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INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

**OVERVIEW OF THE IOC PROGRAMMATIC INTEGRATION WITH,
AND CONTRIBUTION TO, THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE
OF OCEAN SCIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Summary

This document illustrates the continuous alignment and synergies between the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) and relevant programmes and activities of the IOC, as well as with the High-Level Objectives and Functions of IOC defined in its current Medium-term Strategy 2014–2021 and the proposed Draft Medium-term Strategy 2022–2029 ([IOC-XXX/2 Annex 10 rev](#)).

1. INTRODUCTION

In its Omnibus Resolution for Oceans and the Law of the Sea ([A/RES/72/73](#)) adopted at its 72nd session, the United Nations General Assembly decided to proclaim the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (hereafter the Decade) for the 10-year period beginning on 1 January 2021, and called upon the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) to prepare an implementation plan for the Decade in consultation with Member States, specialized agencies, funds, programmes and bodies of the United Nations, as well as other intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and relevant stakeholders.

In addition to the above-mentioned coordinating role of the Decade's design and preparation, which are described in detail in document [IOC-XXX/2 Annex 3](#), IOC is also to play a substantive role with regard to identifying programmatic contributions and thereafter in implementing the Decade. Previous proposals on the Decade and the role of IOC therein anticipated elements of such a substantive contribution ([IOC/INF-1341 Rev.Prov.](#) and [IOC/INF-1357](#)).

The IOC Executive Council at its 51st session (3–6 July 2018, Paris, France) considered a revised Roadmap for the Decade ([IOC/EC-LI/2 Annex 3](#) and Corr.) that proposed steps and a process to develop an Implementation Plan. An important element of the process will be to invite contributions from relevant IOC programmes and expert groups, to build the portfolio of Decade activities.

The revised Roadmap provided the basis for the First Global Planning Meeting of the Decade (13–15 May 2019, Copenhagen, Denmark). At this meeting, participants considered the six societal goals of the Decade—a clean, healthy and resilient, safe and predicted, sustainably harvested and productive, and data transparent ocean by 2030—as well as some crosscutting elements (capacity building, communication), and identified related priority issues and elaborated modalities for making progress with them.

The priority issues and actions identified in Copenhagen aim at operationalizing the transformative objectives of the Decade. Through its programmes and activities, framed in the context of its Medium-term Strategy ([IOC/INF-1314](#)) and the IOC Functions, IOC is already assisting significantly in identifying and articulating the issues and actions that need to be addressed and carried out in relation to the Decade's societal goals and strategic objectives. For example, in relation to Strategic Objective 2, IOC and SCOR have framed multidisciplinary work on understanding and managing the effects of cumulative stressors by mobilizing the advice of a large expert community on this matter (see IOC/INF-1367s); the Tsunami Unit of the IOC Secretariat has facilitated plenary and working group sessions at the First Planning Global Meeting of the Decade on the societal goal 'A Safe Ocean', resulting in the identification of science questions that need to be addressed; gaps in knowledge; research and observation requirements; capacity development issues; and considerations related to co-design of actions in relation to the societal goal.

In turn, the Decade provides a unique opportunity to reiterate the relevance of IOC's work in promoting international scientific cooperation for the advancement of global goals and, specifically, for achieving ocean sustainability.

2. CONSISTENCY AND POTENTIAL SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE PRELIMINARY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE DECADE AND THE HIGH-LEVEL OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS OF IOC

While the goals and objectives presented in the revised Roadmap are indicative and subject to refinement, they provide a guiding framework to define the substantive contribution of IOC to the Decade. The revised Roadmap document and the output of the First Global Planning Meeting (see [IOC/INF-1371](#)) propose a set of societal goals largely consistent and synergistic with the High-Level Objectives (HLOs) of [IOC's Medium-Term Strategy 2014–2021](#) and also with the proposed Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2029, as illustrated below.

Decade's Societal Outcomes (Revised Roadmap)	IOC High Level Objectives 2014–2021				Proposed additional HLO 2022–2029
	1. A healthy ocean	2. Effective early warning	3. A climate change resilient ocean	4. Enhanced knowledge	Science-based sustainable blue economies
A clean ocean	√			√	
A healthy and resilient ocean	√			√	
A predicted ocean		√	√	√	√
A safe ocean		√	√		√
A sustainably harvested and productive ocean	√		√	√	√
A transparent and accessible ocean				√	

Table 1. The societal goals of the Decade IOC High Level Objectives 2014–2021 and the proposed additional HLO 2022–2029

A comparison of IOC's functions with the strategic objectives of the Decade also helps contextualize the substantive contribution of IOC to the Decade, as per the table below.

DECADE'S OBJECTIVES (Draft Roadmap)	IOC FUNCTIONS					
	A. Foster research to strengthen knowledge	B. Maintain, strengthen and integrate observing and data systems	C. Early warning systems and preparedness for ocean risks	D. Assessments and information in support of the science-policy interface	E. Enhance governance through shared knowledge and regional cooperation	F. Build institutional capacity
(i) Generate knowledge	√				√	
(ii) Multiple ocean stressors and Ecosystem Based Management	√			√	√	

(iii) Reduce risks			√			
(iv) Enhance observing networks		√				
(v) Ocean science capacity and literacy	√					√
(vi) Enhance multi-stakeholder cooperation and support decision-making				√	√	√

Table 2. The Strategic Objectives of the Decade and IOC Functions

A non-exhaustive list of programmes and activities carried out by the Commission that are already now providing a substantive contribution to the scoping of the Decade is presented below:

- IOC's activities aimed at recording marine life (OBIS, GOOS), as well as IOC's cooperation with IHO (International Hydrographic Organization) in leading the GEBCO (General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans) effort, in relation to a multi-disciplinary integrated mapping of the ocean.
- IOC's expert work on multiple ocean stressors and their effects on species and ecosystems (HABs, TrendsPO, GOA-ON, GO2NE, and IGMETS) and the Commission's work on integrated coastal and ocean management and marine spatial planning, including transboundary and large-marine ecosystem approaches for the sustainable use of marine resources, in relation to enhancing ecosystem-based management.
- IOC's lead role in GOOS as a contribution to an ocean observing system for all major ocean basins.
- IOC's Ocean Data and Information System (ODIS), under development by IODE (International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange), in relation to making the outputs of research and observations discoverable, available and shared freely and openly in compliance with the [IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange policy](#). This will include the dissemination of data, information and decision-support tools for management actions in coastal and marine ecosystems.
- IOC's work in the area of tsunami early warning and coastal and marine hazards adaptation and preparedness, in relation to an integrated multi-hazard warning system for all ocean basins.
- The portfolio of IOC activities in the area of capacity development activities. The [Global Ocean Science Report](#) provides the reference mechanism to systematically measure progress towards the achievement of [Sustainable Development Goal Target 14.A](#), which deals with ocean science capacity and the transfer of marine technology. The second edition of GOSR, due in 2020, will contain a specific section on the Decade and will provide a baseline on status and trends in ocean science capacity to inform strategic decisions for

ocean science in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the Decade (see [IOC/INF-1366](#)).

The revised Roadmap document refers to a possible structure for the Decade organized in the form of a portfolio of programmes and projects. In this respect, it is envisaged that current and future activities of IOC could be labelled as projects contributing to the Decade when responding to issues yet to be defined in the Decade's Science Plan.

3. MOBILIZING THE CONTRIBUTION OF RELEVANT IOC PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES TO INFORM THE SOCIETAL GOALS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE DECADE

Since the production of the revised Roadmap for the Decade, the IOC Secretariat has promoted the engagement of the ocean science community in the Decade through the various programmes and activities listed in section 2 above, inputs on the scientific contents and priority activities of the Decade will be collected through a survey on the Decade's Science Plan. The Secretariat has also mobilized its Sub-Commissions in the planned regional to global consultation workshops and in the coordination of regional perspectives on and contributions to the Decade's Implementation Plan.

The IOC Secretariat communicates extensively with the governance mechanisms of IOC's main programmes to define their contributions to the operationalization of the strategic objectives of the Decade, including through the design and implementation of science plans, project research plans, and related capacity development activities. As an example, a specific side event on the contribution of GOOS (Global Ocean Observing System) to the Decade was held during the First Global Planning Meeting in Copenhagen (May 2019).

The IOC Secretariat also regularly consults SCOR (Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research), ISC (International Science Council) and other with scientific partners and co-sponsors of IOC programmes and activities in the identification of substantive inputs to the Decade process.