

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
Reports of Meetings of Experts and Equivalent Bodies



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**Intergovernmental
Oceanographic
Commission**

**IOC UNESCO Sub-Commission for the
Caribbean and Adjacent Regions**

First Meeting of the IOCARIBE Ocean Literacy Task Team
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF OCEAN LITERACY	1
3. ONGOING REGIONAL OCEAN LITERACY INITIATIVES	2
a) Network of European Blue Schools (NEBS).....	2
b) Blue Schools Programme in Mexico	3
c) Blue Schools Programme in Brazil.....	4
d) Blue Schools Programme in Honduras.....	5
e) Educational Areas Programme in France.....	5
f) Educational Areas Programme in Martinique	6
4. PROPOSED WORK PLAN	6
5. PREPARATION FOR THE 2025 UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE	7
6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS	7
7. CLOSING	7
ANNEX I. AGENDA	8
ANEEX II. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	9

1. INTRODUCTION

1 The first IOCARIBE Ocean Literacy Task Team was opened on Friday, 15 November, 2024 at 09:00 am (COT) by Ms. Lorna Inniss, Head of IOCARIBE, who welcomed the participants.

2 Ms. Lorna Inniss, outlined that the meeting would take place with the support of interpretations available in English, French and Spanish. She proceeded to introduce the meeting agenda without amendments and opened the floor for a round of introductions from the meeting participants.

IOC UNESCO Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions Introduction

3 Ms. Lorna Inniss, Head of IOCARIBE, provided a brief introduction about the IOC UNESCO Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE) office. IOCARIBE is composed of 29 Member States and fosters collaboration in ocean science and knowledge across the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico. The Statutory Intergovernmental meetings of IOCARIBE take place on a biennial basis, the next one expected to take place from 31 March to 4 April of 2025.

4 IOCARIBE Programmes include the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Tsunami and other Coastal Hazards Warning System for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (ICG/CARIBE-EWS), a successful collaborative effort for tsunami readiness, and various observing networks for Early Warning Systems (EWS).

5 The Harmful Algal Blooms Programme and the Sargassum Working Group, with six Task Teams, also aim to develop EWS and forecasting systems, reflecting the interconnected nature of oceanic issues, benefiting sectors like tourism.

6 Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) will see the opening of the PROCARIBE+ Project (2025-2027), funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which aims at protecting, restoring and harnessing the natural coastal and marine capital of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (CLME).

7 IOCARIBE is involved in numerous actions of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030). The IOCARIBE Capacity Development Working Group and Ocean Literacy Task Team, are essential for the contribution of the region to the UN Ocean Decade challenges. The First Session of the IOCARIBE Capacity Development Working Group took place on 18 October 2024, in which it was highlighted that effective capacity development requires the conduction of activities beyond research, including ocean literacy and technical trainings.

8 The Head of IOCARIBE, proceeded to introduce the Coordinators of the Ocean Literacy Task Team, Ms. Ronaldo Christofolletti, Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP, Brazil) and Ms. Rahanna Juman, Deputy Director of the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA, Trinidad and Tobago).

2. GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF OCEAN LITERACY

9 Mr. Esteban Burguett, IOC UNESCO Assistant Project Officer, provided a report on the global overview of Ocean Literacy. The Ocean Literacy Projects for the Ocean Decade are spearheaded by the Ocean Literacy Group of Experts (GoE). This group consists of 20 experts from various backgrounds, enabling a transdisciplinary approach to their work. The experts provide guidance and oversee the implementation and

monitoring of the IOC Ocean Literacy Portfolio, ensuring a comprehensive overview of their activities. The GoE defines good practices for ocean literacy, develop global and regional programmes, and coordinates networks at various levels. One notable outcome is the IOC UNESCO State of the Ocean Report, which includes a chapter on ocean literacy. The GoE participates in educational conferences and ocean communication events worldwide to expand its network.

10 Another significant group is the Decade Coordination Office (DCO) for Connecting People and the Ocean. The DCO provides advice on applying and evaluating Challenge 10 of the UN Ocean Decade.

11 In June 2024, the Venice Declaration was established during the Ocean Literacy World Conference. This declaration, created with input from a wide community of ocean literacy experts and Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs), outlines action points to restore humanity's relationship with the ocean from various perspectives, including social, educational, and policy-making. The Venice Declaration is being translated into multiple languages to reach more countries.

12 For the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France in 2025. Ocean literacy and education are a part of the Ocean Action Panel 2, to strengthen the ocean and science-policy interface. In addition, there will be an Ocean and Climate Village exhibition to engage youth and the general public. There are discussions to plan a Blue Schools Global Meeting to strengthen the Blue Schools Global Network and continue the Ocean Literacy Dialogues. These initiatives aim to foster new collaborations and bring voices from the Caribbean and other regions to the global stage.

13 The IOC UNESCO Ocean Literacy Programme has also developed the Blue Curriculum for Policymakers and the Ocean Literacy General Toolkit for formal education, providing resources to integrate ocean literacy into curricula. The Global Network of Blue Schools is still in its early stages, particularly in Latin America, where they are setting up national coordinators to strengthen the network through training, monthly meetings, and educational resources. There is also an ongoing progress to establish networks in the Maldives and Europe, with a focus on addressing gaps in Asia.

14 Another important Ocean literacy initiative is the Sea Beyond Programme of the Prada Group and IOC UNESCO. This programme involves high school students in creating educational projects on topics like the ocean-climate relationship and biodiversity. The projects are evaluated by judges, and winners are announced annually. They are planning the fourth edition for 2025, with new collaborations to be announced soon.

15 The Kindergarten of the Lagoon is a project under the Sea Beyond Programme, which involves kindergarten children in outdoor activities to connect with the environment and their cultural heritage. Initially tested in Venice, this project has expanded to weekly outdoor experiences, increasing the number of outdoor activities.

3. ONGOING REGIONAL OCEAN LITERACY INITIATIVES

a) Network of European Blue Schools (NEBS)

16 Ms. Dominika Wojcieszek, European Marine Science Educators Association, provided a report about the Network of European Blue Schools (NEBS). The European Union manages the NEBS, which is part of a larger initiative aimed at promoting ocean literacy among EU citizens. This initiative, known as the EU for Ocean coalition, was established in 2020 to ensure the sustainable management of ocean and marine

resources. The coalition comprises three main components: the EU for Ocean platform, the Youth for Ocean Forum, and the Network of European Blue Schools.

17 The EU for Ocean platform serves as a collaborative space for businesses, institutions, research organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders to work together on ocean-related projects. The Youth for Ocean Forum engages young people aged 16 to 30 in ocean literacy and conservation efforts. The Network of European Blue Schools focuses on integrating ocean education into schools by involving teachers and students in ocean-related projects.

18 For schools to join the NEBS, there are five compulsory criteria. i. Develop a project with interlinked activities that help students learn about the ocean; ii. Produce a clear output such as a science fair, art show, play, podcast, song, report, or social media campaign; iii. Involve all students in the project; iv. Collaborate with a local or external partner; and v. Communicate the project results through various channels like social media, school websites, or local media.

19 The network primarily targets the 27 EU member states but also includes associated countries. Collaboration with UNESCO allows schools from non-EU countries to join the global network. As of the latest update, the network includes over 500 schools and has issued 567 certificates, involving nearly 80,000 students in various projects.

20 The distribution of Blue Schools varies across regions, with the Mediterranean Sea region leading with 313 schools. Other regions include the Black Sea, Atlantic Ocean, North Sea, and Baltic Sea. Countries with strong maritime traditions, such as Spain, Italy, Greece, and Portugal, have a significant number of Blue Schools. Even countries without an ocean coastline, like Slovakia, Austria, and Hungary participate by developing ocean-related projects.

21 The network's success is measured by the number of schools and students involved, as well as the variety of projects undertaken. By promoting ocean literacy and encouraging active participation in conservation efforts, the network helps prepare the next generation of EU citizens to sustainably manage and protect marine resources. The initiative is a great opportunity to build a bridge between ocean professionals; provide teachers the resources and networking opportunities organized by the EU4Ocean platform and Yotuh4Ocan; and collaborate with other schools nationally and internationally.

DISCUSSION

22 Ms. Elva Escobar, Chair of the IOCARIBE Capacity Development Working Group, inquired if there are similar statistical information regarding the number of established Blue Schools in the TAC region?

23 Mr. Ronaldo Christofolletti, responded that the All-Atlantic Blue Schools Network has that type of statistical analysis.

24 Ms. Lorna Inniss, added that the IOCARIBE Ocean Literacy Task Team should aim to have quantitative data of the number of blue schools in the region. She suggested to include this recommendation in the IOCARIBE OL-TT Work Plan.

b) Blue Schools Programme in Mexico

25 Ms. Andira Guzman, National Coordinator of Mexican Blue Schools, provided a report about the development of blue schools in Mexico. In Mexico, there is very low cultural awareness about the importance of marine resources. The national blue schools programme lacks funding and a lot of the work is completed through volunteering. Presently, the programme is working to secure external funding.

26 There are six blue schools established across the country located in the Mexican states of Yucatan, Campeche, Quintana Roo and Sinaloa. The goal is to establish more blue schools in other regions of the country.

27 The programme efforts have fluctuated over time, with varying levels of success and participation. To increase the success of the programme, there has been capacity development workshops provided to teachers, offering resources to help educators integrate ocean literacy into their curriculum. The programme aims to provide information and support to schools at all levels, from preschool to high school.

DISCUSSION

28 Ms. Raquel Lorenz, IOC UNESCO Ocean Literacy Global Programme, informed that the Global Blue Schools programme is creating a tool kit. She encourages to discuss the inclusion of IOCARIBE Blue Schools into the toolkit.

29 Ms. Lorna Inniss, agreed and added that there should be a follow up meeting to discuss this.

30 Mr. Ronaldo Christofolletti, noted it is essential to link the Global Blue Schools actions with those at regional and national level (Atlantic and Caribbean).

c) Blue Schools Programme in Brazil

31 Mr. Ronaldo Christofolletti, IOCARIBE Ocean Literacy Task Team Coordinator, provided a report on the development of blue schools in Brazil. The Ocean Literacy agenda in Brazil, developed in collaboration with UNESCO and the Ministry of Science and Technology, includes the Blue Schools movement and the Ocean Olympics. Currently, there are 339 Blue Schools across Brazil, involving over 100,000 students and more than 2,000 teachers. These schools participate in forums and science fairs, linking their actions to national topics such as Science for Sustainable Development and Biodiversity and Biomes. The Ministry of Science and Technology has announced that in 2025, the national science fair's theme will be Ocean Literacy, engaging schools nationwide.

32 Financial support has enabled the selection of 15 science clubs in Ocean Literacy, each comprising one teacher and five students, who receive fellowships to continue their activities throughout the year. This initiative will expand next year to include 20 more science clubs, focusing on women in STEM. The Brazilian Blue Schools are also linked to the All Atlantic Blue Schools network, composed of 18 countries.

33 The Brazil Ocean Olympics, have been running for four years, and includes three modalities: i. A knowledge test; ii. Software environmental projects; and iii. Artistic, cultural, and technological activities. The goal is not competition but participation, with medals awarded to those who score more than 50% on the knowledge test. Participation has grown significantly, from over 3,000 applications in 2021 to more than 62,000 in the current year. The Ocean Olympics plans to involve schools from the Caribbean, and Brazil in the 2025 UN Climate Change Conference (COP 30) which will

convene in November 2025 in Belém, Brazil. The Ocean Olympics include special talks on topics like women in science and climate change, and the government provides fellowships for students from poorer regions.

34 The Brazilian Blue Schools have produced various educational materials, including books and videos, available on a repository website to support teachers. Research conducted two years ago revealed that 98% of Brazilians had not heard of the Ocean Decade, while 40% did not recognize how their actions impact the ocean. This highlights the importance of the Ocean Literacy agenda in raising awareness and understanding of the ocean's significance and the impact of human activities on marine environments.

35 The Brazilian Ocean Literacy Alliance, which includes institutions from municipalities, the federal government, and the private sector, has been working on public policies to include ocean literacy in the curriculum. In 2021, Santos became the first municipality to pass a law including ocean literacy in the curriculum. Currently, efforts are underway to include ocean literacy in the national curriculum.

d) Blue Schools Programme in Honduras

36 Ms. Timna Varela, National Coordination of Blue Schools in Honduras, provided a report of blue school activities in Honduras. The Integrating Ocean Literacy into School Curricula project of Honduras has been underway for over three years, aiming to incorporate ocean literacy into the educational system. The initiative began in response to the 2020 Mesoamerican Reef Report card with a grant provided by the Sustainable Ocean Alliance.

37 As a consequence, a multidisciplinary Technical Committee was formed, including representatives from the Ministry of Education, curriculum experts, science teachers, and marine biologists from the Bay Island National Marine Park in Honduras. The Technical Committee worked to design educational resources for both teachers and students with the objective to align the resources with the national curriculum.

38 In 2022, during the Ocean Conference in Portugal, Honduras became familiar with UNESCO's ocean literacy and blue curriculum, which provided further guidance on implementing ocean literacy initiatives for schools in the country.

39 The Integrating Ocean Literacy into School Curricula project of Honduras has developed teacher guides and student booklets for grades 8 and 9, with the participation of over 70 teachers. In 2022, the project was awarded the Guardians of the Climate Award by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Latin America and the Fundación Centro Melimoyu Ecosystem Research Institute (MERI) Foundation.

40 Future plans for 2025 include the addition of two pilot blue schools as part of the All Atlantic initiative.

e) Educational Areas Programme in France

41 Mr. François Morisseau, Office Français de la Biodiversité (OFB, France), provided a presentation about the development of educational areas in France, including autonomous territories. The programme on educational areas focuses on educating children and communities about biodiversity, moving beyond mere civilization. The concept originated in the Marquesas Islands in Polynesia, where a scientist explained marine biodiversity and protected areas to school children.

42 Launched in 2012, the programme now aims to establish 18,000 educational areas across France and autonomous territories, covering about one-third of all schools and secondary schools. It has also been adapted to terrestrial ecosystems. The success of the programme is attributed to its project-based pedagogy, which integrates teaching with practical, real-world applications. This approach has led to improved learning outcomes across all disciplines.

43 The methodology provided to teachers is based on the development of protected area management plans. Students learn about their chosen site, including its ecosystems, species, and human activities, and understand the environmental issues involved. They then decide on actions to take and develop projects throughout the year. Each new class builds on the previous year's work, creating an educational patrimony of the area.

44 In the Caribbean region, there are some educational marine areas being developed in Guadalupe and Martinique.

DISCUSSION

45 Ms. Lorna Inniss, conducted a poll questionnaire and learned that Member States in the Caribbean are mostly implementing ocean literacy work in schools and NGOs. She added that IOCARIBE is also interested in engaging with the tourism and fisheries sectors.

f) Educational Areas Programme in Martinique

46 Ms. Séphora Badmer, Parc Naturel Marin de Martinique, provided a report on educational areas in Martinique. The programme aims to protect marine biodiversity by supporting local decision-makers towards management measures in favor of biodiversity, by financing scientific research projects in marine biology, supporting the actions of associations for the protection of biodiversity on the territory and implementing environmental awareness projects.

47 There are 30 active projects, involving 31 schools, including 19 elementary, 9 middle, and 2 high schools. The programme works on both marine and terrestrial environments. The first educational area in Martinique was created in 2017.

48 The programme is coordinated and funded by the Parc Naturel Marin, Martinique and the Office Français de la Biodiversité, France. In addition, its implementation is supported by teachers and members of the Environment and Planning Department, Water Office, the Academy of Martinique, and the Ministry of Culture. In addition to the teachers, partners, e.g. Zéro Déchet Martinique, Asso Mer, Konnect West Indies, etc., are important for the implementation of the programme because they bring expertise of environmental awareness.

49 These areas allow students to engage in activities linked to their school curriculum and take on the role of environmental managers. They also provide access to various stakeholders in the marine environment and opportunities for field trips. This network benefits both the project-leading structures and the students involved.

4. PROPOSED WORK PLAN

50 Ms. Lorna Inniss, Head of IOCARIBE, provided a report on the proposed work plan for the IOCARIBE Ocean Literacy Task Team. First, in the days and weeks after the meeting, Member States will need to provide nominations for two key roles: i. Ocean

Literacy Contact; and ii. Ocean Literacy Blue Schools Coordinator. The Ocean Literacy Contact will handle broader ocean literacy initiatives beyond the Blue Schools programme, while the Ocean Literacy Blue Schools Coordinator will be trained to ensure schools meet the criteria for designation as Blue Schools. IOCARIBE aims to provide the training on Ocean Literacy Blue Schools between December 2024 or January 2025.

51 IOCARIBE is working with the Caribbean Examinations Council and UNESCO National Commissions to develop a new Blue Curriculum, incorporating topics like biodiversity, pollution, fisheries, and the Blue Economy. Representatives from the Ocean Governance Coordination Mechanism in the TAC region are invited to join this discussion.

52 IOCARIBE is also looking to engage with the tourism and fisheries sectors to include them in ocean literacy initiatives. Participants are encouraged to express their interest to the IOCARIBE Secretariat. IOCARIBE acknowledges that some participants may need government approval for nominations and urges them to expedite this process.

53 IOCARIBE encourages Early Career Ocean Professionals and Non-Governmental Organizations to get involved and contribute to the implementation of the Ocean Literacy Task Team activities.

5. PREPARATION FOR THE 2025 UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE

54 Ms. Lorna Inniss, Head of IOCARIBE, informed that the next United Nations Ocean Conference will take place in Nice, France from 9 to 13 June 2025. IOCARIBE encourages the partners and Members States to work together in the next six months to show case success stories and advances about Ocean Literacy, including the IOCARIBE Network of Blue Schools, in the 2025 UN Ocean Conference.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

55 No other business was discussed.

7. CLOSING

56 Mr. Ronaldo Christofolletti, Coordinator of the IOCARIBE Ocean Literacy Task Team, thank all the participants for their contributions and closed the meeting at 11:00 am Colombian Time (COT).

ANNEX I. AGENDA

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF OCEAN LITERACY	1
3. ONGOING REGIONAL OCEAN LITERACY INITIATIVES	2
a) Network of European Blue Schools (NEBS).....	2
b) Blue Schools Programme in Mexico	3
c) Blue Schools Programme in Brazil.....	4
d) Blue Schools Programme in Honduras.....	5
e) Educational Areas Programme in France.....	5
f) Educational Areas Programme in Martinique	6
4. PROPOSED WORK PLAN	6
5. PREPARATION FOR THE 2025 UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE	7
6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS	7
7. CLOSING	7
ANNEX I. AGENDA	8
ANEEX II. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	9

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