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**INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION**  
(of UNESCO)

**Thirty-second Session of the Assembly**  
UNESCO, 21–30 June 2023

Item 4.6 of the Provisional Agenda

**IOC CONTRIBUTIONS TO UN GOVERNANCE PROCESSES**

Summary

This document provides information on outcomes and contribution of IOC to a number of UN processes relevant to ocean affairs that took place during the intersessional period. These are the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Conference for an International Legally Binding Instrument (ILBI) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ); and the 2022 UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, and plans for the 2025 UN Ocean Conference.

Decision proposed: The Assembly is requested to take note of these developments and further encourage IOC Member States to engage in these intergovernmental fora, highlighting the role of ocean science and contribution of IOC. The draft decision on this item is referenced as Dec. A-32/4.6 in the Provisional Action Paper (IOC/A-32/AP Prov.).

## Introduction

1. IOC enjoys a recognized role in the UN system, in accordance with its Statutes. As a competent international organization in the fields of Marine Scientific Research and Transfer of Marine Technology, IOC contributes to various UNCLOS processes, including the recently agreed international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction known as BBNJ, which is now awaiting the start of a process which should culminate by this Agreement entering into force.
2. The IOC also contributes to major UN global agreements and frameworks including: the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular the stand-alone Goal 14 on the ocean, also acting as a custodian UN agency for reporting on SDG Targets 14.3 and 14.a; the UNFCCC Paris Agreement by advocating for the increasing role of the ocean; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the SIDS SAMOA Pathway.
3. Building on the guidance of Member States, IOC plays a pivotal role in these processes in bringing together the scientific communities, the governmental decision-making system, and a broader set of stakeholders within our Member States, including the private sector and the civil society, to generate authoritative knowledge and develop efficient, science-based integrated ocean management and corresponding solutions.

## UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

4. IOC took part actively in the UN Climate Change Conferences in Glasgow (COP-26) and Sharm el Sheikh (COP-27), which brought together world leaders and over 40,000 registered participants at each Conference. The outcome of COP-26 - the Glasgow Climate Pact - is the fruit of intense negotiations among almost 200 countries over the two weeks, strenuous formal and informal work over many months, and constant engagement both in-person and virtually for nearly two years.
5. Specifically relevant to the Ocean-climate nexus, Article 60 of the final decision (1/CP.26) the Glasgow Conference invites the relevant work programmes and constituted bodies under the UNFCCC to consider how to integrate and strengthen ocean-based actions in their existing mandates and workplans. Article 61 introduces the organization of an annual “ocean-climate” dialogue held by the Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice, known as the SBSTA, from June 2022. IOC Executive Secretary has since taken part in the 2022 and 2023 Ocean Climate Dialogue as a keynote speaker.
6. At COP-27, the ocean community was strongly mobilised and for the 1<sup>st</sup> time hosted a dedicated Ocean Pavilion, (a first ever in the Blue Zone), thanks to the leadership of some 20 scientific institutions including IOC and the organisation of more than 300 ocean-related events. IOC supported and was the main organizer of a multitude of events informing about strategies to combat ocean acidification, reduce ocean deoxygenation, the importance of coastal blue carbon ecosystems and of course the role of the Ocean Decade in facilitating the science required to reduce climate and ocean change. Several declarations have also reinforced the recognition of the fundamental role of the ocean in the climate system and the need to consider it as our best ally in the fight against climate change. Worth highlighting, the COP-27 final declaration and decisions regarding the implementation of ocean-based climate solutions “*encourages Parties to consider, as appropriate, ocean-based action in their national climate goals and in the implementation of these goals, including but not limited to nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies and adaptation communications;*” (Article 46). The final decision also recognizes the “*need to address existing gaps in the global climate observing system*” (Article 26), and “*to address systematic observation gaps, particularly in developing countries and for ocean, mountain, desert and polar regions and the cryosphere in order to improve understanding*”

*of climate change, climate-related risks and tipping points, and adaptation limits and to ensure enhanced delivery of climate services and early warning systems.”*

7. As IOC continues to engage in future COPs and Ocean-Climate Dialogue meetings under the UNFCCC, it is proposed that key messages conveyed by the IOC Secretariat and its Member States focuses on:

- (i) Increasing the global recognition that a healthy and productive ocean is a key source of solutions both for climate mitigation and adaptation, and that rigorous and immediate action, based on ocean science and observation, needs to be scaled-up to preserve marine ecosystems, ensure resilient aquatic food production and support adaptation and resilience-building for coastal communities;
- (ii) Scaling up investment into ocean observing and research of ocean change to inform local & regional adaptation mechanisms to a rapidly changing ocean; including the conservation and restoration of carbon rich ecosystems, the safe implementation of ocean carbon dioxide removal technologies; and climate smart ocean management for supporting sustainable development and protecting ocean life and those that depend on it, in line with the objectives of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030).

8. IOC also continues its support to the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action (MP-GCA), which aims to strengthen collaboration between governments and key stakeholders to immediately lower emissions and increase resilience against climate impacts. Within the focus area on Ocean and Coastal Zones, IOC is part of the Core Group and acts as a Special Advisor on science. The Core Group brings together the Sector co-leads and Special Advisors on Finance, Governance and Science (cross-cutting). MP-GCA continues the organization of the very successful Action Days, including the Ocean Action Day.

### **Contribution to the International Legally Binding Instrument (ILBI) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ)**

9. In its resolution 72/249 of 24 December 2017, the UN General Assembly decided to convene an Intergovernmental Conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, with a view to developing the instrument as soon as possible. The first session was convened from 4 to 17 September 2018, the second session from 25 March to 5 April 2019 and the third session from 19 to 30 August 2019. The fourth session, which was postponed by decisions 74/543 and 75/570 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, was convened from 7 to 18 March 2022. A fifth session of the Conference was convened from 15 to 26 August 2022 and extended to another session from 20 February to 4 March, whereby UN Member States finally agreed on a draft text for the ‘High Seas’ treaty. This agreement covers a range of issues, including marine genetic resources, environmental impact assessments, area-based management tools, and capacity building and technology transfer. Once the Agreement is formally adopted by the UNGA in June 2023, a process of ratification will start and will require the ratification of 60 Member States before the Treaty can enter into force.

10. Importantly for the Commission, the final agreed text of the Agreement makes reference to the possible cooperation with UNESCO-IOC in the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism to be created under the auspices of the new treaty potentially opening a pathway for deploying IOC’s tested, and fully operational platforms and programmes in capacity development and transfer of marine technology for the benefit of all countries. Given that IOC possesses recognized technical expertise in several areas of relevance to the BBNJ Agreement, further discussion will be required with Member States and the future Secretariat of the Treaty (undefined at this stage) to identify and develop further collaborative approach so that the IOC can contribute

scientific and technical inputs in the operationalization and implementation of the Agreement, in accordance with its mandate.

11. Key message to be further conveyed will highlight that:

- **IOC possesses recognised technical expertise in several areas of relevance to the BBNJ agreement**, from the coordination of international ocean science processes, the collecting, processing, and exchange of ocean data and information relevant to BBNJ stakeholders (governments, scientific experts,), the assessment of national and regional capacities in ocean science (through the IOC *Global Ocean Science Report*), the collection of information on capacity development opportunities provided by Member States, and the design/implementation of the tailored capacity development initiatives and regional collaborative approaches in ocean science, to name a few.
- IOC as a competent international organization in the fields of Marine Scientific Research (Part XIII) and Transfer of Marine Technology (TMT) (Part XIV) of UNCLOS has the **capacity to serve other UN mechanisms through the provision of scientific and technical advice.**

### **Contribution to the 2022 and planned 2025 UN Ocean Conferences**

12. The 2022 UN Ocean Conference took place in Lisbon from 27 June to 1 July 2022. The central theme of the Conference was “Scaling up Ocean Action based on science and innovation for the period 2020–2030: stocktaking, partnerships and solutions”. The Conference also provided inputs to the review of SDG 14 by the High-Level Policy Forum that met in July 2022.

13. IOC directly supported the conference by leading the preparation of concept papers of Interactive Dialogue #4 (Ocean acidification) and #6 (scientific research). The Conference adopted the “Lisbon Declaration” which has been negotiated by UN Member States which *inter alia* recognised *the importance of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) and its vision to achieve the science we need for the ocean we want and expresses full support for the work of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO in implementing the Decade and commit to supporting these efforts.* Finally, IOC led the organisation with other partners of several high-level events related to the Decade, as well as IOC programmatic areas.

14. Plans for the 2025 UN Ocean Conference to be hosted by France and Costa Rica are well under way. The Conference will take place in Nice from 9 to 13 June 2025 and will be preceded by a three-day Ocean Science Conference. IOC has been invited to join the organising committee of the science conference and will be working to align the 2025 events with the Ocean Decade process, in particular the outcomes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Ocean Decade Conference (Barcelona, Spain, 10–12 April 2024), and the Decade Vision 2030 process. IOC will also contribute to the development of concept papers for the main thematic segments of the UN conference.

### **Contribution to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Third Cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of Marine Environment and World Ocean Assessment**

15. IOC continues to provide scientific and technical support to the World Ocean Assessment (WOA) process established under the UNGA. A third cycle of assessment (2021–2025) was initiated under the UN Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects. In accordance with the programme of work for the third cycle, one of the outputs of the third cycle will be the production of one or more assessments of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects. In addition, the Regular Process will provide support for other ocean-related intergovernmental processes which may include a series of policy briefs for policymakers tailored to each process. In this context, a

dedicated brief highlighting synergies between the Regular Process and the Ocean Decade was produced.

16. A meeting of the Regular Process Group of Expert, UN DOALOS and IOC Secretariats took place in March 2023 to further discuss how the work of IOC and the Decade could support the implementation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of the Regular Process. Identified areas of cooperation include:

- Provision of technical inputs from IOC programmes (data, information, knowledge products) to the preparation of the WOA chapters. For e.g. for WOA-2, the Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS) programme contributed to two chapters of WOA-2 by providing statistics on the trends in marine biota as well as the state of biodiversity in marine habitats;
- Development of a coherent capacity-building programme with the aim of strengthening the ocean science-policy interface at national, regional and global levels. A joint Symposium on this topic organized by IOC and UN DOALOS will take place on 12–13 December 2023 at the UNESCO Headquarters, and IOC will also identify scientific experts to participate in the Regular Process regional workshops taking place in 2023.
- Technical review of WOA chapters where relevant;
- Organization of joint events to communicate about the WOA, IOC State of the Ocean Report (StOR) and importance of strengthening the science/policy interface, highlighting the complementarity between the Regular Process and the Ocean Decade. For example, the Barcelona Decade conference will provide an opportunity to organize such events.

### **Convention on Biological Diversity – New Global Biodiversity Framework**

17. The Convention on Biological Diversity prepared the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) negotiations which was eventually adopted at the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties of Convention on Biological Diversity in December 2022 in Montreal (Canada). Prior to this, the Open-ended Working Group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (WG2020) published document CBD/WG2020/3/INF/4 providing information on marine and coastal indicators, and listed several potential contributions from IOC. In particular the role of a global marine biodiversity observing system based on the Essential Ocean Variables, which is coordinated through the Biology and Ecosystems Panel of the Global Ocean Observing System could have a prominent role in supporting Goal A of the proposed framework - Ecosystem Integrity collaborating with the Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS), the Marine Biodiversity Observation Network (MBON) of GEO BON, and the new UN System of Environmental Economics Accounting (SEEA) Ecosystem Assessment (EA) working group on Indicators.

18. On 19 January 2022, IOC participated and presented on those IOC contributions at a CBD webinar (online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgNXEbG56Aw>). After two and a half years of virtual discussions, the CBD was finally able to reconvene its Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) and WG2020 for face-to-face discussions in Geneva. The Geneva Biodiversity Conference (13–29 March 2022) was held to prepare the foundations for the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. At the Geneva meeting, UNESCO provided a statement reconfirming that OBIS is well positioned to support the development of statistics related to the proposed marine headline indicators and that the IOC's Capacity Development Strategy may also be of assistance, as well as the Ocean InfoHub and the Ocean Data and Information System.

19. At COP-15 in December 2022, the IOC in its role as coordinator of the Ocean, held COP-15's flagship half-day ocean event: 'An Ocean of Life' on 16 December 2022, bringing together

key voices in a high-level dialogue on the science and policy solutions required to halt ocean biodiversity loss. Opened by UNESCO's Director-General, the event highlighted the importance of protecting and sustainably managing marine and coastal biodiversity to achieve a future more sustainable world. It also explored the role of the Ocean Decade to generate the science and knowledge that is the basis for action to address the marine biodiversity crisis.

20. The adoption of the new Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP-15) of the Convention on Biological Diversity is a key development. The Framework is divided into four overall goals and 23 targets for the protection of the world's biodiversity. The most emblematic of these (Target 3), "at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas..."<sup>1</sup> by 2030, when the current areas under protection respectively account for 17 and 8%. Several other targets are relevant to the work of IOC and the Ocean Decade, in areas of ocean science, biodiversity assessment, ocean observation and data management, marine spatial planning and capacity development to name a few.

21. In order to operationalize the monitoring framework for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Conference of the Parties, in [decision 15/5](#), established an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Indicators for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. It is composed of 45 experts and 15 observers that include UNESCO-IOC.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities including over their traditional territories.* (Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Target 3).