**Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission**

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**Thirty-first Session   
of the Assembly**

14–25 June-2021(online)

**UNESCO**

* + 1. Harmful Algal Blooms: 15th Session of IPHAB, 23–25 March 2021

1. Mr Joe Silke, Chair of the IOC Intergovernmental Panel on Harmful Algal Blooms (IPHAB), presented the main outputs of the 15th session of the Panel. The Panel took eight decisions and endorsed two recommendations for the consideration of the Assembly at its 31st session. The decisions concern: (i) Regional HAB Programme Development taking into account the difference of support for the various groups and networks depending on whether they are affiliated to a regional IOC subsidiary body or not; (ii) the continuation of the Task Team on the Early Detection, Warning and Forecasting of HAB Events with new terms of reference; (iii) the continuation of the Task Team on the development of the Harmful algal Information System and a periodic Global Harmful Algal Bloom Status Report with new terms of reference; (iv) the continuation of the Task Team on a Global Inter-Agency Ciguatera Strategy for Improved Research and Management with new terms of reference; (v) the continuation of the Task Team on Harmful Algae and Desalination of Seawater to assess and explore the feasibility of a joint FAO-IOC food safety risk assessment (or what available data allow) for toxins in drinking water coming from desalination plants; (vi) the continuation of the Task Team on Biotoxin Monitoring, Management and Regulations with new terms of reference; (vii) the continuation of the Task Team on Algal Taxonomy with new terms of reference; and (viii) the continuation of the Task Team on Harmful Algae and Fish Kills with new terms of reference and renamed to Task Team on Fish Killing Microalgae and Ecosystem Effects.
2. In addition to the above, the Intergovernmental Panel submitted to the Assembly its planned intersessional activities in the form of a workplan and budget for the IOC HAB Programme 2022–2023 and recommended to it the continuation of IPHAB as a major technical subsidiary body with unchanged terms of reference.
3. The Chair of IPHAB informed the Assembly that the Memorandum of Understanding between FAO, IAEA, IOC and WHO on Ciguatera Poisoning, presented to the 30th session of the Assembly as IOC-XXX/Inf.4, and subsequently approved by the UNESCO’s Executive Board, has not yet been signed due to delays caused by organization changes in WHO.
4. The Assembly was informed that Dr Joe Silke (Ireland) was re-elected as Chair and Dr Alexandra Silva (Portugal) was re-elected as Vice-Chair.
5. Finally, he drew the attention of the Assembly to the interest of FAO to investigate the possibility of returning as a cosponsor of IPHAB as set out in IOC Assembly Resolution XVI-4.
6. The representatives of 13 Member States took the floor.
7. The Assembly acknowledged that the activities under IPHAB provide a valuable resource to the global HAB community including pathways to improve management of HAB impacts.
8. The Assembly noted that the activities, initiatives and programmes of IPHAB are enhancing research on HAB especially in relation to how HAB occurrences may respond to climate change and that this understanding is of key importance in relation to fishery resources, as well as the development of HAB management capacity.
9. The Assembly stressed (i) the importance of early warning systems as of critical importance to HAB affected member states; (ii) the importance of sharing of data in HEADAT and OBIS, as the source of information for all around the world involved in research or management of HAB’s; (iii) and that the coordinated activities on Ciguatera are important as Ciguatera may have an increasing impact on world food supply and fishery resources.
10. The Assembly noted the importance of the role of national IPHAB representatives and urged that they be reactivated if not active and that they keep close contact with their IOC national focal points to share information.
11. The Assembly acknowledged the value and importance of regional activities on HAB in particular for capacity enhancement and noted that HAB’s continues to impact society at a level of concern to governments and the public. Several Member States referred to *Sargassum* as a challenge and as a high priority to address together with the risk HAB poses for people living on the coast and being dependent on seafood.
12. The Assembly took positive note of the interest of the FAO to investigate the possibility of returning as co-sponsor of IPHAB.
13. The following Member States chose to provide records of their plenary intervention on this agenda item for the informational annex to the meeting report: [Chile](#Chil_343), [Colombia](#Col_343), [Côte d’Ivoire](#Cotdiv_343), [Italy](#Italy_343), [Japan](#Jap_343), [Malaysia](#Malay_343), [Spain](#Spain_343), [Thailand](#Thai_343), [United Kingdom](#UK_343).
14. The Assembly adopted IOC Decision A-31/3.4.3.

# Harmful Algal Blooms

The Assembly,

Having considered the Executive Summary Report of the 15th online session (23–25 March 2021) of the IOC Intergovernmental Panel on Harmful Algal Blooms (IPHAB),

Endorses the Executive Summary Report of IPHAB-XIV and the recommendations contained therein (IOC/IPHAB-XV/3s);

Takes note of the information related to the status of the FAO-WHO-IAEA-IOC Memorandum of Understanding of Ciguatera Poisoning, and commends cooperation between the four UN organizations in this area;

Agrees that the regular budget for these activities will be identified as part of the Resolution on Governance, Programming and Budgeting Matters of the Commission (IOC Resolution A-31/2).