



INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

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Item 4.7 of the Provisional Agenda

DRAFT SCOPING FRAMEWORK FOR OCEAN DECADE MID-TERM EVALUATION

Summary

With reference to the UN General Assembly A/RES/72/73, which proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021–2030, the year 2025 marks the mid-point in the implementation of the Ocean Decade under the coordination of UNESCO-IOC and the launch of a mid-term evaluation process.

This document outlines the proposed scope, modalities, and timing of the mid-term evaluation process. Following discussions at the Executive Council it will be used to develop the detailed Terms of Reference of the evaluation, the results of which will be presented at the next IOC Assembly.

Financial and administrative implications: The evaluation will be funded through UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service.

The proposed decision is referenced as Draft Resolution EC-57/[4.7] in the Action Paper (document IOC/EC-57/AP Prov. Rev.)

Context

1. Since its launch in 2021, the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (the Ocean Decade) has evolved into a complex and multi-dimensional ecosystem of national, regional, and international partners and stakeholders who are undertaking Decade Actions, supporting coordination, providing in-kind or financial resources, and engaging in diverse initiatives and activities. Coordinated by the Decade Coordination Unit (DCU) within UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (UNESCO-IOC), the Ocean Decade was designed to be a dynamic initiative that can both foresee and respond to emerging issues and needs. To achieve this, the Implementation Plan for the Ocean Decade envisages a series of periodic review processes to achieve the two related goals of ensuring that: (i) the delivery of the Ocean Decade is being carried out to ensure maximum impact; and (ii) the ocean science and knowledge priorities of the Ocean Decade are relevant and responding to emerging science, policy, and societal issues.

2. 2025 marks the mid-point of the implementation of the Ocean Decade and a mid-term evaluation process is being launched to address the first review goal namely, to review the structures, processes, partnerships, and resources that underpin the delivery of the Ocean Decade and make recommendations to optimise the impact of the Ocean Decade. The evaluation will build on the quantitative data on Ocean Decade implementation that has been collected through the Ocean Decade Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. It will focus on the exploration of causes and thus solutions to issues that are identified as hindering implementation and delivery of the Decade.

3. The Vision 2030 process, which was led by the DCU throughout 2024, was implemented as the first in a series of triennial processes to address the second review goal namely, the identification of future ocean science and knowledge priorities. The outcomes of this process were documented in a series of White Papers and the Vision 2030 Outcomes Report (all published in the IOC Ocean Decade Series, 51 and 50) that were discussed in draft form at the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference (Barcelona, April 2024) and finalized based on the feedback and discussions by Conference participants. While this process focused on science and knowledge priorities, it also identified several recommendations touching upon coordination and delivery of the Ocean Decade that will be relevant to the mid-term evaluation process.

4. This Concept Note which has been prepared as a Working Document to the 57th Session of the IOC Executive Council and outlines the proposed scope, modalities, and timing of the mid-term evaluation process. It has been discussed with the Decade Advisory Board during Meeting No. 02/2024 of the Board (Paris, May 2024). Following discussions at the Executive Council it will be used to develop the detailed Terms of Reference of the evaluation.

Proposed Scope of the Mid-Term Evaluation

5. The mid-term evaluation will involve critical analysis of existing approaches, and development of practical and actionable recommendations in relation to a range of five priority issues that are listed below. The sub-issues to be considered under each issue that are listed below are proposals, and the final list of sub-issues will be identified during the inception phase of the evaluation including via consultation with key stakeholders.

(i) Governance and coordination:

- a. Role, resourcing, and effectiveness of global governance and coordination structures including the Decade Coordination Unit and the Decade Advisory Board.
- b. Role, resourcing, and effectiveness of decentralised governance and coordination structures including Decade Coordination Offices, Decade Collaborative Centres, Decade Implementing Partners, regional taskforces, and National Decade Committees.

(ii) Resource mobilisation:

- a. Strategic approach to resource mobilisation for the Ocean Decade with a particular emphasis on the effectiveness of the focus of the Decade generating connections between Decade Actions and funders, as opposed to a role as a financing mechanism.
- b. Effectiveness of, and priorities for, resource mobilisation for central and decentralised coordination and to support Decade Actions.
- c. Role and impact of structures engaged in resource mobilisation including the Ocean Decade Alliance and the Foundations Dialogue.
- d. Role of Member States in resource mobilisation for coordination and to support Decade Actions.

(iii) Science and knowledge delivery:

- a. Progress in soliciting and/or generating transformative Ocean Decade Actions to contribute to identified priorities.
- b. Progress and achievements of endorsed Ocean Decade Actions in generating relevant and transformative ocean science and knowledge.
- c. Progress of Ocean Decade Actions in supporting relevant United Nations global policy frameworks and targets.
- d. Awareness of Ocean Decade amongst key user groups and uptake / use of outcomes of Ocean Decade within those groups.
- e. Effectiveness of the Ocean Decade Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in tracking progress and impact.

(iv) Engagement and outreach:

- a. Progress in communicating the goals and actions of the Decade to diverse targeted groups and stakeholders.
- b. Effectiveness of mechanisms for engagement /outreach and resourcing sustainability for these efforts.
- c. Progress in achieving inclusivity, diversity and equity in the Ocean Decade including across gender, geography, and generations.
- d. Process and results of measuring impacts of communication and outreach with key targeted stakeholders.

(v) Leveraging of Ocean Decade to Contribute to IOC Vision and Evolution:

- a. Progress in the development and implementation of IOC-led Decade Actions and coordination structures.
- b. Sustainability and impact of IOC-led initiatives developed through the Ocean Decade as a means of contributing to achievement of IOC High Level Objectives.
- c. Existing and potential role of IOC-led initiatives in catalysing new partnerships, activities or resource mobilisation to support future evolution of IOC.

6. In considering the above issues, the mid-term evaluation will focus both on the impact during the remaining period of implementation to 2030, including specific measures needed to ensure the effective implementation of the Vision 2030 process recommendations, and consider the necessary conditions to ensure a strong and sustainable post-2030 legacy of the Ocean Decade. It will also, as relevant, identify specific recommendations and actions needed to increase diversity, equity and inclusivity in the Ocean Decade including with respect to generational, gender and geographical diversity and the engagement of Indigenous and local knowledge holders.

7. The mid-term evaluation will be managed by the Evaluation Office of the Division of Internal Oversight Services (IOS) of UNESCO. It will be conducted by a team of external evaluation experts and will comply with UNESCO's Evaluation Policy. The evaluation will use a mixed method approach involving quantitative and qualitative data from various sources including a thorough literature review, desk study, structured interviews, surveys, focus group discussions with relevant stakeholders such as Member States and other actors internal and external to the Ocean Decade ecosystem. The outcomes of the process will include a quality assured evaluation report and a clear action plan that documents the recommendations arising from the evaluation including timing, roles, and resource needs. Given the diverse stakeholders engaged in the implementation of the Decade, particular attention will be paid to the clear identification of roles and responsibilities for actors within UNESCO, within the Ocean Decade stakeholder ecosystem, and external partners.

8. The proposed calendar for the mid-term evaluation is as follows:

September 2024	Finalisation of Terms of Reference following discussions at 57 th Session of IOC Executive Council.
November 2024	Procurement process. Identification and recruitment of external evaluation team. Start of mid-term evaluation process.
March 2025	Draft findings available for discussion with IOC Officers and Decade Advisory Board.
April 2025	Final documentation available in advance of 33 rd Session of the IOC Assembly.
June 2025	Presentation of results to the IOC Assembly at its 33 rd Session.
October 2025	Presentation to UNESCO's Executive Board.