

## Meeting Notes

### Working Group on Sustainable Ocean Planning and Management (SOPM)

18 March 2026

Online

---

Annex I Meeting agenda

Annex II Participants list

#### 1. Welcome Introduction

#### 2. Adoption of the Agenda

#### 3. Update on Strategy Implementation

- The IOC Secretariat presented an update on progress across the five activities of the IOC–SOPM Implementation Plan (2025-2027):
  - Activity 1 (Identify key decision-makers for SOPM): A collaborative file has been created with the IOC Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) team to develop a **joint global database of decision-makers for both SOPM and MSP**, strengthening coordination across networks.
  - Activity 2 (Development of communication plan and materials): Significant progress has been made on communications.
    - A **draft SOPM brochure** has been developed, aligned with the IOC’s core messaging strategy and already shared with co-chairs; it will be circulated to the Working Group in the coming weeks.
    - A **draft digital communications plan** has been prepared.
    - The **first SOPM webinar is scheduled for 14 April 2026 with IOCCARIBE**, focusing on introducing SOPM and IOC support to Member States.
    - **Introductory SOPM training is under development** in collaboration with the IOC Ocean Teacher Global Academy (OTGA), to be delivered via an online platform.
  - Activity 3 (Mapping of SOPM end user data needs): A **joint MPR/GOOS/IODE proposal submitted in February 2026 to the Government of Flanders UNESCO Trust Fund (results expected July–August 2026)** focuses on identifying national data needs for knowledge-driven SOPM. It aims to strengthen alliances and data centres, incorporates input also from OBIS and OCTA, and includes an adapted MSP assessment tool. Findings will inform a broader partnership strategy, including gaps requiring external collaboration beyond IOC.
  - Activity 4 (Review existing SOPM initiatives): Not yet started; an update will be provided at the next meeting.
  - Activity 5 (Fundraising for SOPM pilot project): The **GEF-8 Project Identification Form was resubmitted in February 2026** in partnership with the World Resources Institute, the Development Bank of Latin America and

the Caribbean, and Applied Ocean Sciences, following feedback from the GEF. The proposal includes a USD 2 million rapid-access fund to support the initial implementation of SOPM, with a global scope and a focus on Latin America and the Caribbean.

- The draft SOPM brochure was presented to the Working Group by the IOC Secretariat, which focuses on the distinction between SOPM and MSP, the rationale for SOPM (“why” and “why now”), its relevance for all nations including beyond national jurisdiction, and the support IOC offers to Member States.
- A dedicated [webpage](#) and contact email address ([sopm@ioc-unesco.org](mailto:sopm@ioc-unesco.org)) have been established to centralize and streamline communications.
- **Members expressed strong support for the progress achieved and requested access to the brochure** for their own communication efforts. The IOC Secretariat confirmed that the final version will be shared in the coming weeks.

#### 4. Update Island States Ocean Summit

- The IOC Secretariat presented an update on the organization of the Summit that will be held in **Tokyo, Japan from 3 to 4 June 2026**.
  - The Summit is expected to convene **54 invited heads of state and government**, ministers, and ambassadors, as well as around **300 participants** including policymakers, technical experts, and development partners.
  - The **outcomes will be captured in a Co-Chairs’ Summary and an Outcomes Document**. Key anticipated outcomes include a shared understanding of the state of play of SOPM activities, as well as agreed actions, priorities, and recommendations. The Summit will also launch a Sustainable Ocean Planning Support Platform for Island States as a technical assistance mechanism.
  - An **overview of the Summit agenda was presented**, with Day 1 focused on high-level engagement and awareness, and Day 2 dedicated to technical discussions, best practices, and pathways to action.
  - Expressions of interest to participate can be shared via email to: [al.londono-ramirez@unesco.org](mailto:al.londono-ramirez@unesco.org).
5. Working Group members were encouraged to contribute to the co-design of the Sustainable Ocean Planning Support Platform, express interest in joining the initiative, share examples of best practices and ongoing SOPM initiatives, and identify opportunities for joint action.

#### 6. Update from Co-Chairs on SOPM Advancement & Capacity Building Opportunities Globally

- Working Group co-chairs provided views on recent developments linking SOPM to key global processes, including UNFCCC and BBNJ.
- SOPM was highlighted under the UNFCCC as an **overarching “umbrella” to accelerate ocean-based climate solutions and support the integration of SOPM into national climate plans**.
- **Growing momentum around the BBNJ Agreement** was noted, including preparations for the first COP in January 2027, alongside opportunities for collaboration, co-development, and access to support and funding.
- The **importance of positioning SOPM within major global forums**, including the Our Ocean Conference, and leveraging coordination mechanisms was underscored.

- Emphasis was placed on SOPM's role in **connecting action across local, national, regional, and areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ)**, including strengthening linkages between EEZ and ABNJ governance.
- SOPM was highlighted as an increasingly recognized, science-based approach to **integrating policies and supporting biodiversity governance across boundaries**.
- The need for stronger stakeholder integration, improved data, and identification of opportunities for joint action was also emphasized.
- Working Group members were encouraged to engage further with the co-chairs to explore collaboration and support the advancement of these linkages.

## 7. Reporting from Task Force Groups

- Updates were provided by the Task Force Leads on intersessional discussions held between meetings.
- An update on the Training and Capacity Building Task Force was provided by Marinez Scherer. Key points shared included:
  - SOPM was reaffirmed as an umbrella framework for ocean-climate solutions, requiring multi-level engagement, capacity building, and alignment with global processes such as BBNJ.
  - Discussions emphasized the importance of data interoperability, effective communication (including adaptation to local languages), and targeted training on key themes such as climate linkages, stakeholder engagement, and data systems, alongside prioritization of pilot implementation in SIDS and African countries and opportunities for peer learning.
  - Next steps include advancing MSP tools as a basis for SOPM, reviewing rapid assessment methodologies and developing and sharing initial communications materials.
  - **A table will be shared with the Working Group to collect and consolidate contact details of individuals responsible for SOPM development in Working Group member countries.**
- An update on the Organization of Data and Science Task Force was provided by Gunnar Finke. Key points shared included:
  - The Task Force will support the IOC-SOPM Implementation Plan by focusing on Activity 3, with an emphasis on delivering practical, tangible outputs such as end-user consultations, a report on essential data and information needs, and multilingual communication materials to support access to SOPM data.
  - The work will center on mapping national data needs and gaps across IOC data systems, strengthening links between data providers and decision-makers, and identifying essential datasets while leveraging existing IOC networks such as NODCs and IODE, without duplicating existing initiatives.
  - Initial implementation ideas include developing a clearer understanding of end-user groups, improving data organization to support decision-making, incorporating socio-economic, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and citizen science data, and assessing the status and capacity of national data centers, including opportunities to strengthen them.
- An update on the Resource Mobilization and Financing Task Force was provided by Angel Herrera-Ulloa. Key points shared included:

- Resource mobilization was identified as a key priority, with emphasis on a pragmatic, pilot-driven approach that targets specific regions or countries, engages end users, and leverages existing partnerships, networks, and parallel funding pathways, including engagement with a range of potential public, private, and philanthropic partners.
- Next steps include **developing a shared document mapping funding opportunities, projects, and contacts and identifying priority pilot regions to support funding proposals.**
- The full Task Force meeting minutes are available on the Google Drive via the following links for the [Training and Capacity Building Task Force](#), [Organization of Data and Science Task Force](#), and the [Resource Mobilization and Financing Task Force](#).

## 8. Group Discussion

- The Working Group discussed opportunities to strengthen SOPM through capacity building and training, including leveraging existing platforms, as well as identifying potential fundraising avenues and partnerships to support implementation.
- The importance of improving access to SOPM decision-makers across Member States was highlighted, alongside the need to enhance coordination, stakeholder mapping, and engagement using existing IOC structures and networks.
- Members emphasized the need to clearly define roles, responsibilities, and workstreams across Task Forces to avoid duplication, improve efficiency, and better coordinate across overlapping areas such as data, capacity building, and communications.
- Additional themes touched upon included the potential of SOPM in ABNJ and climate-related applications, the need to translate discussions into structured tasks and reporting outputs, early identification of progress indicators to support reporting to the IOC General Assembly in 2027, and the importance of strengthening participation and coordination across IOC bodies and Member States.

## 9. Next Steps

- IOC Secretariat to **establish Google Drive to allow collaboration on Working Group documents.**
- The **next online Task Force meetings are proposed to take place in May 2026**, with a Doodle poll to be circulated by each Task Force Lead to confirm exact dates.
- The **first IOC-SOPM Working Group in-person meeting will be held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France, as a two-day meeting between 23 November and 11 December 2026**, with a Doodle Poll to be shared to finalize the date. Lunch and coffee will be provided, while travel arrangements will need to be organized individually.

## 10. Closure

- [Presentation](#), minutes of this WG meeting will be shared in follow-up.

**Wednesday, 18 December 2026**

**15.00 Participants join online meeting**

**15.05 Welcome introduction**

*Marinez Scherer & Gunnar Finke, SOPM Working Group Co-Chairs*

**15.10 Adoption of the agenda**

*Marinez Scherer & Gunnar Finke, SOPM Working Group Co-Chairs*

**15.15 Presentation update implementation (draft communication materials; fundraising status; 1<sup>st</sup> MS webinar)**

*Fanny Douvere, SOPM Lead, IOC Marine Policy & Regional Coordination Section*

**15.20 Update Island States Ocean Summit**

*Julian Barbieri, Head, IOC Marine Policy & Regional Coordination Section*

**15.30 Update from co-chairs on SOPM advancement & capacity building opportunities globally**

*Marinez Scherer & Gunnar Finke, SOPM Working Group Co-Chairs*

**15.40 Reporting from task force groups & discussion**

*Marinez Scherer & Gunnar Finke, SOPM Working Group Co-Chairs*

**16.20 Next steps & dates for next meeting**

*Marinez Scherer & Gunnar Finke, SOPM Working Group Co-Chairs*

**16:25 Closing remarks**

*Marinez Scherer & Gunnar Finke, SOPM Working Group Co-Chairs*

**ANNEX II List of participants**

---

<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Organization/Country</b>
Afanador Franco	Fernando	General Maritime Directorate – Oceanographic and Hydrographic Research Center <i>Colombia</i>
Ahmed Babou	Dedah	Ministère de la Pêche, des Infrastructures Maritimes et Portuaires <i>Mauritania</i>
Ahmed Moneer	Abeer	National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (NIOF) <i>Egypt</i>
Darnaude	Audrey	Center for Marine Biodiversity, Exploitation & Conservation Centre national de la recherche scientifique <i>France</i>
Finke	Gunnar	German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) <i>Germany</i>
Garcia Scherer	Marinez Eymael	Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), <i>Brazil</i>
Gissi	Elena	National Research Council, Institute of Marine Sciences, Venice <i>Italy</i>
Hildebrand	Lawrence	World Maritime University <i>Canada</i>
Herrera-Ulloa	Angel	Universidad Nacional Costa Rica <i>Costa Rica</i>
Lovell	Tricia	Fisheries Division <i>Antigua and Barbuda</i>
Luo	Gang	China Institute for Marine Affairs Ministry of Natural Resources <i>China</i>
Mobio	Abaka Brice Hervé	Université Felix Houphouët-Boigny - Centre Universitaire de Recherche et d'Application en Télédétection <i>Côte d'Ivoire</i>
Popoola	Samuel Olatunde	Nigeria Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research <i>Nigeria</i>
Schive	Per W.	Ministry of Climate and Environment <i>Norway</i>
Souza Gómez	Alejandro José	CINVESTAV IPN <i>Mexico</i>

Wakita	Kazumi	Tokai University <i>Japan</i>
--------	--------	----------------------------------

<b>IOC Programme</b>	<b>Representative</b>	<b>Position</b>
IOCARIBE	Lorna Veronica Inniss	Head, IOC Sub Commission IOCARIBE
Marine Policy Section	Julian Barbieri	Head, MPR
	Fanny Douvere	SOPM lead
	Elle Gillard	Associate Project Officer
	Niccolo Bassan	Associate Project Officer
Ocean Science	Katherina Schoo	Associate Project Officer
WESTPAC	Zhiwei Zhang	Rep WESTPAC
	Sazlina Salleh	University Sains Malaysia

<b>Partner Organization</b>	<b>Representative</b>	<b>Position</b>
GESAMP	Peter Kershaw	Member, Former Chair
ICG/PTWS	Li Yao	Associate Researcher, Division of Marine Policy Research
IHO	Samuel Harper	Assistant Director