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Item 4.7 of the Provisional Agenda

**STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN DECADE OF OCEAN SCIENCE FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PERSPECTIVES FOR 2024**

Summary

Pursuant to Resolution EC-55/1, this document provides information on the key outcomes of Ocean Decade implementation across the four main pillars of activity: (i) Decade Actions; (ii) Governance and coordination structures and informal working groups; (iii) Resource mobilization; and (iv) Stakeholder engagement and outreach over the period from July 2023 to May 2024, including the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference. It identifies remaining challenges and opportunities across the pillars and concludes with a vision and outlook to 2025 and beyond.

Decision proposed: The Executive Council is invited to consider the draft IOC Resolution IOC EC-57/[4.7] published separately.

1. In December 2017, building on the efforts of IOC Member States and the IOC Secretariat, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030 (hereafter, the Ocean Decade). The Ocean Decade is a once in a life-time opportunity to deliver a step-change in the generation and use of ocean science. It will influence how countries invest in and participate in science and innovation to embrace societal goals and align research investment to contribute to common goals including the 2030 Agenda.

2. In accordance with Resolution A/RES/72/73 of the UN General Assembly, and IOC Resolution EC-LI.1, after the preparatory phase of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) reported upon in documents [IOC-XXX/2 Annex 3](#) (2019), [IOC/EC-53/4.1.Doc\(1\)Rev.](#) (2020), [IOC/A-31/3.7.Doc\(2\)](#) (2021), and [IOC/EC-55/4.1.Doc\(1\)](#) (2022), the period from July 2023 to May 2024 saw continued intense activity related to the implementation of the Ocean Decade.

3. Building on past efforts, significant achievements were realized in terms of engagement and visibility, building of a strong and diverse portfolio of Decade Actions, and operationalization and growth of the central and decentralized architecture for the governance and coordination of the Decade. The 2024 Ocean Decade Conference (Barcelona, April 2024) was the apogee of activity during this period and was a watershed moment for the future of the Ocean Decade.

Decade Actions

4. Two additional Calls for Decade Actions were launched during this period. Call for Decade Actions No. 06/2023 was launched in October 2023 and closed on 31 January 2024. This Call had a focus on engagement of partners in Africa and Caribbean SIDS and solicited ideas from partners in these regions who require support and mentoring to develop co-designed Decade Actions. Over 50 submissions were received to this Call and training and mentoring for around 25 groups will commence in June 2024. Call for Decade Actions No. 07/2024 was opened on 15 April 2024 and will close on 31 August 2024. It is focusing on the solicitation of contributions of in-kind and financial resources to reinforce existing Decade Actions and coordination structures, and to identify initiatives to be included as part of the Ocean Decade Capacity Development Facility. All Calls for Decade Actions also solicited projects to attach to already endorsed Decade Programmes.

5. As of May 2024, the Calls for Decade Actions have resulted in the endorsement of 52 programmes, 363 projects and 99 contributions. The portfolio of Decade Actions covers all ocean basins and all 10 Decade Challenges. It represents the collective work of thousands of individuals, and hundreds of institutions and is an indication of the continued significant and global interest in the Ocean Decade.

6. The second iteration of the Ocean Decade Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the period July 2023 to June 2024 was launched in late 2023 and at the time of preparation of this document 41% of Decade Actions had completed their reporting. This represents a low rate of reply which renders it difficult to identify detailed trends and compare monitoring results with the previous reporting period. In addition, the majority of responses received were from Decade Actions with lead institutions in developed countries. Very few of the Decade Actions led by partners in SIDS or LDCs submitted reporting data, which means that the below data especially those relating to geographical diversity, while representing broad trends, should be interpreted with a degree of caution. Discussions are underway with the Decade Advisory Board to improve the coverage of M&E data received from Decade Actions, and this issue will also be addressed in the Ocean Decade Mid-term Evaluation to be implemented in late 2024 / early 2025.

7. In terms of the geography of implementation of Decade Actions, developed countries remain predominant. The United States, France, Canada, United Kingdom and Spain are the countries where the most Decade Actions reported implementing activities over the last 12 months. These same trends hold true for projected activities in the coming 24 months. Coverage across ocean basins is becoming more balanced with increases in activity in the Mediterranean Sea, the South Pacific and the South Atlantic ocean basins. An important issue to note is the high proportion of Decade Actions that are being implemented in ocean basins without decentralized coordination structures in place, including the Atlantic, Arctic and Mediterranean Sea ocean basins.

8. Between 15 and 20% of Decade Actions reported that they had implemented activities in Africa and SIDS respectively in the last period, and similar percentages are true for projected activities in these geographic areas in the next 24-month period. However, leadership of Decade Actions in Africa and SIDS remains persistently low at 6% and 2.6% respectively.

9. In terms of leadership of Decade Actions, the majority are led by NGOs and research institutes. As for the location of implementation of activities there is a strong bias towards developed countries in terms of the home country of lead institutions and individuals engaged in Decade Actions. Over 23,000 individuals were involved in the Decade Actions that responded to the M&E framework. Decade Actions reported that 41% of individuals participating in Decade Actions were women, while 47% were men. Early Career Ocean Professionals accounted for 32% of individuals engaged in Decade Actions.

10. Decade Actions reported implementing capacity development initiatives that have benefited over 400,000 beneficiaries, focusing strongly on Early Career Ocean Professionals. However, the bias towards developed countries is reflected in the reported nationalities of beneficiaries with most beneficiaries from Europe and North America; Brazil is a notable exception to this trend.

11. Concerted and targeted efforts are continuing to increase engagement in SIDS and Africa including through the support and mentoring of partners identified via Call for Decade Actions No. 06/2023. Supported by the Africa Decade Coordination Office housed within IOCAFRICA, the Africa Ocean Decade Taskforce has continued to oversee implementation of the [Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap](#) and has led development of a new Ocean Decade programme focusing on sustainable ocean management in Africa. Under the leadership of IOCARIBE, a Tropical Americas and Caribbean Taskforce has been established and is preparing a regional roadmap to guide priority activities in the region. The Pacific Islands Decade Collaborative Centre was launched in September 2023, housed within the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science and a Pacific Islands Regional Roadmap was launched at the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference. The Ocean Decade Capacity Development Facility, which was launched in December 2023, will focus on capacity development needs of partners in SIDS, Least Developed Countries and Early Career Ocean Professionals.

12. Decade Actions reported generating approximately 10,000 knowledge products including scientific literature and a broad range of other types of knowledge products, with Challenge 6 – Coastal Resilience, Challenge 8 – Ocean Data, and Challenge 10 – Behaviour Change being the Ocean Decade Challenges where Actions identified the highest numbers of generation of knowledge products. 142 knowledge products predominantly based on Indigenous and local knowledge were reported as being generated. Decade Actions reported 9,800 incidences of knowledge uptake either through citations in published or grey literature or uptake to policy, management, education or other uses. Challenge 8 – Ocean Data, Challenge 9 – Capacity Development, and Challenge 2 – Ecosystems were the most commonly cited Challenges for knowledge uptake. Over 150,000 new datasets were reported as being created and deposited in recognised data repositories.

13. IOC is leading 20 Decade programmes and projects across a range of themes, including new programmes related to Sustainable Ocean Planning and an Africa-wide programme focusing on sustainable ocean management, and is substantively involved in several others. It is also hosting six Decade Coordination Offices, although three of these are operating at a bare minimum level due to resource constraints. There is a significant potential for the IOC contribution to the Decade to reinforce IOC's core programmatic work, regional and thematic leadership, and human resources. However, additional resources are required to ensure full operationalisation of these initiatives. In addition to the IOC-led Decade Actions, a small number of Actions are being led by other UN entities including FAO, UNESCAP and UNEP. The Ocean Decade Mid-term Evaluation will include consideration of the existing synergies between the Ocean Decade and the programmatic work of IOC and make recommendations to reinforce these synergies to achieve greater impact throughout the Decade and beyond.

Governance and Coordination Structures and Informal Working Groups

14. The Decade Advisory Board met twice in online meetings in 2023 and discussed recommendations related to the endorsement of Decade programmes from Calls for Decade Actions and discussed a range of strategic issues related to measuring progress of the Decade, resource mobilisation, the role of indigenous and local knowledge in the Decade, and the means of increasing engagement of Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries. The first cohort of expert members of the Board came to an end in December 2023. Following an open nomination process, a new Board was constituted in January 2024 including five returning members, and ten new expert members. In addition to the expert members, representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the International Maritime Organization joined the Board to fill the three rotating seats for United Nations agencies. The new Board has met twice during the period including an in-person meeting in May 2024 in Paris. The Board focused its discussions on the operationalisation of the recommendations of the Vision 2030 process and provided guidance on the scope of the upcoming Mid-term Evaluation.

15. Twelve (12) decentralised coordination structures are operational (Decade Collaborative Centres (DCC) and Decade Coordination Offices (DCO)) and 16 Decade Implementing Partners. The DCOs and DCCs are playing an essential role in supporting the Decade Coordination Unit to coordinate Decade Actions, catalyse new initiatives, build stakeholder engagement, mobilise resources and communicate on the Decade. Six DCOs are being hosted by IOC (Western Pacific Region – WESTPAC; Tropical Americas and Caribbean – IOCARIBE; Africa – IOCAFRICA; Ocean Literacy – IOC/OSS; Data Sharing – IODE; and Ocean Observations – GOOS). Additional resources are required for the full operationalisation of the Tropical Americas and Caribbean, Africa, Data Sharing and Ocean Observations DCOs. DCOs, DCCs and DIPs indicated that in the last period cumulatively they have implemented over 1,379 capacity development initiatives targeting over 29,000 beneficiaries, of whom 48% were women and 63% were ECOPs. In addition to the established Decade Collaborative Centres, dialogue is ongoing with partners to establish new centres for Challenge 1 – Marine Pollution and Challenge 4 – Sustainable Ocean Economy.

16. Thirty-eight (38) National Decade Committees have been created and are implementing diverse initiatives to catalyse national interest and resources for the Decade, as well as provide a platform for the discussion of national priorities aligned to the Decade. Notable gaps exist in the global coverage of NDCs, particularly in SIDS. Only 11 of the current Committees reported to the first iteration of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. These Committees have an average Committee size of 37 members, with most members from government or research institutes. On average 18% of members of Committees are ECOPs and 44% are women. Committees cumulatively reported carrying out over 230 Decade related

activities with ocean literacy, capacity development and workshops the most common form of activities.

17. A Data Coordination Group was established in December 2021 to support development and operationalisation of the data, information and knowledge strategy for the Decade. A working group has been established to develop an implementation plan for the strategy; this plan is expected to be released in July 2024. The Corporate Data Group has 10 private sector members that are developing actions to facilitate sharing of data between private sector and the scientific community. The Strategic Communications Group has been renewed and comprises 25 communications experts who provide advice to the Decade Coordination Unit on communications tools and approaches. The Ocean Decade Expert Roster, which has over 250 members, has been established to create a pool of experts to assist the IOC Secretariat with the identification of strategic targets for Ocean Decade Challenges, in the review of Decade programme submissions, and in regular review processes of the Decade.

Resource Mobilisation

18. The following Member States/organizations have made specific financial or in-kind contributions to support Decade coordination activities during this period: Belgium (Government of Flanders), Canada, France, Fugro, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Research Council of Norway, Schmidt Ocean Institute, Sweden, and REV-Ocean.

19. Mobilization of in-kind and financial resources remains a key challenge for the successful implementation of the Decade. Resources are needed for coordination costs at the central (i.e. Decade Coordination Unit) and decentralized levels (notably IOC-led Decade Coordination Offices), as well as for Decade Actions, both endorsed and future Decade Actions. Data from the Decade programmes that reported to the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, indicated that for the next 12-month period, approximately USD 32 million has been secured, while an additional USD 43 million is required for full implementation over the next 12 months representing a resourcing gap of 54%.

20. The Ocean Decade Alliance has grown during this period and now numbers 11 Patrons and 19 institutional members. Alliance members have been engaged in high-level events and in raising visibility of the Ocean Decade amongst their constituencies. Efforts continue to work with Alliance members to develop joint funding or support initiatives for the Decade. Co-branded Calls for Decade Actions have been concluded with the Belmont Forum and the EC-led Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership.

21. There have been significant efforts to engage philanthropic Foundations during this period, and an in-person meeting of the Foundations Dialogue was held in June 2023 in Monaco hosted by the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation. The resulting 2023 [Monaco Statement](#) identified four priority areas of action that are being further developed and that will be workshopped with participants at the Fourth Foundations Dialogue Meeting in Rio de Janeiro in September 2024 hosted by the Boticario Foundation.

22. Secondments and loans of staff from France, Japan and Fugro (a private sector partner) are providing invaluable support to the coordination of the Decade.

23. To maintain the current momentum and level of activity, additional financial or in-kind resources are urgently required to allow the sustained operation of the Decade Coordination Unit. Significant mobilisation of resources will also be required to support Decade Actions.

Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach

24. There were intensive stakeholder engagement and outreach efforts during this period. Numerous events focusing on different aspects of the Ocean Decade were held at the SDG Summit (New York, September 2023), COP28 (Dubai, December 2023), the Fourth United Nations International SIDS Conference (Antigua & Barbuda, May 2024) and the Immersed in Change Conference (Costa Rica, June 2024). The 2024 Ocean Decade Conference, which is discussed below, was the peak of stakeholder engagement during this period.

25. The Ocean Decade website received 194,500 users and generated 611,000 page views over this period. 60% of users were female, and 38% male, with the majority of users under 34 years of age. The website incorporates the Ocean Decade Network, an online community platform for exchange and collaboration which has over 8,000 registered users and is the digital home to the different groups working as part of the Decade. The GenOcean communications campaign is currently being redesigned and will be relaunched in 2024 to focus on citizen science initiatives.

26. Social media followers across all Ocean Decade platforms have grown to approximately 75,000, which represents a significant increase since the last period. Based on reporting to the first iteration of the Monitoring and Reporting Framework, the combined social media reach of Decade Actions, DCCs, DCOs, DIPs and National Decade Committees is over 3 million followers.

Vision 2030 Process & 2024 Ocean Decade Conference

27. The Vision 2030 process that commenced implementation in early 2023 was a significant focus of activity over the last period. Ten Vision 2030 Working Groups were established, each with the mandate of authoring a White Paper to define a strategic ambition for one of the 10 Ocean Decade Challenges. The zero draft versions of White Papers were subject to an open review process in early January 2024 and used by the DCU to develop the *Vision 2030 Outcomes Report* (IOC Ocean Decade Series, 50). This report draws on the key findings of the White Papers, and contains analyses across and between Ocean Decade Challenges, as well as exploring priority cross-cutting themes related to the enabling conditions for the Ocean Decade. The *Vision 2030 Outcomes Report* was discussed at the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference and with the Decade Advisory Board prior to its finalization.

28. Hosted by Spain and co-organised with UNESCO-IOC, the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference was the focal point of stakeholder engagement during this period and milestone moment to discuss the outcomes of the Vision 2030 process. Held as the culmination of Ocean Decade Week (8–12 April 2024), the three-day Conference on 10–12 April 2024 hosted over 2,600 participants from 124 countries and generated over 3,000 unique livestream views. The Conference was structured around four thematic sessions that combined plenary and parallel session discussions that provided a platform to discuss the outcomes of the Vision 2030 process and generate consensus on the science and knowledge priorities for the Ocean Decade, as well as the key enabling conditions that need to be created or reinforced.

29. The key outcome of the Conference was [The Barcelona Statement](#) that captures the key recommendations of the Conference and synthesized a series of announcements and commitments made by UNESCO-IOC and partners during the Conference including *inter alia* the launch of new Decade programmes on Sustainable Ocean Planning and sustainable ocean management in Africa, a proposal for a new Decade Collaborative Centre for sustainable ocean economy in Barcelona, a coastal cities initiative that will be linked to a special event on coastal resilience in advance of the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference, an international coastal cities congress to be hosted by UNESCO-IOC and Qingdao Municipality, China in early 2024, and new funding streams for Africa and SIDS.

30. The Conference also created a significant boost in visibility and outreach for the Decade. There were 21,000 new users of Ocean Decade website from 207 countries and 66,000 page views in the lead-up to and during Conference. During the Conference, there were 496 social media posts with 690,000 impressions and over 4,000 new social media followers.

Perspectives for the Next Period

31. A key focus on the next period will be the socialisation and operationalisation of the recommendations of *The Barcelona Statement*. This Statement and the more detailed recommendations contained in the *Vision 2030 Outcomes Report* will be used to guide the future work of the DCU including the scoping of future Calls for Decade Actions to contribute to the identified priority needs for each Challenge, initiation of new processes and structures to contribute to fulfilment of the cross-cutting recommendations, and targeted discussions with resource providers to align resource mobilisation with the most pressing needs of the Ocean Decade. A framework for tracking progress in the achievement of the recommendations in the lead-up to the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference and beyond is being developed.

32. Upcoming international events including the CBD COP16 (Cali, November 2024) and UNFCCC COP29 (Baku, November 2024) will also be important moments to discuss and create partnerships to contribute to the fulfilment of recommendations from *The Barcelona Statement*. Close cooperation has been established with France and Costa Rica as the co-hosts of the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference (Nice, June 2025) to ensure that the outcomes of the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference are used to underpin discussions in 2025 in relation to science and knowledge priorities and to catalyse action and partnerships. This includes strong engagement in the development of the One Ocean Science Congress, a special event that will be held in the lead-up to the United Nations Ocean Conference.

33. 2025 will mark the mid-term of implementation of the Ocean Decade. As foreseen in the Implementation Plan, a mid-term evaluation of the Ocean Decade will be implemented with the results to be presented to the IOC Assembly at its 33rd Session in 2025. The mid-term evaluation will focus on the development of recommendations to improve delivery and impact of the Ocean Decade with a proposed focus on governance and coordination, resource mobilisation, science and policy impact, engagement and outreach and synergies with IOC programmatic work. [IOC/EC-57/4.7.Doc\(2\)](#) contains a conceptual framework for the evaluation including the proposed methodology and timing.

34. As part of the triennial series of Ocean Decade Conferences, the next event will be held in 2027. A Call for Expressions of Interest for Member States to host the 2027 event will be launched in late 2024 with the announcement of the host country envisaged for the 33rd session of the IOC Assembly in 2025.