the Ocean Decade, showcase Decade Actions, and make new announcements and commitments. Several events are planned throughout the week including a high-level meeting of the Ocean Decade Alliance that will be co-hosted by the Presidents of Portugal and Kenya. The UNFCCC COP-27 (Sharm el Sheikh, November 2022) will be another key event at which the Ocean Decade will be present to highlight ocean-climate challenges and solutions in Africa and to create a link to the discussions at the Africa Regional Priority Setting Conference (Cairo, May 2022) on priority needs for Africa in the context of the Ocean Decade. Planning for the Second International Ocean Decade Conference will commence in the next period, with this major international conference planned for 2023 or 2024. Expressions of Interest are currently being sought from Member States to host this event.

37. In coming months, the Decade Coordination Unit will commence a process of working with members of the Ocean Decade Expert Roster to progressively set strategic ambitions and targets for each of the Ocean Decade Challenges. The monitoring and evaluation framework for the Decade is being completed following discussions at the Decade Advisory Board and will be piloted with Decade Actions from July onwards.

38. The next year will also see a continued focus on resource mobilization, noting the discussions at the Decade Advisory Board on the need to have strategic engagement with multilateral development banks and Member States. Work will continue to build out the Ocean Decade Alliance, Foundations Dialogue, and private sector taskforce. Resource mobilization will include a focus on supporting IOC engagement in the Decade, including IOC-led DCOs and Decade Actions, and will aim to catalyse new support to coordination needs and Decade Actions in Africa and Pacific SIDS.