



OCEAN BIODIVERSITY
INFORMATION SYSTEM

OBIS Coordination Groups and IWG SG

Kick-Off Meeting [online]

12 July 2024



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1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

The OBIS Coordination Groups and IWG SG Kick-Off meeting was opened by Katherine Tattersall, SG-OBIS Co-Chair. The meeting was attended by 38 participants representing 22 OBIS nodes and the OBIS secretariat (list of participants in Annex 2).



Group picture of meeting participants.

Katherine asked whether there are any other agenda items to be put forward. No other items were put forward and the meeting agenda was adopted.

2. IWG SG-Membership and Coordination Groups

At the request of the ad-hoc SG-OBIS meeting on 30 May 2024, the OBIS Secretariat drafted and shared a template letter in which the OBIS nodes could express their intention to join the SG-OBIS, Data Coordination Group, Product Coordination Group, and IWG on SG Membership.

27 OBIS nodes responded. Despite several reminders, no letter was received from OBIS CPPS, OBIS INDONESIA, FISH OBIS, OBIS ARGENTINA, and HAB OBIS.

The host of OBIS Brazil sent a letter that they can no longer run the node and we are currently looking for a solution within Brazil.

CRODT, host institute of OBIS Senegal, which had lost their status as OBIS node, expressed their desire to join OBIS again.

SG-OBIS-12, as part of a new structure for OBIS, established three new OBIS Coordination Groups: the Nodes Coordination Group, the Data Coordination Group and the Products Coordination Group. Possible initial activities for these Coordination Groups were collated during the meeting with work plans to be defined by the Coordination Groups once commenced.

The SG agreed that the coordination groups would be established with the support of, and have ongoing secretarial support from, a new OBIS Community Engagement Officer who is yet to be appointed (see Agenda Item 3).

Katherine reminded the meeting that each of the coordination groups need to have one or two Co-Chair(s) who will:

- Chair meetings according to the group's agreed-upon schedule.
- Ensure that tasks are appropriately distributed amongst the group members.
- Coordinate their activities with the other coordination groups.
- Report to and represent their group at the SG-OBIS.
- Participate/report at OBIS Executive Committee meetings.

Co-chairs will need to be appointed by the members of their Coordination Group during this meeting or at the latest by the subsequent first meeting. Nominations should be sent by email to the Secretariat.

All Coordination Groups should use the same collaborative tools, proposed by the Secretariat and available in all countries, to maintain a clear record of group activities and progress accessible to the Secretariat and members of the OBIS Coordination Groups. Each group should also maintain a secretary position to promote consistent notetaking across meetings. The Coordination Group reports will be made public.

2.1 IWG SG Membership

At SG-OBIS-12, it was agreed that there would be 16 seats for OBIS nodes consisting of OBIS node managers (or one alternate) who are not already represented as SG-OBIS Co-chairs or CG Co-chair.

Based on the 27 OBIS node letters of intent, 23 OBIS nodes confirmed their intention to join the SG, 3 declined and 1 decision pending.

This means the IWG-SG-Membership will need to determine the process for nodes nomination and selection ensuring representation and equity across Nodes in the SG. The proposed

process would be reviewed for adoption by the SG-OBIS in an online intersessional ad hoc meeting, following which there would be a call to all OBIS Nodes for an official commitment to join the SG-OBIS.

Currently there are 18 members on the IWG-SG Membership:

<https://oceanexpert.org/admin/group/539>

2.2 OBIS Nodes Coordination Group

The Nodes Coordination Group (NCG) provides a forum for all OBIS nodes to discuss ongoing activities, priorities, and barriers they may be facing. Membership to this group **is mandatory** for all OBIS nodes, with at least one representative from each node participating. Meetings will occur every two months. There is no maximum number of members. We aim for max participation. Chairs will lead the membership in pursuing methods to promote communication from all parts of the world and overcome the challenge of time-zone coordination (e.g. leveraging asynchronous communication methods).

OBIS Node Coordination Group activities will include:

- Facilitate inter-node communication and exchange of expertise.
- Define priority objectives to guide the efforts of OBIS Nodes.
- Coordinate and distribute the work related to mobilisation of datasets.
- Provide advice to SG-OBIS on the OBIS science mission, policy, and management relevance and strategic priorities.
- Identify and pursue new directions, potential pilot projects, potential resources, and areas of development for data-driven research and ocean policy and management applications, as well as investigate timely topics to help set future strategic directions.
- This will be done in coordination with the Data Coordination Group and Products Coordination Group.
- Coordinate communication of node successes and achievements.
- Provide annual OBIS node activity reports and mutual support for the challenges of individual nodes.
- Identify and resolve training needs within the community.
- Coordinate and implement any inter-Node related activities agreed upon by the SG to achieve the OBIS mission.

All OBIS nodes are represented including the Secretariat, with 86 people currently members of the NCG. The list is available in the OceanExpert database as group 386, subdivided by OBIS node: <https://oceanexpert.org/group/386>.

The Secretariat received one nomination (John Nicholls) to chair the NCG. A second co-chair is still welcome, and the deadline for a second nomination was extended to the 31st July 2024.

2.3 OBIS Data Coordination Group

The OBIS Data Coordination Group (DCG) will focus on topics/issues related to OBIS Priority Area 1: Data mobilisation and input, more specifically:

- Identify, prioritise, and propose solutions for issues around the following topics:
 - Data and metadata standards and formats
 - Data QC
 - Taxonomy
 - Vocabularies
 - Methods of bringing new data into the system
- Identify data gaps and, in collaboration with the OBIS Nodes Coordination group, prioritise and coordinate data mobilisation efforts.
- Ensure the fitness of quality metrics for assessing the current status of OBIS data (e.g. spatial and taxonomic completeness).
- Maintain the OBIS Manual; especially regarding standards or methods.
- Engage with activities of other relevant bodies (e.g. TDWG, GBIF, GOOS, SCOR) by identifying representatives who will report back to the group.

There is no limit to the number of members who can join. Members can include OBIS Secretariat, OBIS node staff, as well as interested or invited experts. Currently 28 people are members of the DCG. The list is available in the OceanExpert database as group 538: <https://oceanexpert.org/group/538>.

The Secretariat did not receive nominations to chair the DCG and the deadline was extended to the 31st July 2024.

2.4 OBIS Products Coordination Group

The OBIS Products Coordination group (PCG) is a collaborative and interdisciplinary group that is driven by the importance of creating data and information products (i.e. indicators) that are scientifically sound, practical, and relevant to decision-makers in government, industry, and civil society. PCG focuses on OBIS Priority Area 2: Data application and output. More specifically, the PCG will:

- Identify, prioritise, and coordinate the development of data and information products that are of interest to our user community.
- Advise on how best to showcase and catalogue data and information products developed by the wider OBIS community, in line with the OBIS data policy, including proper acknowledgment of other formats of resources (e.g. software applications, workflows, papers, etc.).
- Set minimum metadata and quality requirements for data and information products.

- Propose and develop tools, pipelines, and documentation that can bolster the development of products based on OBIS data.
- Support groups/institutions working on product development (e.g. early warning systems, ecological synthesis groups, etc.) to identify potential collaborations.
- Propose a process for frequent expert validation of data and information products by consulting with local scientific experts and end-users (including local communities and indigenous people).
- Engage with activities of other relevant bodies by identifying representatives and reporting back to the PCG.

Similar to the DCG, there is no limit to the number of members who can join. Members can include OBIS Secretariat, node staff, as well as interested or invited external experts. Currently 18 people are members of the PCG. The list is available in the OceanExpert database as group 503: <https://oceanexpert.org/group/503>.

The Secretariat received two nominations to chair the PCG: Jon Pye and Stephen Formel.

3. OBIS Community Engagement Officer position

To support the OBIS Coordination Groups, the OBIS secretariat will be recruiting a consultant funded by the UNESCO Regular Programme allocation to OBIS. The OBIS Community Engagement Officer will support the OBIS Secretariat by providing administrative and communication support across various activities. This role involves assisting with online meetings, partnership agreements, communication and outreach efforts, and community feedback collection. The officer will work under the supervision of the OBIS Programme Manager and in close collaboration with the OBIS secretariat and Co-chairs of various coordination groups to ensure effective engagement and smooth operations.

The participants are asked to provide feedback to the draft Terms of Reference (Annex 2) and a few corrections were made.

The position will be advertised next week and everyone is asked to distribute the call to potential good candidates within their network.

4. OBIS Executive Committee meeting

The OBIS Executive Committee, composed of SG-OBIS Co-Chairs and outgoing Co-Chairs, Coordination Group Co-Chairs and Secretariat/Programme Manager, is supposed to meet 4 times per year (online, in-person if necessary).

The new OBIS structure is a major change in OBIS and therefore we would like to propose that the next EC-OBIS meeting be held in person, which would set the ground for work of the coordination groups, discuss broad targets, needs, challenges and possible ways of working. The idea is not to provide a top-down decision on how each coordination group will work, but rather to provide a basic structure upon which the chairs can work within the groups.

During the EC meeting, the group will also review and prepare the 2025 OBIS workplan and budget (to be presented to the IODE Management Group likely by December 2024 (for adoption at the IODE Committee meeting in March 2025) as well as plan for the next SG-OBIS meeting and Living Data 2025 Conference (Oct 2025).

The proposed date and place for the EC-OBIS meeting is 15-17 October 2024 at the OBIS secretariat, Oostende, Belgium. The costs would be borne by the IODE regular programme allocation to OBIS. The 2024 work plan has a budget of US\$ 20K for a workshop.

5. Close of meeting

Dan Lear reminded all participants that there was a deadline of the end of July 2024 to nominate for the role of Co-chair of the Data Coordination Group and closed the meeting at 15:59, thanking all participants, with special acknowledgement of those who had stepped forward to take on the Co-chair roles.

Annex 1. List of Participants

Mr. Ward APPELTANS
Programme manager OBIS
UNESCO / IOC Project Office for IODE
InnovOcean Campus
Jacobsenstraat 1
8400 Oostende
Belgium

Mr. Sangho BAEK
Information Management Team Manager
Information Management Team
National Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea
National Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea
101-75, Jangsan-ro, Janghang-eup
Seochun-gun,
Chungchungnam-do
South Korea

Ms. Lisa BENEDETTI
IOC consultant
UNESCO / IOC Project Office for IODE
InnovOcean Campus
Jacobsenstraat 1
8400 Oostende
Belgium

Mr. Izwandy BIN IDRIS
University Lecturer
South China Sea Repository and Reference Centre
Institute of Oceanography and Environment
Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT),Mengabang Telipot
21030 Kuala Terengganu
Terengganu
Malaysia

Ms. Emilie BOULANGER
OBIS scientific officer eDNA
UNESCO / IOC Project Office for IODE
InnovOcean Campus
Jacobsenstraat 1

8400 Oostende
Belgium

Mr. Nicolas BRALIC
Universidad de Concepción, campus Concepción
CALLE VICTOR LAMAS 1290, CASILLA 160-C, CONCEPCION
CONCEPCION
Chile

Ms. Angela DINI
Database Manager
Data Team
Ocean Tracking Network
Steele Ocean Sciences Building - Dalhousie University
Halifax Nova Scotia B3H4R2
Canada

Mr. Benjamin DONNELLY
Research Staff
Duke University, Nicholas School of the Environment
Box 90328
Durham, North Carolina NC 27708
United States

Mr. Fangkun DOU
Institute of Oceanology Chinese Academy of Sciences, Qingdao 7 Nanhai Road

Mr. Christian ELLORAN
Division Director
Biodiversity Knowledge Management Department
ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity
Domingo M. Lantican Avenue
University of the Philippines
Los Baños
4031 Laguna
Philippines

Mr. Braulio FERNÁNDEZ
Universidad de Concepción, campus Concepción
CALLE VICTOR LAMAS 1290, CASILLA 160-C, CONCEPCION
CONCEPCION
Chile

Mr. Stephen FORMEL

Biologist
Science Analytics and Synthesis (SAS) Program
U.S. Geological Survey HQ
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, MS 917
Reston, Virginia 20192
United States

Mr. Katsunori FUJIKURA
Senior Scientist
Marine Biodiversity and Environmental Assessment Research Center
Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology, Yokosuka
2-15 Natsushima
Yokosuka, Kanagawa
237-0061
Japan

Ms. Yi Ming GAN
SCAR Antarctic Biodiversity Portal Rue Vautierstraat 29

Ms. Luciana GENIO
Environmental Analyst
Office of Environmental Management and Mineral Resources
International Seabed Authority
14 - 20 Port Royal Street
Kingston
Jamaica

Mr. Takashi HOSONO
Senior engineer
Global Oceanographic Data Center
Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC), Global Oceanographic
Data Center (GODAC)
3173-25 Showa-machi , Kanazawa-ku
Yokohama, Kanagawa
236-0001
Japan

Mr. Johnny KONJARLA
Project Scientist/IndOBIS Data Manager
Biodiversity & Ecology
Centre for Marine Living Resources & Ecology, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India
ATAL BHAVAN
LNG Road, Puthuvypin South, Ochanthuruthu PO
Kochi 682508

Kerala
India

Ms. Ohnam KWON
National Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea
National Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea
101-75, Jangsan-ro, Janghang-eup
Seochun-gun,
Chungchungnam-do
South Korea

Ms. Elizabeth LAWRENCE
OBIS training officer
UNESCO / IOC Project Office for IODE
InnovOcean Campus
Jacobsenstraat 1
8400 Oostende
Belgium

Mr. Dan LEAR
Head of Data, Information & Technology
The Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom
The Laboratory Citadel Hill
Plymouth
PL1 2PB
United Kingdom

Mr. Oleksandr LEPOSHKIN
Head of Department
Geoinformation systems
Ukrainian Scientific Centre of Ecology of the Sea
89, Frantsuzsky Blvd.
Odessa
Odessa oblast
65009
Ukraine

Mr. Ahmad Fakhurrrazi MOKHTAR
Science Officer
South China Sea Repository and Reference Centre, Institute of Oceanography and
Environment
Universiti Malaysia Terengganu
Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT)
21030 Kuala Nerus

Terengganu
Malaysia

Mr. Noah NGISIANG'E
Researcher/ PhD student
Oceanography and Hydrography
Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, Headquarter & Mombasa Station
PO Box 81651
Mombasa
080100
Kenya

Mr. John NICHOLLS
Researcher/Data Manager
History
Trinity College Dublin, Centre for Environmental Humanities
College Green
Dublin
2
Ireland

Ms. Carolina PERALTA BRICHTOVA
Scientist
Universidad Simon Bolivar
Valle Sartenejas, Baruta
Caracas ,
Venezuela

Mr. Silas PRINCIPE DE SOUZA
Research assistant
UNESCO / IOC Project Office for IODE
InnovOcean Campus
Jacobsenstraat 1
8400 Oostende
Belgium

Mr. Pieter PROVOOST
OBIS Data Manager
UNESCO / IOC Project Office for IODE
InnovOcean Campus
Jacobsenstraat 1
8400 Oostende
Belgium

Mr. Jonathan PYE
Director of Data Operations
Ocean Tracking Network
Steele Ocean Sciences Building - Dalhousie University
Halifax Nova Scotia B3H4R2
Canada

Mr. Sachit RAJBHANDARI
Senior Technical Services Officer (Software Engineer)
Information Data Centre
CSIRO National Collections and Marine Infrastructure
PO Box 1538
Hobart TAS 7001
Australia

Mr. Ioannis RALLIS
Marine Biologist
Biodiversity
Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), Hellenic National Oceanographic Data Centre
(HNODC)
P.O. Box 712
46.7km Athinon-Souniou avenue
190 13 Anavyssos
Greece

Mr. Tshikana RASEHLOMI
Marine Information Management System (MIMS) Manager
Oceans and Coasts Research Directorate
Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
P/Bag X2Rogger Bay
Cape Town
8012
South Africa

Mr. Andres ROUBICEK
Data services officer
CSIRO National Collections and Marine Infrastructure
PO Box 1538
Hobart TAS 7001
Australia

Ms. Hanieh SAEEDI
Coordinator Biodiversity Information
Marine Zoology

Senckenberg Gesellschaft für Naturforschung
Senckenberganlage 25
60325 Frankfurt
Germany

Mr. Narayanane SARAVANANE
Scientist E
ITIS-GROUP
Centre for Marine Living Resources & Ecology, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India
ATAL BHAVAN
LNG Road, Puthuvypin South, Ochanthuruthu PO
Kochi 682508
Kerala
India

Ms. Saara SUOMINEN
Scientific Officer
OBIS
UNESCO / IOC Project Office for IODE
Wandelaarkaai 7
Pakhuis 61
8400 Oostende
Belgium

Ms. Katherine TATTERSALL
Data Architect
Information and Data Centre
CSIRO National Collections and Marine Infrastructure
PO Box 1538
Hobart TAS 7001
Australia

Mr. Anton VAN DE PUTTE
Science Officer
OD Nature
Koninklijk Belgisch Instituut voor Natuurwetenschappen, Museum voor Natuurwetenschappen
Vautierstraat 29
1000 Brussel
Belgium

Ms. Martha VIDES CASADO
Jefe Línea de Investigación ITE-BEM
Biodiversidad y Ecosistemas Marinos
Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas y Costeras José Benito Vives de Andreis

Calle 25 No. 2-55, Playa Salguero, Rodadero
Santa Marta D.T.C.H., Magdalena,
Colombia

Annex 2. Draft Terms of Reference OBIS Community Engagement Officer

Background, purpose, duties and tasks

UNESCO, through the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), is committed to learn more about the nature and resources of the ocean and coastal areas and to apply that knowledge for the improvement of management, sustainable development, the protection of the marine environment, and the decision-making processes of its Member States. IOC serves as a central pillar in the global system of ocean conservation, sustainable use, and governance. It coordinates oceanographic data and information, leads global climate change and marine biodiversity monitoring, coordinates early warning systems, and plays a significant role in Marine Spatial Planning.

The Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS), a core programme component of the IOC's International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE), facilitates the creation, and improvement of interoperable global and regional networks for ocean biodiversity data, information, and knowledge, thereby ensuring that ocean management is adequately supported by science, observations, and data.

The OBIS community of practice is composed of the national, regional or thematic OBIS nodes united by a Nodes Coordination Group, two specialised Coordination Groups on Data and Products and is managed by the OBIS Steering Group (SG-OBIS). The OBIS Secretariat, based at the IOC Project Office for IODE, InnovOcean Campus in Ostend (Belgium) provides training and technical assistance to its network of partners including OBIS nodes and data providers, guides and advice on the development of new data standards and technical developments, and encourages international cooperation and implement the OBIS work plan and oversees the budget, to foster the group benefits of the network.

The OBIS secretariat is now recruiting a consultant “**OBIS Community Engagement Officer**” funded by the UNESCO Regular Programme allocation to OBIS, with payments foreseen on a monthly basis and deliverables detailed below.

The OBIS Community Engagement Officer will support the OBIS Secretariat by providing administrative and communication support across various activities. This role involves assisting with online meetings, partnership agreements, communication and outreach efforts, and community feedback collection. The officer will work under the supervision of the OBIS Programme Component Manager and in close collaboration with the OBIS Secretariat, Steering Group co-chairs and co-chairs of various coordination groups to ensure effective engagement and smooth operations.

Key Responsibilities

Meeting Administration

- Provide technical and secretariat support to organize the (online) meetings of the three new OBIS Coordination Groups (Nodes, Data and Products), the OBIS Steering Group, and the OBIS All-hands meetings. More specifically:
 - Prepare meeting agendas, send out invitations, take minutes, write reports, and assist the Programme Manager and Co-chairs with action item follow-ups.
 - Note, the Data and Products Coordination Groups will have monthly online meetings. The Nodes Coordination group every two months and the SG-OBIS will have one annual in-person meeting and potentially a few online ad-hoc meetings.

Partnership Agreements

- Provide administrative support in drafting and managing partnership agreements.

Communication and Outreach

- Assist in the development and execution of communication strategies.
- Collect ideas for digital and physical branding materials (e.g. visuals, infographics) and ensure consistency in messaging.
- Draft posts for social media platforms including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter and videos on YouTube.
- Maintain a slide deck for presentations by the Secretariat and by other members of the OBIS Community
- Gather information from OBIS use cases, OBIS cited articles, and OBIS community activities to draft news articles for the OBIS website and IODE and IOC websites as appropriate.
- Maintain a register of OBIS-cited papers.
- Support IODE outreach and promotion activities.

Community Feedback

- Collect and document ideas and feedback from the OBIS community and users to inform improvements and new initiatives.

Reporting

- The OBIS Community Engagement Officer reports directly to the OBIS Programme Component Manager.

Qualifications and Experience

Education

- University degree, Bachelor or Master's degree in Environmental Sciences (preferably Biology or Environmental Data), or Media/Communication Studies, or Public Relations.

Work experience

- Required minimum of 3 years of relevant experience at the international level in public relations, communication and outreach, and preferably within the domain of Marine Biodiversity.

Qualifications

Required

- Strong organizational skills and attention to detail.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Proficiency in using social media platforms for professional communication.
- Experience in administrative support, particularly in meeting preparation and documentation.
- Ability to work collaboratively with a diverse team and community.

Desirable

- Knowledge of or experience in marine biodiversity information systems, and biodiversity data standards.
- Experience in drafting and managing partnership agreements.
- Familiarity with content management systems and website maintenance.
- Experience in collecting and analyzing community feedback.

Languages

- Fluency in English. In addition, knowledge of any other UN languages will be a strong asset.

Deliverables

The consultant will produce meeting reports and digital objects associated with the Specific Tasks outlined above and participate in weekly OBIS Secretariat coordination meetings as well as provide regular updates on progress (via Notion project management tool) and monthly activity reports.

Supervisory arrangements

The consultant will work under the overall authority of the Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Commission of UNESCO and the direct supervision of the OBIS Programme Component Manager.

Facilities to be provided by UNESCO

UNESCO will provide the Consultant with all required access to working files, UNESCO network, knowledge-management systems (including institutional email and Microsoft Teams accounts). The individual consultant is expected to work from home but can also be offered temporary office space if needed, at the secretariat at the IOC Project Office for IODE, Ostend,

Belgium. The person is also expected to be available to travel from time to time to attend meetings, events, etc.

Facilities to be provided by the Consultant

The consultant is expected to work from home/chosen location and bear the costs. The consultant will use their personal computer and a good quality of internet to be able to seamlessly attend online video meetings.

Any content provided by the individual consultant will need to comply with international copyright laws. Furthermore, the individual consultant will not claim copyright of the work produced during this appointment (although authorship will be acknowledged by UNESCO).

Taxes

UNESCO will not reimburse any taxes, duties or other contributions for which individuals may be liable in respect of any payments made to them under the terms of their contract.

Insurance

Individuals issued with a contract for individual consultants or other specialists are covered by UNESCO's insurance policy for work-related illness, injury, accidents or death whilst performing their official duties or traveling on behalf of the Organization.

The insurance premium for the coverage, as determined by Pension and Insurance Section (HRM/SPI), must be included in the financial commitment for the contract.

Social Benefits

Individual consultants and other specialists shall be responsible for arranging, at their own expense, any medical insurance that they consider necessary during the contract period. Unless they are affiliated by virtue of their status as former staff members, they cannot be enrolled in the UNESCO's Medical Benefit Fund or United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. Individual consultants and other specialists are not entitled to paid annual or sick leave.

Duration of the contract

Preferably 11 months within a 12-month period and starting 1 September 2024. This appointment is non-career and does not carry any expectancy of renewal or conversion to another contract.