



INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

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Items 5.2 and 5.4 of the Provisional Agenda

**ACTION PLAN
IN RESPONSE TO THE IOS EVALUATION OF THE IOC STRATEGIC POSITIONING
UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION**

Summary

In September 2021, UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service published *The Evaluation of the Strategic Positioning of IOC-UNESCO—IOS/EVS/PI/197* (the Evaluation). The Evaluation included a set of six recommendations and suggested actions. Its key findings and the management response were presented to the UNESCO Executive Board at its 212th session ([212 EX/9](#)).

The first Draft Action Plan was presented to the IOC Executive Council at its 55th session in June 2022 as document IOC/EC-55/3.2Doc.(1). Following the positive review by the IOC Executive Council and consultation of Member States through IOC Circular Letter [2912](#), the Action Plan (IOC/A-32/6.3.Doc(1)), including updates on progress where relevant, was reviewed by the IOC Assembly at its 32nd session in June 2023. Through IOC Resolution A-32/4, the Assembly requested the IOC Executive Secretary to '*move forward with its implementation considering the IOC's evolving situation, including the resources available, proposing adjustments accordingly and reporting on progress both to IOC and UNESCO Governing Bodies*'.

This document provides an update on the Action Plan implementation presented to the IOC Assembly in 2023, in line with Member States' guidance.

Decision proposed: After introduction and discussion in plenary under item 5, the Executive Council is invited to take note of this document and consider the draft decision referenced as Dec. IOC/EC-57/5.2 in the Provisional Action Paper (document IOC/EC-57/AP). The document will then be subject to an in-depth review by the sessional statutory open-ended Financial Committee and the decision reflected in the Draft Resolution that the Financial Committee will be submitting to the Executive Council for adoption under item 5.4 in accordance with paragraph 15 of the Draft Revised Guidelines for the Preparation and Consideration of Draft Resolutions ([IOC/INF-1315](#)).

Sustainable Ocean Management – what is emerging and what is needed?

1. The recommendations and proposed implementation actions for IOC in this report have been formulated against the background challenge of how best to protect the central role of the ocean in conserving human and planetary health, address climate change, ensure food security, and provide local jobs and underpinning sustainable economic development. The challenge includes how best to enhance science-based ocean policies and management in order to balance the utilisation of the ocean as the valuable resource that it is, while mitigating climate change, preserving biodiversity and regenerating ocean health.

2. A more sustainable management of the ocean is increasingly seen as a multidimensional endeavour involving three key goals: effective protection, sustainable production and equitable prosperity. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and, more recently, the 2030 Agenda both recognise this dual vision of conservation and sustainable use and the role of the ocean in sustainable development. In this vision, the dichotomy between a ‘conservation philosophy’ and an ‘extractive approach’ is transcended. Rather than seeing economic development and environmental protection as irreconcilable, the vision comprises proactively managing human activities to use the ocean wisely rather than using it up. Recent international initiatives such as the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy have further advanced this concept around five building blocks that address a more holistic and knowledge-based view of the ocean, namely: (i) using data to drive decision making; (ii) engaging in goal-oriented ocean planning; (iii) de-risking finance and using innovation to mobilise investment; (iv) stopping land-based pollution; and (v) changing ocean accounting so that it reflects the true value of the ocean¹. All of these, and especially three of them represent major opportunities for IOC.

3. Firstly, it is important that the power of science and data is fully utilised to achieve optimal sustainable ocean management and to influence policy- and decision-making related to other facets of sustainable development, e.g. food security or climate action. Appropriate and robust data driving decision-making has the potential to transform the ocean economy, but there are several barriers that need to be overcome in order to realise this transformation. As it stands, data collection is often dispersed and expensive, with data fragmented across national, corporate, and academic domains, and the usability of and access to data being limited. To ensure that ocean management is adequately supported by science, observations and data, interoperable global networks need to be created and improved upon, providing broad and automated access to ocean data, information and knowledge. This is an end to which IOC is ideally placed to facilitate.

4. Secondly, engaging in goal-oriented ocean planning is also viewed by governments as a key underpinning of how to sustainably manage the ocean. This is because uncoordinated ocean development creates operational inefficiencies, conflicts over use and environmental degradation that undermines future productivity. Difficulties in achieving widespread uptake of goal-oriented planning stem from failure to engage all users, resulting in inefficient processes and a lack of buy-in and implementation. IOC could help to address this need, being well-positioned to both involve numerous ocean stakeholders and promote the importance of science-based, inclusive, and participatory processes.

5. Finally, sustainable ocean management requires the accurate measurement of the value of the ocean. Traditional measures of the economy, such as GDP, are not suited to valuing natural resources and taking account of associated externalities and inequities. IOC is well placed to provide data, information and knowledge that could contribute to the development of more comprehensive

¹ The High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy brought together 14 Heads of State ‘to build momentum for a sustainable ocean economy in which effective protection, sustainable production, and equitable prosperity go hand in hand. The Panel’s vision was set out in Stuchtey et al. (2020) “Ocean Solutions That Benefit People, Nature and the Economy”, available at: [Ocean Solutions Report | High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy \(oceanpanel.org\)](https://oceanpanel.org).

measures, considering the ocean's broader value, including measurements of infrastructure assets, natural assets, and indicators of benefits to people.

6. The Evaluation describes opportunities and challenges for IOC, as shortly summarized below.

Opportunities and challenges for IOC

7. IOC is already a central pillar in the global system of ocean conservation, sustainable use and governance². It is the leading coordinating mechanism of oceanographic data and information in global climate change monitoring and evaluation, the global coordinator of early warning systems for tsunamis worldwide, and a major player in Marine Spatial Planning. It provides the global scientific basis required to understand and improve management of the ocean, coasts and marine ecosystems. IOC provides its Member States with a forum to discuss ocean science priorities and address ocean health, wealth and wellbeing collectively. It also provides a focus on issues related to science, observations, data, and capacity development for other United Nations bodies that are working in the ocean space. Since 2018, it has also been the UN entity tasked with the preparation and implementation of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Yet despite the critical role it plays, IOC's current profile and resources are not adequate for the task.

Opportunities

8. Given the emerging consensus on what a more sustainable management of the ocean might look like, there are clear opportunities for IOC to support this emerging vision.

9. Firstly, the IOC successfully delivered the Implementation Plan for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, as tasked by the UN General Assembly. The concept received strong support across Member States and associated discussions were uncontroversial. The inception of the Ocean Decade can therefore be seen as an invitation to future action and as a platform for further engagement with government policymakers at the highest level. It represents an important opportunity for IOC to make the voice of ocean science heard across the UN System and indeed more broadly with new stakeholder groups including industry, civil society and philanthropy. It also represents a framework for increasing the resource-base of ocean science within IOC and in its Member States.

10. Secondly, the agreement reached amongst UN Member States in March 2023 for an international legally-binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. (BBNJ) is a second opportunity. The agreement covers a range of issues, including marine genetic resources, environmental impact assessments, area-based management tools, and capacity building and technology transfer. Importantly for the Commission, the final agreed text of the Agreement makes reference to the possible cooperation with IOC/UNESCO 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 recognised technical expertise in several areas of relevance to the BBNJ agreement particularly capacity development and data sharing, this represents another important opportunity for IOC to make a strategic contribution within the UN System and more would be possible with adequate resources.

11. Thirdly, the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy (Ocean Panel) is also an opportunity for IOC. The Ocean Panel was initiated by 14 States with the aim of developing policy initiatives outside of the standard UN process. The overarching goal of the Ocean Panel, which is

² Its specific competence in the areas of Marine Scientific Research and Transfer of Marine Technology are recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and referenced in several outcomes of UN Sustainable Development Conferences as well as in the Sustainable Development Goals.

organised around the five themes of health, wealth, finance, equity, and knowledge and which now numbers 17 members, is to develop stronger links between science, policy and concrete actions. The Ocean Panel is working towards an approach that proposes Sustainable Ocean Plans (SOP) for the Exclusive Economic Zones of Ocean Panel member States by 2025 and aims to urge all coastal and ocean States to join this commitment so that by 2030 all ocean areas under national jurisdictions are covered. In December 2021, a multi-partner Action Coalition borne out of the Ocean Panel, where IOC is an active contributor, released a guidance document on SOP, which addresses the interplay between science, planning and finance.

12. With strong links between SOP and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), where IOC already has a unique track record, there are excellent opportunities for the IOC to partner with the Ocean Panel, including e.g. developing and leading a global Decade programme to meet the Panel's ambition for Sustainable Ocean Planning. By building partnerships with third party organizations (because it cannot do everything itself), IOC could help coordinate knowledge for the Ocean Panel and support expansion of the work of the Ocean Panel beyond the 17heads of States' EEZs to other parts of the ocean (potentially including the areas beyond national jurisdictions as well). This could also bring with it revenue-generating opportunities.

13. Fourthly, IOC could support improved quantification and monitoring of the impact of human activities on the ocean. This could e.g. be done by using the concept of Essential Ocean Variables (EOV) and fostering the development of a set of human-centred EOVs within the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) by 2030. Again, the IOC could be an excellent lead for such an activity showing leadership and consolidating human-related knowledge of the ocean into indicators that can guide sustainable ocean policies. The pilot edition of the State of the Ocean Report being developed in 2022 could provide an authoritative knowledge product to communicate the result of this work to Member States as well as relevant UN processes such as the third and future cycles of the UN World Ocean Assessment.

14. Fifthly, IOC has an opportunity to do more in the area of global ocean partnerships to account for natural capital. The value of IOC's work on Marine Spatial Planning is now increasingly formally recognised. An example is the Roadmap to Integrate Clean Offshore Renewable Energy into Climate-smart Marine Spatial Planning that was launched at the Glasgow CoP-26 in November 2021, under the auspices of UN Global Compact, the Global Wind Energy Council and IOC.

Challenges

15. One fundamental challenge is that, in most countries, ocean science, and its interface with policy, lacks a common and core departmental champion as ocean issues have historically tended to be dispersed across numerous government ministries or departments. By contrast, other UN System organizations such as FAO, IMO and WMO have clear mandates with clear constituencies at national levels. FAO engages with Ministries of Agriculture and Fisheries, IMO with Ministries of Transport and WMO with Meteorological Services. These Ministries tend to have significant budgets which allow them to finance UN System organizations.

16. The absence of a clear counterpart in national governments directly undermines the Commission's ability to access senior policymakers and associated funding streams. Related to this, many Member State representatives have a specific focus on particular aspects of the "ocean value chain", such as data and observations, science, or ocean hazards. Such compartmentalisation, while bringing strong ownership and technical expertise, sometimes creates a constraint on the Commission operating optimally.

17. For its part IOC needs to more effectively demonstrate to its Member States the value of ocean science for sustainable development and the value it can provide by fostering the ocean science that is needed for this objective. The Commission's niche is that it provides an international coordination mechanism to encourage and enable the generation of science-based knowledge that can be used for political decision-making. However, it is not alone in this niche.

18. Over time the Commission’s agenda has grown substantially, particularly in the fields of marine policy and ocean hazard preparedness. Some policymakers now find it increasingly difficult to pinpoint exactly what the IOC does. With resources failing to keep pace with the growth of its agenda, better defining the scope of its niche, and then demonstrating its value within this niche, could lead to more suitable Member State representation and, ultimately, greater engagement and ‘buy-in’ to the Commission’s work.

19. UNESCO is IOC’s core funder. This funding, even though strictly limited, enables IOC to undertake global activities aligned with a strategic vision. Yet with heavy reliance on earmarked voluntary (extrabudgetary) contributions, there is a danger of the Commission becoming excessively donor-driven, with activities and resources constrained by project funding cycles and overly focused on specific themes at the expense of more strategic work. How to ensure a more sustainable financial base for the IOC remains a key open question. In addition to exploring the options offered by Article 10.4 of the Commission’s Statutes, advantages of fuller mainstreaming of the ocean across UNESCO as a cross-cutting theme, or strengthening intersectoral working between the Commission and UNESCO’s other sectors, have been frequently noted. The decision ‘UNESCO and the Ocean’ adopted in April 2022 by the UNESCO Executive Board at its 214th session is an important step in the right direction to build upon.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: By September 2022 – Follow up on the request of the IOC-UNESCO 30th Assembly by estimating the necessary resources and accelerating the application of provisions of Article 10.4 of the IOC-UNESCO Statutes to effectively operate the IOC at an “optimal” level, as well as to determine the most appropriate organizational setting in view of IOC’s envisaged global role in science-based ocean management and leading the UN Ocean Decade.

20. Some IOC Member States that are not part of UNESCO (e.g. the United States) have expressed an interest in contributing additional funding to the Commission, but have found it difficult to do so outside of the UNESCO finance framework.

21. Mechanisms for resourcing the IOC are set out in Article 10—Financial and other resources—of the IOC Statutes (see Box 1).

Box 1: Provisions of Article 10 of IOC Statutes

1. The financial resources of the Commission shall consist of:
 - (a) funds appropriated for this purpose by the General Conference of UNESCO;
 - (b) contributions by Member States of the Commission that are not Member States of UNESCO;
 - (c) such additional resources as may be made available by Member States of the Commission, appropriate organizations of the United Nations system and from other sources.
2. The programmes or activities sponsored and coordinated by the Commission and recommended to its Member States for their concerted action shall be carried out with the aid of the resources of the participating Member States in such programmes or activities, in accordance with the obligations that each State is willing to assume.
3. Voluntary contributions may be accepted and established as trust funds in accordance with the financial regulations of the Special Account of IOC, as adopted by the Assembly and UNESCO. Such contributions shall be allocated by the Commission for its programme of activities.

4. The Commission may establish, promote or coordinate, as appropriate, additional financial arrangements to ensure the implementation of an effective and continuing programme at global and/ or regional levels.

Source: [IOC Statutes](#)

22. In addition to a number of specific mechanisms, Article 10 also opens the door to ‘additional financial arrangements’ that the Commission may establish, promote or coordinate to ensure effective implementation of its programme.

23. IOC Secretariat proposes to obtain suitable legal advice on how best to operationalise the provisions of Article 10 in order to ensure the effective and continuing delivery of its global and regional programmes, including the Ocean Decade.

24. IOC’s programmes could also be better packaged, potentially under a guiding framework of sustainable ocean planning and management that would provide a central theme or narrative to IOC’s work, so that higher-level decision-makers feel more persuaded to contribute financially. IOC could undertake a scoping exercise to map the priorities of its Member States and which aspects of sustainable ocean management they are most interested in. The Commission could then use this knowledge to attract further funding by demonstrating what IOC has already been doing in priority themes and detailing what more is needed from the donor community. The exercise would have a regional dimension and a focus on priority beneficiary groups. IOC’s task could be more “structured” in this way, attracting funds with specific deliverables and objectives. This could complement UNESCO’s Structured Financing Dialogue. Improved reporting and effective communication will also be needed to highlight success stories and valorise donors’ investment. IOC could also engage strategic communications experts to assist in the development of a strong narrative and messaging for different target groups under the umbrella of sustainable ocean planning and management.

25. Fundamentally there is also a need for solutions that address IOC’s lack of national departmental champions. As noted above, most countries do not have Departments responsible for ocean science. With IOC’s central mandate couched in terms of ocean science, the Commission lacks the strategically placed, well-funded constituents of other UN agencies. Increasingly, however, IOC is positioning itself as the lead global organization to deliver the knowledge-base and capacities to deliver sustainable ocean planning and management. This builds on its track record in Marine Spatial Planning and provides a more comprehensive and outcome-oriented description of its global contribution including in the areas of climate change and natural disasters as well as economic welfare. In this context, there is merit in exploring how IOC can engage national decision-makers at this more strategic level.

26. One option may be to convene a regular Forum for high-level decision-makers with the ability to engage in strategic discussions of sustainable planning and management and in financing the Commission. This could take place every four years, in line with the quadrennial budget cycle. Such a Forum could be an opportunity to reorient how policymakers perceive the IOC’s remit (from purely technical ocean science to ocean science for a purpose i.e. sustainable ocean planning and management) and to increase the Commission’s profile. This could initiate a process of developing a mandate and institutional framework that reflect the oceanic challenges of the 21st century.

27. The Ocean Decade is opening doors to discussions with new funding partners including industry and philanthropy. To date much of the effort has been on establishing relationships with these partners but conversations are now moving towards discussions on how such partners can provide in-kind or financial support to priority initiatives as part of the Ocean Decade. While there is a need for a certain level of ring-fencing between IOC’s role as coordinating agency of the Ocean Decade and its role in leading or co-leading Decade Actions, the potential for IOC-led initiatives to benefit from these new partnerships should be explored fully. Positioning the guiding framework for IOC of sustainable ocean planning and management within the context of the Ocean Decade e.g.

through the development of a Decade programme on Sustainable Ocean Planning would help reinforce messaging and linkages.

Key implementing actions proposed:

- 1.a. Obtain professional legal advice on the implications of utilizing Article 10.4 of the IOC Statutes to attract additional funding to the Commission to ensure effective and continuing delivery of its global and regional programmes, including the Ocean Decade;
- 1.b. In cooperation with the UNESCO Bureau for Strategic Planning (BSP), set up a Structured Financing Dialogue with a view to attracting new donors. To aid with this, identify a small group of Member States, perhaps current main contributors, that could serve as advocates and lead peer-to-peer resource mobilisation and engagement conversations;
- 1.c. Explore options for convening a High Level Forum of decision-making, on a quadrennial basis, possibly in connection with the IOC Assembly;
- 1.d. Develop strategic messaging around an IOC-wide guiding framework of Sustainable Ocean Planning and Management and strongly position this framework within the Ocean Decade.

Recommendation 2: By June 2022 – Develop in partnership with other agencies a Results Framework for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, clearly identifying the objectives, intermediate objectives, indicators, and indicative owners across the UN System and wider in order to monitor and evaluate progress against the Decade’s objectives.

28. The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development has the power to make a step change in IOC’s ability to scale-up and connect its activities along the ocean science value chain and thus accelerate the impact of its work and influence policymakers. But this will only be possible if the Decade also becomes a unifying framework harnessing the efforts of other organizations and responding to their needs and priorities. While much of the initial work of the Decade has purposely been ‘bottom-up’ as a means of catalysing and inspiring stakeholder engagement, there is now a natural need and demand from partners to complement this approach with a more granular structuration of the strategic ambition of the Decade, e.g. in terms of the Ocean Decade Challenges. This process of strategic ambition and target setting by Challenge will increase the unifying power of the Decade and also support the IOC to position itself in terms of its contribution to the Decade ambition.

29. This in turn will require an overarching results framework that brings together the contributions and monitoring efforts of these other contributors and for which the coordination of monitoring and reporting efforts would be undertaken by the IOC. Such a results framework will necessarily evolve over time as strategic ambition is set and refined and can build on the Ocean Decade milestones and review processes that are laid out in the existing summary Implementation Plan ([IOC/2021/ODS/19](#)).

30. Within IOC there is potential to draw on existing products to support the gathering of data for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) purposes. These include but are not limited to the *Global Ocean Science Report*, the new proposed State of the Ocean Report and the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), as well as other IOC-led Decade programmes. The emerging Decade M&E guidelines and criteria can play a central role in this framework. A mid-term review of the Decade in 2025 would enable a stock take of whether the Decade is ‘on track’ to deliver its objectives.

Key implementing actions proposed:

- 2.a. Commence rollout of the first iteration of the Results Framework for the Ocean Decade at the latest by mid-2022. The Results Framework should comprise a minimum outcomes, intermediate outcomes, outputs, baselines, and indicative owners;

- 2.b. Set in place a process for collectively developing with UN-Oceans partners and all relevant stakeholders' strategic ambitions and targets across the 10 Ocean Decade Challenges and progressively integrate these into the Results Framework for the Ocean Decade;
- 2.c. Operationalise the review mechanisms envisaged in *the Implementation Plan for the Ocean Decade*, including the series of international and regional Ocean Decade Conferences every three years which will provide the platform for stocktaking and adaptive management of Decade priorities.

Recommendation 3: By June 2022 – Determine how UNESCO can support the Decade

31. With some core funding from regular programme budget in the Approved Programme and Budget for 2022–2025 (41 C/5), most of the funding remains to be secured through extrabudgetary resource mobilization. The Commission needs to simultaneously address the need to build a well-resourced and well-equipped Decade Coordination Unit while also fostering connections between Ocean Decade partners carrying out ocean science and partners who might be able to provide resources.

32. Continued lack of sustainable funding risks jeopardising the success of the Decade and damaging IOC-UNESCO's brand. It is critical that IOC steps up its discussions with (i) UN-Oceans counterparts and (ii) organizations outside of the UN System, including philanthropy and the private sector. A positive example in this context is the contribution of Fugro who has seconded a data expert to the Decade Coordination Unit as well as the burgeoning conversations with philanthropic Foundations via the Foundations Dialogue. The Ocean Decade Alliance is growing and has the potential to become a highly visible platform and network for unlocking resources for the Decade, both directly and indirectly. Further work is needed to operationalise Alliance members' engagements to concrete support for Decade Actions and coordination.

33. At the level of IOC Member States, 34 National Committees for the Decade have been established. This is encouraging but much more needs to be done. To achieve this, IOC will need to: (i) step up its outreach to Member States to explain the goals and powers of the Decade; (ii) clarify how the Decade can help Member States achieve their national objectives; (iii) clearly identify opportunities for investment by Member States in Decade Actions and coordination, including via in-kind contributions; and (iv) strategically engage donor States including working with existing strong partners to play a peer-to-peer engagement and advocacy role. Tracking countries' level of participation and financial investment and ensuring strong visibility of impact and outcomes via the Results Framework could help to encourage further investment in the Decade.

34. There are opportunities too for the Commission to use its Regional Sub-Commissions to attract additional resources. In IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC), the Decade is already being capitalised upon by strengthening the Secretariat's human capacity to coordinate Decade actions in the region. African Conference on Priority Setting and Partnership Development for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (Cairo, 10–12 May 2022) and its *Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap* ([IOC/2022/ODS/36](#)) supported by a dedicated African Task Force (composed of 15 high level experts that includes regional organisations and donors) are also extremely encouraging steps forward and should be used as levers to mobilise new resources to position IOCAFRICA as a fully resourced regional coordination hub for the Decade. Engaging multilateral development banks, international financing instruments such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and regional funding bodies such as African Union or the African Development Bank would be of critical importance. These institutions typically provide support in response to national requests and thus it will be essential to work via Member States to raise the profile of ocean science funding needs. Discussions with BSP to re-start conversations about seeking a formal role for UNESCO as an implementing agency for GCF and the Adaptation Fund is another option that should be pursued. Generally, the establishment of national committees in developing countries has the potential to help attract funds from Official Development Assistance (ODA) agencies by setting national priorities for

the Decade but there will be a need for close interaction and communication with these Committees to ensure consistency of messaging.

35. The initiative of Egypt, supported by many Member States, to add the item ‘UNESCO and the Ocean’ to the agenda of the 214th session of the Executive Board and the resulting decision [214 EX/29](#) represents an extremely important development in this regard.

Key implementing actions proposed:

- 3.a. Develop clear, targeted messaging to different donor groups on the benefits and means of investing in the Ocean Decade;
- 3.b. Further assess resource needs for IOC programmes and structures to support effectively the implementation of the Decade (beyond the Decade Coordination functions assumed by the Decade Coordination Unit (DCU));
- 3.c. Building on decision 29 of the 214th UNESCO Executive Board work with other UNESCO sectors to make the Ocean a transversal priority theme and position the Ocean Decade as the primary vehicle through which Member States can support it.

UN-wide supporting actions:

- 3.d. Develop a clear and structured ‘ask’ for financial or in-kind resources for partners’ support to the DCU;
- 3.e. Undertake a detailed mapping and analysis of the activities and interests of UN-Oceans partners to identify existing or potential Decade-related initiatives, identify gaps and make recommendations for stronger engagement and resource provision;
- 3.f. Encourage UN partners to establish and resource Decade Coordination Offices to lead coordination around regional or thematic priorities;
- 3.g. Ensure that financial or in-kind support to the DCU is a prerequisite to membership of the Ocean Decade Alliance.

Recommendation 4: By June 2024 – Consider options for further exploiting IOC-UNESCO’s data and knowledge base

36. One of the Commission’s core strengths is its ability to coordinate scientific research and act as a global coordinating mechanism for ocean data and information sharing. However, some end users still have difficulty navigating multiple online data and information resources (of which there are over 3,000) and, because of the huge variety, their usability differs considerably. The Ocean Data and Information System (ODIS) aims to build a global ocean data ecosystem based on interoperability arrangements that enables any stakeholder to equitably share or use data within that ecosystem. Accelerate the development of the Ocean Data and Information System (ODIS) and its contribution to the UN Ocean Decade would be a very positive development and needs to be considered a priority for resource mobilization.

37. Another solution may be to develop a set of ocean indicators that are accessible to non-scientific communities. This would go some way to improving end users’ ability to understand the wealth of data that the Commission produces, both in terms of portraying the state of the ocean but also in terms of our capacity to measure, understand and provide solutions to address important ocean issues.

38. GOOS has already developed Essential Ocean Variables, but there is space for the other Sections of IOC to develop this approach further. There is also scope for other UN-Oceans bodies to contribute. Any indicator produced should match and be relevant to the four themes as identified under the communications approach (see Recommendation 5 below). These indicators may facilitate government efforts to sustainably manage the ocean and further invest in ocean science delivery and infrastructure.

39. Forecasting of key ocean variables could also be an important way of using the Commission's data and information and generating useful outputs as already envisaged as part of the Ocean Decade. However, developing, maintaining and effectively using such a model would be highly demanding. It would call for an Earth system approach and hence require input from other partners. It would also require the expertise of all IOC's Sections.

40. There are currently several major assessments of ocean health including the World Ocean Assessment and the *Copernicus Marine Service Ocean State report*. IOC itself produces the *Global Ocean Science Report*. However, there is currently no annual State of the Ocean Report (StOR) providing a readily digestible yet authoritative snapshot of the ocean, drawing, for example, on the Essential Ocean Variables and other IOC research. This would also be an opportunity for others to contribute and could result in further partnerships and, potentially, funding opportunities. The StOR could also draw on multiple contributors with the Commission acting as a facilitator and coordinator and would complement regular reporting on the Ocean Decade. The report could also provide an assessment of what the scientific community does not know and identify and highlight the need for more IOC-led research and associated resource requirements.

Key implementing actions proposed:

- 4.a. Institute a working group across the Commission's Sections in order to develop a list of socio-economic indicators – e.g. for use in the *State of the Ocean Report*. If necessary, expand the working group to involve other actors such as the UN-Oceans agencies;
- 4.b. Develop processes for streamlining and facilitating the Commission's data pipeline so it can support the development of indicators proposed above;
- 4.c. Accelerate the development of the Ocean Data and Information System (ODIS) and its contribution to the UN Ocean Decade;
- 4.d. Seek funding to prepare the first *State of the Ocean Report* by the 32nd session of the Assembly in 2023.

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| <p>Recommendation 5: By June 2022 – Explore means of attracting additional senior policy engagement in the work of IOC-UNESCO</p> |
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41. While the central focus of IOC's work, the ocean, has unparalleled associative power in the public mind, IOC faces significant challenges communicating with and influencing policymakers. In addition to the structural factors noted above, especially lack of national departmental champions, these include: (i) lack of clear brand identity; (ii) a competitive environment, with lots of UN System organizations engaging in the field; and (iii) the intangible nature of IOC's currently stated remit, i.e. 'ocean science'.

42. IOC's challenge is both to specify the product and services that the Commission delivers and to ensure that this information is effectively packaged and delivered to governments, with the IOC itself clearly identified as the source.

43. IOC can learn lessons from how other UN agencies facing similar challenges (e.g. UNDRR) have transformed their communication strategies. These include: doing more to develop collaborations with UN and other organizations that become champions for IOC's work; repackaging communication products across multiple media (e.g., blogs, vlogs, speeches, etc.) and putting significant efforts into growing social media audiences, which remain well below those of other UN entities, to raise its profile more generally; and doing more to share stories from the regions rather than focusing on Headquarters.

44. Actions – IOC can consider include: identifying target audiences and key messages, helping scientists to tell a story so that expertise is transformed into communicable messages and stories; narrowing down IOC communications to two or three communications themes and running these cross-channel; targeting communication efforts to those that are most beneficial to the IOC from a

leveraging perspective; developing more effective regional communications strategies with regional Sub-Commissions, which also have some political influence; ensuring a more streamlined use of IOC's logo across regions to minimise confusion; leveraging other organizations' communications initiatives; and focusing on social and digital media, as a means of measuring impact and tracking sentiment.

Key implementing actions proposed:

- 5.a. Implement a mapping exercise with key national and regional organisations across diverse sectors with a role in policymaking to identify priority entry points for reinforced engagement via the Ocean Decade and IOC's programmatic work;
- 5.b. Effect a step change in communications effectiveness beginning with developing an IOC Communication Strategy with assistance from a communications expert. The process should be participatory and include members of the Senior Management Team in order to agree upon the Commission's vision statement, and priority communications themes, audiences, and channels, respecting the fact that IOC is a component of UNESCO;
- 5.c. Produce an annual or bi-annual bulletin on the Commission's "Top Outcomes" which highlights its major achievements and demonstrates its continued value;
- 5.d. Clarify IOC's Logo Policy to ensure that the Commission has a consistent brand.

Recommendation 6: By June 2022 – Assume a leadership role in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment in marine science, supporting its existing data efforts such as the Global Ocean Science Report with dedicated action.

45. Gender Equality (GE) is a UNESCO's global priority. Yet IOC-UNESCO's approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) still lacks a strategy and there is a need to shift the culture of how GEWE is treated across the Commission. This will require the involvement not just of IOC's Gender Focal Point, but of the whole organization.

46. Almost all IOC elected officers and senior management are male. A collective effort to improve the gender balance in candidates for election in each of the Commission's regions could provide an effective approach to addressing and making women more visible in leadership positions. IOC could also develop GE Guidelines for IOC expert committees and other bodies, as applicable, and submit a proposal to the IOC Assembly at its 32nd session.

47. More generally, there is a need for the Commission to do more to encourage women to apply for positions within its structure, particularly leadership positions. And this is not just in reference to ensuring gender equality but also addressing any geographic disparities. The *Global Ocean Science Report* is a valuable tool for progress measuring in this regard.

48. In terms of the Ocean Decade, a working group could be formed to better mainstream gender across Decade activities including those implemented by IOC-UNESCO. Its activities should go hand-in-hand with the Decade endorsed programme on gender (<https://empoweringwomen.wmu.se>).

49. IOC could also institute and manage an award, scholarship or prize to recognize women's achievements in ocean science.

Key implementing actions proposed:

- 6.a. Request the advice of the UNESCO Division for Gender Equality to develop Gender Guidelines for IOC expert committees and other bodies, as applicable. Submit the proposal to the IOC Assembly at its 32nd session;
- 6.b. Continue to encourage IOC Member States to ensure gender equality in their delegations to IOC governing bodies. Provide statistics after each session to monitor progress;

- 6.c. Institute a working group (to include gender experts from the Commission's UN-Oceans counterparts as well as UNESCO), to develop a roadmap through which gender equality can be better mainstreamed throughout the Ocean Decade;
- 6.d. Scope out partners that may be interested in supporting a Women in Ocean Science Award, including through UN Global Compact;
- 6.E.** Work with HR experts to target qualified female candidates for senior management positions within the Commission and to improve geographical distribution.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTIONS & UPDATES ON PROGRESS

| | Actions Planned | Progress as of April 2024 | Responsible Unit(s) | Estimated Date for Completion |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Recommendation 1:</p> <p>By September 2022 – Follow up on the request of the IOC-UNESCO 30th Assembly by estimating the necessary resources and accelerating the application of provisions of Article 10.4 of the IOC-UNESCO Statutes to effectively operate the IOC at an “optimal” level, as well as to determine the most appropriate organizational setting in view of IOC’s envisaged global role in science-based ocean management and leading the UN Ocean Decade.</p> | <p>1.1 Obtain professional legal advice on the implications of utilizing Article 10.4 of the IOC Statutes to attract additional funding to the Commission to ensure effective and continuing delivery of its global and regional programmes, including the Ocean Decade;</p> | <p>In line with the decision of the IOC Executive Council at its 55th session requesting the Executive Secretary to prepare ‘an estimate of the budget, including the needs in human resources, necessary to sustainably deliver IOC’s core programmes and to expand its activities in response to increasing demands of Member States and other stakeholders’ (reference Resolution IOC-XXX-3 and Resolution EC-55/2) was implemented through Circular Letter 2912. Given the strategic programmatic scope and the mid- to long-term ambition of the proposal, it requires further discussion by Member States and will be part of the broad consultative process ‘IOC and the Future of the Ocean’.</p> | <p>IOC ES in consultation with BSP and LA</p> | <p>Q2 2025 – document for the 33rd session of the IOC Assembly</p> |
| | <p>1.2 In cooperation with the UNESCO Bureau for Strategic Planning (BSP), set up a Structured Financing Dialogue with a view to attracting new donors. To aid with this, identify a small group of Member States, perhaps current main contributors, that could serve as advocates and lead peer-to-peer resource mobilization and engagement conversations;</p> | <p>activities in response to increasing demands of Member States and other stakeholders’ (reference Resolution IOC-XXX-3 and Resolution EC-55/2) was implemented through Circular Letter 2912. Given the strategic programmatic scope and the mid- to long-term ambition of the proposal, it requires further discussion by Member States and will be part of the broad consultative process ‘IOC and the Future of the Ocean’.</p> | <p>IOC ES, in consultation with BSP & IOC Officers</p> | <p>Course of 2024–2025</p> |
| | <p>1.3 Explore options for convening a High-Level Forum of decision-making, on a quadrennial basis, possibly in connection with the IOC Assembly;</p> | <p>To be postponed pending the initiation and outcomes of the Member States consultation on ‘the IOC and the future of the ocean’, which will identify knowledge gaps and adequacy of science inclusion within multilateral ocean frameworks, to be implemented from June 2024-June2027</p> | <p>IOC ES and DC a.i.</p> | <p>Q2 2027</p> |
| | <p>1.4. Develop strategic messaging around an IOC-wide guiding framework of Sustainable Ocean Planning and Management and strongly position this framework within the Ocean Decade.</p> | <p>Underway. Seed funding secured to engage technical assistance to develop framework in the context of the Ocean Decade. Inputs from Member States and ocean management stakeholders was solicited through IOC Circular Letter 2968 (November 2023), and an international survey supplemented by individual interviews. A Draft IOC wide Strategy document was presented to IOC Member States at 2 webinars (May 2024) and presented to EC-57 for consideration. In parallel, a stocktaking workshop with international partners was organised in March 2024 to develop the Ocean Decade Sustainable Ocean Planning Programme (SOP) framework which was launched at the Barcelona Conference. An interim steering</p> | <p>IOC ES and DC a.i.</p> | <p>September 2024</p> |

| | Actions Planned | Progress as of April 2024 | Responsible Unit(s) | Estimated Date for Completion |
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| | | group has been established to further advance the development of the structural elements of the SOP Decade programme. | | |
| Recommendation 2: By June 2022 – Develop in partnership with other agencies a Results Framework for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, clearly identifying the objectives, intermediate objectives, indicators, and indicative owners across the UN System and wider in order to monitor and evaluate progress against the Decade’s objectives. | 2.1 Commence rollout of the first iteration of the Results Framework for the Ocean Decade at the latest by mid-2022. The Results Framework should comprise a minimum outcomes, intermediate outcomes, outputs, baselines, and indicative owners; | Full rollout completed in January 2023. | IOC ES and DCU | Completed, to be considered as closed |
| | 2.2 Set in place a process for collectively developing with UN-Oceans partners and all relevant stakeholders’ strategic ambitions and targets across the 10 Ocean Decade Challenges and progressively integrate these into the Results Framework for the Ocean Decade; | Underway. Vision 2030 process results presented at 2024 Ocean Decade Conference (April, 2024) and final milestones and indicators discussed with Decade Advisory Board (May, 2024) and presented to EC-57. | IOC ES and DCU | June 2024 |
| | 2.3 Operationalise the review mechanisms envisaged in the Implementation Plan for the Ocean Decade, including the series of international and regional Ocean Decade Conferences every three years which will provide the platform for stocktaking and adaptive management of Decade priorities. | Achieved. 2024 Ocean Decade Conference confirmed for April 2024 to be hosted by Spain. Monitoring & Evaluation Framework rollout completed. Vision 2030 process operationalized. | IOC ES and DCU | Completed, considered by the Assembly-32 as closed |
| Recommendation 3: By June 2022 – Determine how UNESCO can support the Decade | 3.1 Develop clear, targeted messaging to different donor groups on the benefits and means of investing in the Ocean Decade. | Underway. Results of Vision 2030 process will guide the development of strategic and targeted messaging, including for discussion at the Fourth Foundations Dialogue Meeting (September 2024). | DCU in consultation with the IOC Management Team | Q3 2024 |
| | 3.2 Further assess resource needs for IOC programmes and structures to support effectively the implementation of the Decade (beyond the Decade Coordination functions assumed by the Decade Coordination Unit (DCU)); | Underway. Budget and resource needs estimates prepared and maintained up-to-date for Decade Coordination Offices hosted by IOC including data sharing, ocean observations, Ocean Literacy, Africa and Tropical Americas and Caribbean region. Active resource mobilisation to support these structures. | IOC ES in consultation with the IOC Management Team | Ongoing – update on progress to IOC EC-57 |
| | 3.3 Building on decision 29 of the 214th UNESCO Executive Board work with other | Achieved. The first report on the highlights of intersectoral cooperation under the framework | IOC ES and DCU | Completed, proposed to be |

| | Actions Planned | Progress as of April 2024 | Responsible Unit(s) | Estimated Date for Completion |
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| | UNESCO sectors to make the Ocean a transversal priority theme and position the Ocean Decade as the primary vehicle through which Member States can support it. | of the Ocean Decade, was presented to the UNESCO Executive Board as document 217 EX/4.I.B (also referenced for consideration by the IOC Executive Council under item 3.1). While work is underway and new initiatives will continue to be developed with all UNESCO sectors, guided by Member States priorities and discussion, the process is established and endorsed by the UNESCO Executive Board. | | considered as closed |
| | <i>UN-wide supporting actions:</i> 3.4. Develop a clear and structured 'ask' for financial or in-kind resources for partners' support to the DCU; | Ongoing. Secondment of Resource Mobilisation Officer is finalized and has commenced work. Review of core roles within the Decade Coordination Unit planned to inform development of targeted resource mobilisation 'ask'. | DCU | Q2 2024 |
| | 3.5. Undertake a detailed mapping and analysis of the activities and interests of UN-Oceans partners to identify existing or potential Decade-related initiatives, identify gaps and make recommendations for stronger engagement and resource provision; | Underway. Consultant report being discussed with UN partners with view of finalization. | DCU | Q2 2024 |
| | 3.6. Encourage UN partners to establish and resource Decade Coordination Offices to lead coordination around regional or thematic priorities | Ongoing. Call for Decade Actions No. 07/2024 includes solicitation for DCOs and DCCs to fill critical thematic and geographic gaps. | DCU | ASAP and ongoing throughout Decade, with progress reports to Governing Bodies |
| | 3.7. Ensure that financial or in-kind support to the DCU is a prerequisite to membership of the Ocean Decade Alliance | Ongoing. Review process for existing members of the Ocean Decade Alliance will commence in Q2 2024 with identification of new contributions of financial or in-kind resources. | DCU ES and IOC Management Team | ASAP and throughout the admission process |
| Recommendation 4: By June 2024 – Consider options for further exploiting IOC- | 4.1 Institute a working group across the Commission's Sections in order to develop a list of socio-economic indicators – e.g. for use in the State of the Ocean Report. If necessary, expand | Advisory board for the StOR, providing guidance on content for the StOR, including potentially sociological, economical parameters (e.g. Blue Sustainable Economy | ES and IOC Management Team | Q3 2025 |

| | Actions Planned | Progress as of April 2024 | Responsible Unit(s) | Estimated Date for Completion |
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| UNESCO's data and knowledge base | the working group to involve other actors such as the UN-Oceans agencies; | and ocean literacy) has been established and has started working. Lessons learned from SToR second cycle and IOC consultation process will inform the need and potential scope for further indicator development work within IOC. | | |
| | 4.2 Develop processes for streamlining and facilitating the Commission's data pipeline so it can support the development of indicators proposed above; | Working groups established to harvest relevant data for SDG data collection related to ocean acidification. Other aspects are linked to the work in action 4.1 and are therefore postponed, | ES and IOC Management Team | Q3 2025 |
| | 4.3 Accelerate the development of the Ocean Data and Information System (ODIS) and its contribution to the UN Ocean Decade | Underway. A Programme called "An Ocean Data and Information System supporting the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development" (OceanData-2030) has been registered with the UN Decade for Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. | Head IOC/OST and IOC Management Team | Throughout the Decade with progress updates to IOC Governing Bodies. |
| | 4.4 Seek funding to prepare the first State of the Ocean Report by the 32nd session of the Assembly in 2023. | Ongoing. Republic of Korea continues to loan staff via KIMST to help prepare the StOR. Process ongoing for funding with private sector partners. | ES and IOC Management Team | Q2 2024 |
| Recommendation 5: By June 2022 – Explore means of attracting additional senior policy engagement in the work of IOC-UNESCO | 5.1 Implement a mapping exercise with key national and regional organizations across diverse sectors with a role in policymaking to identify priority entry points for reinforced engagement via the Ocean Decade and IOC's programmatic work; | To be postponed pending the initiation of the Member States consultation on the future of the ocean and the IOC which will identify knowledge gaps, and as part of this process map out key national and regional policy frameworks relevant to the work of IOC. | ES and IOC Management Team | Q2 2025 |
| | 5.2 Effect a step change in communications effectiveness beginning with developing an IOC Communication Strategy with assistance from a communications expert. The process should be participatory and include members of the Senior Management Team in order to agree upon the Commission's vision statement, and priority communications themes, audiences, and channels, respecting the fact that IOC is a component of UNESCO; | In light of recent change in leadership within IOC, the initiation of this process has been delayed. The development of an IOC Communications Strategy will be a key priority for the third and fourth quarters of 2024, which will kickstart through a participatory process that involves interviews with stakeholders, including members of the Senior Management Team to identify priority communications themes, audiences, and channels. | ES and IOC Management Team | Q2 2025 – IOC Communication strategy to be presented at IOC Assembly-33 |

| | Actions Planned | Progress as of April 2024 | Responsible Unit(s) | Estimated Date for Completion |
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| | 5.3 Produce an annual or bi-annual bulletin on the Commission's "Top Outcomes" which highlights its major achievements and demonstrates its continued value; | A proposal for an annual/bi-annual bulletin is currently being developed by the IOC Communications Team and will be submitted to the senior management and for consideration within the framework of the new IOC communication strategy to be developed in 2025. | ES and IOC Communications Team | Q2 2025 |
| | 5.4. Clarify IOC's Logo Policy to ensure that the Commission has a consistent brand; | This process has been partially completed by means of IOC applying throughout its programmes, regional bodies and various projects the UNESCO Brand Guidelines, approved by the UNESCO Executive Board and General Conference. The unified UNESCO policy establishes a specific logo for IOC/UNESCO (necessary to reinforce the Commission's brand among its core communities and Member States) that is nevertheless completely in coherence with the overarching UNESCO brand guidelines, colour palette and logo use policy. The policy applies to print and digital documents; social media; programme and projects' communication; partnerships; and for branding around specific events. The logo policy documents can be requested by Member States directly from UNESCO/CPE. The next step will be to develop and implement guidelines for the branding of IOC programmes, subsidiary bodies, and projects in accordance with the overall logo policy, | ES and IOC Communications Team | Q2- 2025 |
| Recommendation 6: By June 2022 – Assume a leadership role in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment in marine science, supporting its existing data efforts such as the Global Ocean Science Report with dedicated action | 6.1 Request the advice of the UNESCO Division for Gender Equality to develop Gender Guidelines for IOC expert committees and other bodies, as applicable. | Ongoing | IOC Gender Focal Point and EO | Q2 2025 |
| | 6.2 Continue to encourage IOC Member States to ensure gender equality in their delegations to IOC governing bodies. Provide statistics after each session to monitor progress. | Letters of invitation to IOC Governing Bodies contain such an encouragement. Statistics for IOC EC-55: F100:M126. To be continued. | ES, IOC Gender Focal Point and EO | Completed, considered by Assembly-32 as closed |

| | Actions Planned | Progress as of April 2024 | Responsible Unit(s) | Estimated Date for Completion |
|--|--|--|--------------------------------|--|
| | 6.3 Institute a working group (to include gender experts from the Commission’s UN-Oceans counterparts as well as UNESCO), to develop a roadmap through which gender equality can be better mainstreamed throughout the Ocean Decade; | Ongoing. Working Group to be established in Q3 2024 including collaboration with UNESCO Division for Gender Equality to develop an Ocean Decade gender roadmap on basis of priority outcomes of Vision 2030 process. | DCU and IOC Gender Focal Point | Q4 2024 |
| | 6.4. Scope out partners that may be interested in supporting a Women in Ocean Science Award, including through UN Global Compact; | | DCU and IOC Gender Focal Point | Q4 2024 |
| | 6.5. Work with HR experts to target qualified female candidates for senior management positions within the Commission and to improve geographical distribution. | Ongoing. Since the 32 nd session of the IOC Assembly, Joanna Post joined the IOC senior management team as Head IOC/OOS. | ES and EO | Implementation will continue until target is achieved. Report on progress to be submitted to the 33 rd session of the IOC Assembly. |