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**INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION**  
(of UNESCO)

**Fifty-seventh Session of the Executive Council**  
UNESCO, 25–28 June 2024

Item 4.5 of the Provisional Agenda

**REPORT ON THE SECOND EDITION OF THE ‘IOC STATE OF THE OCEAN REPORT’  
(StOR) (2024) AND GUIDANCE FOR FUTURE EDITIONS**

Summary

This document was prepared in response to the Decision IOC/A-32/4.2 (2022) requesting the IOC Secretariat to provide a report on the second edition of the StOR to the IOC Executive Council at its the 57th Session for Member States review and additional guidance. This document presents the most updated concept note for StOR.

The IOC Executive Council is invited to review and endorse the publication of the StOR on a regular basis. Annexes remain in English only.

Financial and administrative implications: paragraphs 22 and 23.

The proposed decision is referenced EC-57/Dec.4.5 in the Action Paper (document IOC/EC-57/AP Prov.)

## Introduction

1. In recent years, a renewed focus on the world's ocean and appreciation of its crucial role for life on Earth, the global climate, food security, human health and wellbeing, as well as its contribution to the global economy, have led to an increased demand by decision-makers for relevant, strategic, current, and easily accessible information on the state of the ocean.

2. At its 53rd session in February 2021, the IOC Executive Council (EC) considered the proposal to prepare a periodic 'IOC State of the Ocean Report (StOR)' as a response to the previously mentioned increased demand for the key information on the state of the ocean (see [IOC/INF-1393](#)). Following the 53rd session of the Executive Council, the IOC Secretariat invited Member States to express their views on the spatial and temporal scope of the report, focus areas, and style of presentation (cf. IOC Circular Letter, [2843](#)). In parallel the IOC Secretariat convened an informal expert consultation on the StOR to further discuss its main features. The results of the Member States and expert consultation are synthesized in the [IOC/INF-1393 Rev.](#) The IOC Assembly at its 31<sup>st</sup> session in June 2021 endorsed the production of a Pilot StOR, which was presented to the IOC Executive Council at the 55<sup>th</sup> session in 2022 as *State of the ocean report 2022: pilot edition* (IOC Technical Report n° [173](#)).

3. Following the presentation of 'State of the Ocean Report 2022 – Pilot edition', the related concept note went through a 1.5 year review process. Further guidance by Member States was received at the 32nd session of the IOC Assembly in June 2023 (refer to [IOC/A-32/Dec.4.2](#)).

4. The StOR Advisory Board played a central role in the scoping, reviewing and editing of the report since the IOC Assembly session in June 2023. The StOR Advisory Board consists of representatives from nine countries. The Secretariat with the support of the Advisory Board updated the concept note based on comments received during the IOC Assembly.

5. The results of the consultations were presented in IOC Circular Letter [2963](#), which included an updated StOR concept note and a template for contributions. As requested by the Assembly, the IOC Secretariat conducted two online workshops allowing Member States to provide additional comments. The Member States welcomed the concept note that has guided the preparation of the second edition of StOR published as IOC Technical Series 189 before this session of the Executive Council.

6. The 2024 IOC *State of the Ocean Report* is supported financially by the Government of Iceland, The Back to Blue Initiative and the Republic of Korea.

7. It comprises 21 sections by 101 authors from 28 countries (46% female, 54% male). The report was peer reviewed by more than 45 international experts.

8. The revised and agreed concept note presented in this document now directly indicates the target audience of the StOR, which is primarily policymakers, while the information included can also serve as a source of information on the state of the ocean for the media. It was also identified the IOC programmes and affiliated projects as the primary source of information, while taking into account complementary data from other international organizations where necessary to provide a StOR covering all [Ocean Decade Outcomes](#). It was agreed that the frequency should be regular but subject to the constraints of available financial and human resources.

## StOR objective, structure and frequency

9. The IOC *State of the Ocean Report* has the ambition to:

- (i) Inform decision-makers about gaps in the implementation of the seven Outcomes of the UN Ocean Decade, and, in the longer term, about gaps on the path to ocean well-being. The StOR will be used to inform policy and administrative priorities and identify research focus areas that need to be strengthened or developed.

- (ii) Inform policymakers about the state of the ocean to stimulate actions towards ‘the ocean we need for the future we want’, contributing to the 2030 Agenda and in particular SDG 14, which reads ‘Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources’, as well as other global processes such as the UNFCCC, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Sendai Framework. The StOR will be used to assist in the implementation of stronger science-based ocean governance frameworks at national and global levels.

10. The StOR will present the results of ocean-related scientific activities and analyses to describe the current and future state of the ocean, addressing physical, chemical, ecological, socio-economic and governance aspects, focusing on the seven Outcomes of the Ocean Decade.

11. The Ocean Decade Outcomes represent the main features of the ‘ocean we want’ at the end of the Decade in 2030 and are therefore well suited to serve as a framework for monitoring the state of the ocean during the Ocean Decade. Structuring the report around the Outcomes rather than the Challenges of the Decade should improve the assimilation of the results presented. It will also strongly complement the other elements of the Ocean Decade monitoring and evaluation framework that focus on action-oriented activities and other key elements of the enabling environment of the Ocean Decade. Even after the end of the Ocean Decade, its seven Outcomes will represent general and globally agreed priorities on the path to ocean well-being. This will ensure that the StOR also has a long-term perspective beyond the UN Ocean Decade (2021–2030).

12. The target audience of the StOR are therefore primarily policy- and decision-makers, while being a potential source for information about the status of the ocean for the media and the general public.

13. The majority of the StOR sections will be provided by IOC expert working groups and projects, IOC-affiliated activities, Ocean Decade programmes, and on the basis of collaborations with other international and United Nations organizations.

14. There are already a number of related publications which focus on the ocean or contain dedicated sections exploring ocean themes, raising awareness on the importance of the ocean for the general public, policymakers and other marine stakeholders, such as the UN World Ocean Assessment (WOA), WMO *State of the Global Climate Report*, IPBES, FAO *State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture* (Sofia 2022) Report, IPCC reports, AMS *State of the Climate Report*, among others.

15. The StOR production is guided by an Advisory Board, with the following Terms of Reference (Annex to Decision A-32/4.2):

1. *Guide the ongoing development of the Concept Note of the State of the Ocean Report to ensure the further refinement of the purpose, frequency, scope, target audience, and alignment of the StOR with other UN assessment reports.*
2. *Provide advice to the Secretariat in support of the production of the StOR, including:*
  - (i) *defining themes relevant for the different Ocean Decade Outcomes,*
  - (ii) *identifying the respective topics for the section,*
  - (iii) *identifying authors and reviewers for each section which reflect diversity in expertise, gender, geographic representation, career status and Indigenous Peoples and other coastal communities.*
3. *Provide regular reports on the concept and production of the StOR to IOC governing bodies.*

16. It is expected that the StOR will be published on a regular basis (every two years, depending on available financial and human resources).

17. Each edition will feature multiple sections representing topics covering global assessments relevant to each Ocean Decade Outcome.

18. Editions of the StOR shall be comprehensive but concise, with 2-5 sections per Ocean Decade Outcome. A section is a brief narrative description of a parameter(s) related to the specific Ocean Decade Outcome.

19. The decision on topics and list of contributors to each section is guided by the StOR Advisory Board and the review by Member States. Lead authors are invited to fill gaps in the authorship in diversity in expertise, gender, geographic representation, career status and Indigenous Peoples and other coastal communities, where appropriate.

20. A 2- to 3-page executive summary will be preceding the main body of the text, organized around the seven Ocean Decade Outcomes, illustrating key findings highlighted by sections.

21. The authors of each section are asked to provide a quantitative assessment related to the topic, not exceeding 3 pages (including figures and references). The figures and graphs included in the section, once redesigned, will be an important tool to illustrate the findings to a non-expert audience. Authors are advised to follow the section template (see Annex 1) which guides on content and format. Each section will be organized as follows:

- (i) a brief introduction to the issue presented and why it is relevant for illustrating the respective outcome,
- (ii) a description of the current state of knowledge with quantitative and qualitative analyses and conclusions, as well as,
- (iii) next steps that would be required for the topic of the contribution to achieve the respective Ocean Decade Outcome.

### **Financial and administrative implications**

22. The StOR is part of the activities under Function D, 'Support assessment and information to improve the science-policy interface'. The allocated regular budget is insufficient to produce the StOR (2024–2025 Regular Programme Workplan n° 42001108: Follow-up to SDGs, WOA & State of the Ocean Reporting).

23. The publication of a regular StOR will require human and extrabudgetary financial support by IOC Member States to finance coordination at the IOC Secretariat, editorial work, translation, layout, design, printing and communication.

## Annex 1: The StOR Contribution Template (English only)

### Outcome X

**[Title]** maximum 80 characters

Authors: [name, first name<sup>1</sup>, name, first name<sup>2</sup>, ....]

<sup>1</sup> [Affiliation, Country, email corresponding author]

<sup>2</sup> [Affiliation, country]

[Introductory text including relevance of the topic to the Decade outcome in question ]

150 words maximum

[Description of findings, trends, status]

500 maximum

[Conclusion, next steps]

150 words maximum

Figure [X]. [caption text]. Source: [text].

### References

examples, authors are encouraged to focus on the main publications and apply the style below:

Friedlingstein, P., O'Sullivan, M., Jones, M. W., Andrew, R. M., et al. 2020. Global Carbon Budget 2020. *Earth System Science Data*, Vol. 12, pp. 3269–3340. <https://doi.org/10.5194/essd-12-3269-2020>

IPCC. 2019. *IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*. (H.-O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, V. Masson-Delmotte, P. Zhai, M. Tignor, E. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Nicolai, A. Okem, J. Petzold, B. Rama and N. M. Weyer (eds.)). In press. <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/>

### Additional resources

maximum 3, follow the example

IOC SDG 14.3.1 portal <http://oa.iode.org>

Global Ocean Acidification Observing Network <http://goa-on.org>

Ocean Acidification Research for Sustainability Ocean Decade Programme <http://goa-on.org/oars/overview.php>

### Additional guidance:

- Number of figures maximum 2
- Footnotes should be avoided