



**INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)**

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Item 4.1 of the Provisional Agenda

**PROGRESS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
OF THE DECADE ROADMAP**

Summary

In accordance with Resolution [A/RES/72/73](#) of the UN General Assembly, and IOC [Resolution EC-LI.1](#), the preparation of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) is well underway. This document describes actions undertaken by the Secretariat and the [Executive Planning Group \(EPG\)](#) established in November 2018 as an advisory body to IOC governing bodies, building on the guidance of the UN Decade Roadmap ([IOC/EC-LI/2 Annex 3](#) and [Corr](#)), as well as next steps towards 2020. Key activities have been conducted to engage stakeholders through parallel consultations and the organization of the 1st Global Planning Meeting (Copenhagen, 13–15 May 2019) and planning of regional workshops. Communication and outreach activities have been implemented to inform Member States, potential partners and other stakeholders of the preparatory phase, with the aim of inviting contributions, as well as to communicate the purpose and expected results of the Decade. An addendum to this document provides further draft guidance on the Decade governance arrangements, the establishment of Decade support offices, and National Coordination Mechanisms (Implementation phase).

Financial and administrative implications: IOC's Decade coordination function is expected to be supported through extra-budgetary contributions. Only under the most favorable budget scenario (\$534.6M) of the IOC 40 C/5 Programme and Budget, some minimal regular budget funding are allocated. See paragraphs 30 & 33.

The proposed decision(s) is referenced as IOC-XXX/Dec.4.1 in the Provisional Action Paper ([IOC-XXX/2 Prov.](#)) of the 30th session of IOC Assembly.

Introduction

1. In December 2017, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030 (hereafter, the Decade), building on the efforts of IOC Member States and the IOC Secretariat. The Decade is a once in a life-time opportunity to deliver a step-change in ocean science and to influence how countries invest, utilize, and participate in science and innovation to embrace societal goals and align research investment to contribute to common goals. The period from 2018 to 2020 is focusing on the preparation of the Decade Implementation Plan that will be submitted to the UN General Assembly for its consideration in 2020. This work is led by IOC, in consultation with Member States and all relevant stakeholders.

2. At its Fifty-first session, the IOC Executive Council took note of the 'Roadmap' document ([IOC/EC-LI/2 Annex 3](#) and [Corr.](#)) as an initial guide to the steps and processes to develop a Decade Implementation Plan. The Roadmap is intended to guide the preparation process in terms of preliminary objectives, societal outcomes, governance and engagement process.

3. This document provides an overview of the activities conducted towards the development of the Decade implementation plan.

Establishment and work of the Executive Planning Group

4. In July 2018, the IOC Executive Council decided, through [Resolution EC-LI.1](#), to establish an Executive Planning Group (EPG) acting as an advisory body to the IOC on the preparation for the Decade. Its main tasks are to: (i) provide advice on the form and structure of the Decade including governance arrangements; (ii) support the drafting of the Implementation Plan for the Decade (to be finalized by 2020 for consideration by the UN General Assembly); and (iii) engage and consult relevant communities. Subsequently a Call for expert nomination was issued through [IOC Circular Letter 2723](#) and widely disseminated amongst and beyond our ocean community. Following a selection process led by the IOC Officers representing all five IOC regional groups, with due consideration to expertise, gender and geographical balance, 19 experts were invited to be a member of EPG. These experts met for the first time from 17 to 19 December 2018 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The EPG provided guidance on the Decade's Implementation Plan formulation process including its structural and programmatic elements, as well as the consultations, engagement and communication strategies to unroll in 2019 and 2020. The report of the 1st EPG Meeting is available as document the UN Decade Series No 1.

5. A number of tasks have been assigned amongst EPG members including: the provision of inputs to the Roadmap, the development of guidelines for the regional consultation workshops, the guidance for the organization of the Global Planning Meeting, the process for the development of a high level science plan, the definition of criteria for endorsement of Decade activities, the development of a business case for investing in ocean science, and the development of a model for the governance of the Decade implementation phase. Most of these works are in progress and are envisaged to be finalised by the end of the year.

6. In May 2019, the EPG produced a white paper entitled *Accelerating Ocean Science for a Better World: The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021–2030* (UN Decade Series, No. 3), which was widely circulated and part of the documentation for the 1st Global Planning Meeting in Copenhagen. This paper is targeting non-technical audience and aims to articulate the proposition value of the Decade towards the achievement of societal outcomes.

Engagement of Stakeholders

UN organizations and UN-Oceans

7. In the last two face-to-face UN-Oceans meetings, IOC shared with UN-Oceans' members preliminary plans for the Decade with a view to identify interests in strengthening the delivery of ocean science and related capacity development aspects towards the implementation of respective members mandates. There was a clear consensus among UN-Oceans members that the Decade adds value to their work and offers an opportunity to strengthen collaboration. Therefore, UN-Oceans may act as a think tank on the Decade and develop a strategy on how and what kind of inputs it could make towards a successful Decade. At its last annual meeting in Geneva (7–8 February), [UN-Oceans](#) agreed to set up a dedicated Contact Group to facilitate the exchanges amongst UN-Oceans Members as well as provide inputs and guidance to the preparatory phase of the Decade. The Group would initially operate until the end of the planning phase (i.e. the end of 2020).

8. As an initial set of tasks, the Group will:

- (i) contribute inputs to the organization of global and regional consultation meetings foreseen in 2019–2020 (identification of topics, speakers, communication and outreach within respective constituencies);
- (ii) assist with the identification and engagement of institutional stakeholders into the planning process, and contribute to communication activities during that phase;
- (iii) review and provide inputs to the key documents being prepared by the Executive Planning Group (a dedicated expert group that has been established by IOC governing bodies to provide advice on the preparation and design of the Decade);
- (iv) brainstorm on the development of potential Decade initiatives to be developed in an inter-agency context.

9. IOC established the UN-Oceans Contact Group in May 2019. In addition, further bilateral consultations have taken place between IOC and ISA (International Seabed Authority), IMO (International Maritime Organization), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), WMO (World Meteorological Organization), UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), UN DOALOS (Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea) and UN Environment. Side events/targeted interventions to promote the Decade have been organized together with IMO, WMO, UNFCCC, ISA, UNESCO (Underwater Cultural Heritage) and UN DOLAOS.

Science community

10. Ocean scientists (interdisciplinary and specialized scientists) and the Innovation and Technology community (ocean science support infrastructures) are critical to engage as early as possible in the process. They will connect oceans science to societal needs. They will bring ocean science perspectives to the Decade and provide scientific technologies and services to the Decade (leading technological developments).

11. Several consultations and participation at the ocean science meetings have taken place. SCOR (Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research), IAPSO (International Association for the Physical Sciences of the Ocean), AGU (American Geophysical Union), PICES (North Pacific Marine Science Organization), ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea), POGO (Partnership for Observation of the Global Oceans), IMBER (Integrated Marine Biogeochemistry and Ecosystem Research Project), AMS (American Meteorological Society), EGU (European Geosciences Union), EMB (European Marine Board), Future Earth, AtlantOs and ICS (International Centre for Science and High Technology) and many other science networks active globally and regionally have been approached to communicate the aims and benefits of the Decade, but also to gather ideas and possible contributions, and to engage young scientists. Convening “Town Hall”

style meetings at the AGU Fall Meeting and the Ocean Sciences Meeting (OSM) in late 2018 and early 2019, respectively, are two examples of such opportunities. A breakout session on the Decade will be organized at [OceanObs'19](#) in Hawaii from 16 to 20 September 2019.

12. The engagement of the science community is also critical to the development of the Decade Science Plan. At its first meeting, the EPG deliberated that the Science Plan should be designed on the basis of a bottom-up process complementing the top-down guidance on the scoping of the Decade. A task team of the EPG was constituted to guide this exercise, and the IOC Secretariat was asked to elaborate a process for the collection of inputs from the active scientific community that will inform the Science Plan. Under the guidance of the dedicated EPG task team, the IOC Secretariat developed a questionnaire and invited relevant expert groups and scientific networks to fill it. As per EPG guidance, the questionnaire focused on the first three Strategic Objectives of the Decade, which pertain directly to the science aspects of the Decade. The initial results of the survey were presented at the Global Planning Meeting in Copenhagen (13–15 May 2019). It is suggested that the exercise conducted be considered as a pilot for developing the Science Plan. The approach followed with the questionnaire could be expanded to further expert groups, scientific networks and organizations, within a timeline coherent with the development of the overall Decade Implementation Plan.

Foundations and philanthropic organizations

13. A mapping exercise has been conducted in order to identify potential foundations and philanthropic organizations that have an interest in funding societally-relevant ocean science. A consultant was hired to undertake such mapping and develop an engagement strategy with this group of stakeholders. Through alignment and leveraging of investment in high impact ocean research, there is strong potential to support the Decade and its activities in order to fulfill intervention objectives. To take this potential dialogue further, a partnership agreement has been signed with the Velux Foundation (Denmark). This cooperation entails: (i) the development of a plan for engaging private foundations at global regional and national level in the Decade; (ii) a Decade engagement conference for private foundations to be held in Copenhagen at the Danish Royal Academy of Science and Letters at the end of October 2019; and (iii) the potential establishment of a platform for private foundations to share information about Decade activities and initiatives throughout the Decade.

Private sector

14. Cooperation with the UN Global Compact has been established. The Global Compact brings together approximately 13,000 corporate participants committed to catalyse action towards the 2030 Agenda. It encourages businesses worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies. The UN Global Compact's Action Platform for Sustainable Ocean Business contributes specifically towards the development of the Sustainable Ocean Business Principles, which will be launched at the 74th session of the UN General Assembly (17–30 September 2019). The Global Compact was an official sponsor of the Decade Global Planning Meeting in Copenhagen. Further collaboration is envisaged with a view to developing a joint policy brief to highlight potential models and best practices in ocean science partnerships illustrating public/private initiatives, data philanthropy, the role of technology incubators, etc. A Partnership Agreement signed in 2017 with the World Ocean Council will also provide an avenue for engaging the corporate sector in the work of the Decade.

Targeted engagement: youth, early career professionals and gender mainstreaming

15. Youth is considered to be a key group to engage during the Decade and the planning phase. The next generation (not only early career scientists but also high school kids and under-graduates) is a key audience to be targeted through communication activities, as they will become the future decisions-makers, scientists, managers, economic actors who will manage the Decade. This will require the development of specific means of communication as the way they communicate is very different from the actual generation (platforms, blogs and networks). The implication of the Early career scientists in the preparation phase was also stressed during the Global Planning Meeting last

May. Seed funding has been made available to support the participation of such groups into the regional workshops and global meetings.

16. As noted by the Global Ocean Science Report ([GOSR-I](#)), female scientists represent on average 38% of marine scientists. The Decade will promote gender equality across the whole value chain, from research to the development of products to inform policy. Particular attention will also be paid to women in the planning phase as their participation will be encouraged in the consultative and planning meetings as well as their inclusion in the governance mechanisms (for example, gender balance was one of the criteria for the selection of the Decade Executive Planning Group). This data will be highlighted in the communication materials to be developed.

1st Global Planning Meeting (Copenhagen, 13–15 May 2019)

17. The IOC convened the 1st Global Planning Meeting in Copenhagen from 13 to 15 May 2019, hosted by the National Museum of Denmark. This foundational meeting brought together 246 institutional representatives (including IOC Secretariat) working at the science-policy interface, as well as ocean businesses and philanthropic organizations committed to ocean sustainability, to start crafting science-based solutions and partnerships that the Decade will deliver.

18. The Global Planning Meeting was conceived as an integral part of the Decade design process, providing the first forum for international, interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder dialogues that will work in preparing and eventually implement the Decade. The aim of the meeting was to engage stakeholders and provide inputs to the development of the Implementation Plan of the Decade.

19. Specifically the objectives of the Global Planning Meeting were to:

- (i) identify the science questions the Decade should focus on across the R&D priority areas identified in the Decade roadmap and any additional R&D priorities that need to be tackled in order to meet the societal outcomes that the Decade aims to achieve by 2030;
- (ii) elaborate plans to address these science questions, including potential programmes, partnerships and resources;
- (iii) address cross-cutting priorities that are crucial to the success of the Decade, such as, capacity building and marine technology transfer, financing and partnerships, data and information sharing and knowledge exchange and communication; and
- (iv) connect with key stakeholders to build ambition and amplify engagement with the entire ocean community to prepare for the Decade.

20. The meeting was organized in plenary and breakout groups to facilitate in-depth and interdisciplinary discussions across sectors (i.e. ocean science and technology; ocean policy and sustainable development; business and industry; NGOs and civil society; donors and foundations) with the view to identify possible deliverables and partnerships that will meet the Decade's six societal outcomes. Cross-cutting elements were also discussed in depth such as those related to the transformation of knowledge systems; acceleration of transfer of technology; the enabling of training and education; and science-policy dialogues.

21. The same framework will be replicated for the organization of the regional consultation workshops to facilitate the integration of regional outputs into the global planning process. In addition to the report of the first Global Planning Meeting (UN Decade Series, No 1), a synthetic document highlighting the main conclusions and recommendations will be made available to the regional workshops.

UN Informal Consultative Process on Ocean and Reporting to the UNGA

22. Pursuant to paragraph 358 of General Assembly resolution 73/124 of 11 December 2018 ([A/RES/73/124](#)), the twentieth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP-20) will focus on Ocean Science and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Taking place from 10 to 14 June 2019, at the UN Headquarters in New York, USA, this meeting will provide an additional opportunity to consult and engage with UN Member States in the preparation of the UN Decade. Several EPG members as well as the IOC Chairperson and Executive Secretary have been selected as panelists and will present progress in the preparation of the Decade, as well as address themes related to the scope and uses of, and gaps in, ocean science, and international cooperation and coordination in advancing ocean science. IOC will organize a dedicated side event on the Decade at ICP-20.

23. In addition to ICP providing a channel for IOC to report on progress with the Decade, IOC also provided substantial inputs on the UN Decade and ocean science through the Report of the Secretary-General on Oceans and the Law of the Sea to the UNGA (74th session, [A/74/70](#)).

Organization of Decade regional consultation workshops

24. Regional consultation workshops are an integral part of the Decade design process to achieve the engagement of various communities through a multi-stakeholder dialogue. These will build on the structure of the Global Planning Meeting with a focus on regional requirements and priorities as well as contributions to global activities. Working groups will be organized around the six societal outcomes that have been defined in the Decade Roadmap document ([IOC/EC-LI/2 Annex 3](#) and [Corr.](#)) in order to ensure that science delivered under the Decade is policy relevant.

25. The aims of the regional consultation workshops are therefore to:

- (i) communicate the purpose and expected results of the Decade to all stakeholders;
- (ii) engage and consult the ocean community concerning the Decade Implementation Plan and more particularly assess the status of regional ocean research vis-à-vis the requirements of regional policy requirements (for example, identifying priorities in research or in capacity development and training);
- (iii) identify the possible contributions of regional bodies to the Decade objectives, aligning their agenda with the Decade;
- (iv) identify possible themes or topics for workshops that may be part of the Decade;
- (v) draft plans for such initiatives, as appropriate, including scope, objectives, expected results, participation and possible schedule; and
- (vi) identify opportunities for investment and resource mobilization for the Decade.

26. Some progress with the organization of regional consultation workshops, as foreseen in the Roadmap document, has been achieved thanks to the hosting offers received from Member States and/or regional organizations. The first two regional workshops will focus on the Pacific Ocean and will be hosted by the Pacific Community (23–25 July 2019) and the Government of Japan (31 July–2 August 2019), respectively. Other workshops are foreseen in 2019 and early 2020, namely for the Indian Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, the North Atlantic (including Arctic) and South Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and South East Pacific region. Further consultations about the hosting of such meetings are underway with the Governments of France, Mexico, Canada, Brazil and Italy, as well as with the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific and the European Community.

Communication and outreach activities

27. Thanks to the support provided by the Governments of Republic of Korea, Japan and Flanders (Belgium), a communication campaign is underway to inform Member States, potential

partners and other stakeholders of the preparatory phase, with the aim of inviting contributions, as well as to communicate the purpose and expected results of the Decade.

28. The following communication and engagement activities will be initiated (and the following outputs anticipated) in accordance with the communication strategy defined in the Decade Roadmap:

- **Support for the participation of early career scientists and SIDS/LDCs experts in the Preparatory Phase consultative and planning meetings.**
- **Communication materials:** Promotional documents, videos, kakemonos and exhibition booths are being produced to communicate about the Decade at major ocean events. These communication materials will be used during the consultative and planning meetings of the Decade as well as during side-events at international meetings.
- **A new Decade website (<http://oceandecade.org>) has been launched** in June 2019 providing a platform for Decade advocates and participants to register their ideas, commitment through an **Online Community Forum**.
- **A Communication expert Group has been established following the Global Planning Meeting.** The Communications Advisory Group for the Decade brings together communication professionals from the different stakeholder groups (governments, scientific institutions, foundations and civil society, and the private sector) who have strong experience and keen interest in communication issues. Members of this group will support the communications work of the IOC Secretariat and advise the Decade's Executive Planning Group on communications issues.
- **Media training** will be organized, when possible, in parallel to the regional consultation workshops, to fully integrate national and regional media in the consultations, sensitizing them around the societal outcomes of the Decade and harvesting their feedback about how we should be communicating about the Decade to independents journalists, major media networks, and digital influencers (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube). An additional output from each media training will be a list of commitments by participating media representatives (e.g. covering a number of Decade stories per year).
- **A communication strategy** is being developed aimed at increasing awareness of the Decade and its objectives among target audiences resulting in engagement and participation in Decade activities. On the basis of the communication strategy, programme development, engagement and communication experts will provide support to the IOC Secretariat in the development of these engagement and communication activities.

29. The IOC Secretariat and members of the EPG will continue to play an active role in communicating the objectives of the Decade at various scientific conferences, science/policy meetings, and UN meetings, among which those scheduled in 2019:

- EurOcean 2019 conference, 11–12 June, UNESCO, Paris, France
- Oceans 2019, 17–20 June, Marseille, France
- 2019 IMBER Open Science Conference, 17–21 June, Brest, France
- Eleventh WIOMSA Scientific Symposium, 1–6 July, Mauritius
- 27th IUGG Assembly with the IAPSO (International Association of Physical Sciences of the Ocean), 8–18 July, Montreal, Canada
- 3rd session of the Intergovernmental Conference on BBNJ/IGC, 19–30 August, New York, USA
- G7 45th Summit, 25–27 August, Biarritz, France

- 46th Annual session of GESAMP and the 50th Anniversary of GESAMP, 9–13 September, NY, USA
- OceanObs'19 – An Ocean of opportunity, 16–20 September, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA
- 1st Marine Regions Forum, 30 September–2 October, Berlin, Germany
- 6th Our Ocean Conference, 24–25 October, Oslo, Norway
- Oceans'19 MTS, 27–30 November, Washington, USA
- Santiago Climate Change Conference (25th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 25) to the UNFCCC), 2–13 December, Chile

Financial implications

30. Overall, the main challenge for the Commission's small Secretariat is the dual task to raise not only extrabudgetary resources necessary to maintain its core operational programmes but also significant additional resources to lead and coordinate the Decade preparation phase. Document IOC/Decade-Inf.1 provides a summary of the resources implications related to the coordination of the preparatory phase. Until now, most of the funds have been provided through extra-budgetary contributions. Five countries (Belgium, Canada, Japan, Republic of Korea, and UK) have made specific financial contributions to IOC to support planning activities. The Government of Canada has offered the loan of an expert for one year starting in June 2019. IOC benefited from the return by UNESCO of USD 170,000 from the funds held up in the result of UNESCO cash issues at the end of 2018, following the decision from the Executive Board at its 206th session to carry forward unspent fund from the previous biennium. Yet, further commitments are needed in order to deliver a Decade plan, which fully reflects the need of all nations, as well as to fund the Decade activities between 2021 and 2030. The coordination of the preparation and start-up phase requires full-time professionals (at minimum, a P5 coordinator, a P3 programme specialist for managing activities and partnerships, a communication specialist at P1/P2 level, and an administrative assistant). Currently, none of these positions are sustained. The coordination of Decade activities is being managed by the Head of Marine Policy & Regional Coordination on a part-time basis, supported by one consultant funded through extra-budgetary funds.

Next steps

31. It is anticipated that the draft Decade Implementation Plan will be finalized after the second global planning meeting in 2020, and will be circulated widely for comments prior to its finalisation and transmission to the UNGA. The 2nd UN Ocean Conference, co-hosted by Portugal and Kenya in Lisbon from 2 to 6 June 2020, with a focus on the progress from science to actions, will also provide a strategic opportunity to present the draft Decade Implementation Plan and forge partnerships around programmes and initiatives.

32. The second meeting of the EPG will take place in December 2019 or January 2020. Amongst its tasks, the definition of endorsement criteria and process for the Decade activities/projects will need to be completed, together with first the formulation of a high-level science plan built on regional, global and thematic inputs, and second a proposal for governance arrangements during the implementation phase.

33. The Commission relies primarily on extra-budgetary funds for its work on the Decade, and in this respect, the continuation of this coordination role beyond 2020 should be carefully assessed in light of available resources both at programmatic and staffing levels. The contribution of Member States and partners will be essential to successfully start the implementation of the Decade. As highlighted in the Roadmap document, Member States are encouraged to establish mechanisms to stimulate engagement of national stakeholders in the UN Decade, though the establishment of national committees/coordination mechanism, possibly building on existing IOC national committees. These coordination mechanisms may also include Decade support offices hosted by Member States that could underpin the implementation of thematic and/or regional aspects of the

Decade in liaison with IOC as global coordinator. With regards to the latter, the Assembly is invited to consider the draft guidance for the establishment of Decade support offices and national coordination structures (Implementation phase) as proposed in the addendum to this document (IOC-XXX/2 Annex 3 Add.)