



**INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)**

Thirty-first Session of the Assembly
UNESCO, 14–25 June 2021 [online]

Item 3.7 of the Provisional Agenda

UPDATED PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF OCEAN SCIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING RESULTS OF CALL FOR DECADE ACTIONS NO. 01/2020

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) continued apace during the first half of 2021. [A/RES/75/239](#) noted with appreciation the [Implementation Plan](#) for the Decade and requested IOC to coordinate its implementation. Implementation of the Decade commenced on 1 January 2021. This document describes actions undertaken by the Secretariat in partnership with the Executive Planning Group (EPG) as other parties, building on the guidance of the UN Decade Roadmap ([IOC/EC-LI/2 Annex 3 and Corr](#)).

Financial implications: paragraphs 63-65.

Decision proposed: Any decision related to this specific document will be reflected in the Draft Resolution [Draft Resolution A-31/\[3.7\]](#) contained in the second revised Action Paper ([IOC-31/AP Rev.2](#))

Introduction

1. In December 2017, building on the efforts of IOC Member States and the IOC Secretariat, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030 (hereafter, the Decade). The Decade is a once in a life-time opportunity to deliver a step-change in the generation and use of ocean science. It will influence how countries invest in and participate in science and innovation to embrace societal goals and align research investment to contribute to common goals including the 2030 Agenda.

2. The period from June 2020 to May 2021 was critical for the Decade. It represented the final six months of the preparation phase, and the first six months of the implementation phase, that commenced with the opening of the Decade on 1 January 2021. IOC, in consultation with Member States and all relevant stakeholders, led the preparation of the Decade and is now coordinating its implementation. Milestones in this period included the consideration of the Implementation Plan by the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly and the adoption of [A/RES/75/239](#) of 31 December 2020 that noted with appreciation the Implementation Plan and requested IOC to continue in its coordination role throughout the implementation phase. This period also saw the successful roll-out of the first Call for Decade Actions ([No. 01/2020](#)) that solicited close to 250 potential Decade Actions including both proposed programmes and contributions. During this period a number of National Decade Committees and regional stakeholder groups emerged to coordinate Decade stakeholders and catalyse the development of Decade Actions. In addition, this period saw significant efforts to engage stakeholders through a series of launch events, virtual webinars, as well as dedicated sessions and side events on the margins of international and regional conferences. Communication and outreach activities were implemented to inform Member States, potential partners and other stakeholders of the Decade, with the aim of catalysing partnerships and the mobilisation of resources as the Decade transitioned from its planning phase to its action phase.

3. At its 30th session, the IOC Assembly under [Resolution XXX-1](#) requested the IOC Executive Secretary to:

- (i) report on the implementation of the current version of the Decade Roadmap at the 53rd session of the IOC Executive Council in 2020;
- (ii) further develop the governance arrangements for the implementation phase (2021–2030) based on the inputs received on documents IOC-XXX/2 Annex 3 and Addendum;
- (iii) make the draft implementation plan available and invite its review by Member States; and
- (iv) report to the IOC Executive Council at its 53rd session, on comments received and plans for finalizing the implementation plan, prior to its submission to the UNGA;

4. This document provides an overview of the activities conducted throughout the period from June 2020 to May 2021.

Executive Planning Group

5. The Executive Planning Group (EPG) continued to make significant contributions to the preparation phase of the Decade throughout the first half of this period. Between June and December 2020, regular online meetings of the EPG were held to discuss and solicit input to the Implementation Plan and other elements of the Decade preparation phase, including communications and outreach activities. Members of the EPG participated in the Informal Working Group for Monitoring and Evaluation, the Communications Advisory Group, and acted as focal points during the Call for Decade Actions No. 01/2020. Several members of the EPG participated in virtual events throughout this period and have been catalytic in the creation of national and regional stakeholder platforms. [Resolution EC-53/1](#) of the IOC Executive Council extended the mandate of the EPG to act as an Interim Decade Advisory Board in anticipation of the creation of the definitive Decade Advisory Board

in the third quarter of 2021. The first meeting of the Interim Decade Advisory Board was held from 6 to 8 April 2021 and is briefly reported below (full report in [The Ocean Decade Series, 21](#)). A second meeting is planned on 19th May 2021.

Engagement of Stakeholders

UN Organisations and UN-Oceans

6. Several meetings of the UN-Oceans contact group for the Decade, and of the full UN-Oceans group, were held during this period. These meetings provided a forum for the IOC Secretariat to present the development of the Implementation Plan and seek feedback on specific issues contained in the draft Plan including the scientific framework of the Plan, the governance and coordination framework, and resource mobilization and financing modalities. IOC Secretariat staff were invited to present the Decade in a number of UN events including the high-level webinar on the science-policy interface organised by UN-DOALOS in March 2021.

7. Several UN entities made formal written submissions to the peer review of the zero draft of the Implementation Plan and the review of Version 1.0 of the Plan. UN DOALOS coordinated a virtual presentation of Version 2.0 of the Implementation Plan to UN Member States on 15 October 2020.

8. Discussions within UN-Oceans aimed to solicit contributions and commitments to the Decade from UN agencies. To date, of UN partners only FAO has submitted two Decade Actions for registration. Further discussions are required with other UN entities to solicit the registration of other Decade Actions. UN DOALOS, ISA and FAO participated in the Interim Decade Advisory Board Meeting No. 01/2021.

9. Discussions are ongoing between UNESCO, IOC, United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to identify potential areas of synergy and collaboration between the Decade and the parallel UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration which is being coordinated by UNEP and FAO and which will be launched on 5 June 2021.

Scientific community

10. The scientific community remained a focus of engagement efforts during this period. The Decade was presented by IOC Secretariat staff and EPG members in a large number of virtual scientific meetings and events; as an unexpected benefit of the current sanitary restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the transition to a virtual mode of working significantly increased the number of events in which the Decade could be represented. This community was targeted during the peer review of the zero draft of the Implementation Plan and represented the majority of respondents. It also represented the majority of respondents to the Call for Decade Actions No. 01/2020.

11. A number of scientific institutions have indicated interest in being recognised as Decade Implementing Partners or Decade Collaborative Centres as reported below.

12. In the context of the February 2020 Memorandum of Understanding between IOC and the International Science Council (ISC), ISC and IOC have jointly organised events as part of the [Ocean Decade Virtual Series](#) in the context of this MoU.

Foundations and philanthropic organizations

13. Building on the Foundations Dialogue Event, which IOC organized in partnership with The Velux Foundations (Denmark) at the Danish Royal Academy of Science and Letters in Copenhagen on 27–28 February 2020, an informal platform of approximately to 20 philanthropic Foundations has been established and met regularly during this period. This group is self-organising into thematic and geographic sub-groups to assist the IOC Secretariat to create the enabling framework and peer to peer engagement needed to support the Decade implementation.

14. Three philanthropic Foundations submitted Decade Actions in the form of in-kind contributions to the Call for Decade Actions No. 01/2020 and discussions are underway to develop modalities for the implementation of these contributions. One partnership agreement has been signed and several other partnership agreements are under negotiation with the objective to catalyze and organize complementary commitments and resources to meet the Decade's challenges. Philanthropic Foundations have been invited to join the Ocean Decade Alliance, a resource mobilization mechanism for the Decade that focuses on large-scale voluntary commitments. The Alliance will provide its members with an entry point to support priority actions of the Decade.

15. The Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection will host the second meeting of the Foundations Dialogue in late 2021 in Morocco. This event will pursue the dialogue, target new philanthropic partners, synergise new partnerships, present and entry point for support to Decade Actions, and invite other foundations to join the Ocean Decade. Regular organisation meetings are being held with the Foundation to plan this event.

Private sector

16. Ongoing private sector engagement activities aim at stimulating active participation in the Decade in areas such as ocean research, innovation, ocean literacy, data management and sharing, as well as engagement in the Ocean Decade Alliance. Building on cooperation established since the beginning of the preparatory phase with the Sustainable Ocean Business Action Platform of UN Global Compact, which brings together more than 9,500 corporate participants committed to catalyze action towards the 2030 Agenda, a number of joint activities continued to take place over this period. IOC contributed to the review process of [UN Global Compact's Ocean Stewardship Report 2030](#) published on 2 June 2020 that offers a roadmap for how ocean-related industries and policymakers can jointly secure a healthy and productive ocean by 2030 and which highlights the importance of the Decade in support of the proposed roadmap. IOC also contributed to the work of the COVID-19 Task Force "sprint" organized by the UN Global Compact that led to the release of the [Blue Resilience Brief](#) which outlines areas where scaling-up joint science-industry action could enhance the resilience of the blue economy and contribute towards a more sustainable future.

17. Recognizing the importance of science-industry collaboration, the IOC and the UN Global Compact reinforced their shared commitment to work together by signing a letter of intent in August 2020 to pursue joint activities aimed at mobilizing the private sector around the Decade's framework. IOC participated in the [2020 UN Global Compact CEO roundtable – Ocean Stewardship Annual Review](#) in September 2020, in particular in relation to data collection and sharing. Building on the outcomes of the CEO roundtable, ongoing discussions are underway with the UN Global Compact to explore the role of industry in the Ocean Decade Data Coordination Platform that is being established given the important role of industry as a beneficiary and contributor to the data component of the Decade. The IOC Executive Secretary also participated in events such as Sustainable Ocean Summit (December 2020) organised by the World Ocean Council, the 8th Annual World Ocean Summit (March 2021) convened by the Economist Groups specifically geared toward private sector engagement and the Virtual Ocean Dialogue convened by the World Economic Forum on May 25–27, 2021, during which the first day of the event was focused on the Ocean Decade.

18. Several bilateral discussions took place with private sector organizations to inform and raise awareness on the Decade as well as explore possible contributions, including with Fugro, Total, AXA XXL, Panerai, and Iberostar. Discussions with these groups are in various stages with the aim of developing partnership agreements where relevant and/or engaging these groups as members of the Ocean Decade Alliance. Presentations or discussions were also held with various industry platforms or groups to raise awareness of the Decade including Enterprises pour l'Environnement, International Chamber of Commerce, Marine Technology Society and the Seaweed Coalition.

High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy

19. The High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy (the 'Ocean Panel') was

established in 2018 by fourteen Heads of State. Over the last several years the Ocean Panel commissioned a number of peer-reviewed Blue Papers and Special Reports to explore priority ocean issues that have significant policy relevance. The Secretariat published a report entitled ‘Ocean Knowledge for a Sustainable Ocean Economy: Synergies between the Ocean Decade and the Outcomes of the Ocean Panel’ (ref. [Ocean Decade Series, 17](#)) to document the synergies between the Ocean Panel and the Ocean Decade. The report identifies the role of the Ocean Decade in contributing to the ambition of the Ocean Panel and identifies proposals for actions to develop a lean, reliable guiding framework to respond to emerging demands for robust ocean knowledge relevant to society and necessary for achieving a sustainable ocean economy.

Informal Working Groups

20. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** An Informal Working Group for Monitoring and Evaluation for the Decade was established in November 2019. This Group comprises experts from a diversity of sectors including industry, NGOs, Member States, scientific community and Early Career Ocean Professionals. The group prepared a concept note on the monitoring and evaluation conceptual framework that was presented to the Interim Decade Advisory Board Meeting No. 01/2021. It is now building on that note to develop a Discussion Paper on Monitoring and Evaluation that will be presented to the Decade Advisory Board towards the end of 2021.

21. **Technology and Innovation:** The Secretariat is working with the Schmidt Ocean Institute to establish an Informal Working Group for technology and innovation for the Decade. This group will have the mandate to provide a platform to exchange on ocean innovation and technology in the Decade, regularly review technological innovations and link these to the scientific priorities under the Decade. This will assist in identifying gaps and opportunities, inform the development of engagement mechanisms to promote and stimulate development innovative Decade Actions, and inform Calls for Decade Actions. The Informal Working Group is expected to be established in the first half of 2021.

22. **Data Management:** In order to coordinate across partners that are engaged in ocean data initiatives, a draft Terms of Reference for an “Ocean Decade Data Coordination Platform” has been developed in consultation with IODE, with two components: (i) The Ocean Decade Data Coordination Group that will be focused on strategic exchange and coordination between key actors – including data generators, managers and users; and (ii) The Ocean Decade Data Technical Implementation Coordination Group that will be focused on technical collaboration to develop the technical elements required to build the “digital data ecosystem” foreseen under the Ocean Decade. The Platform is expected to be established in the first half of 2021.

Regional and National Decade Initiatives

23. Regional taskforces/planning committees have emerged in the Arctic, Southern Ocean, Pacific, Western Tropical Atlantic and Mediterranean regions. These self-organised groups are convening regional stakeholders and triggering the development of regional action plans/programmes that will guide the development of Decade Actions. Programmes for the Mediterranean Sea, Southern Ocean and for the Pacific regions were submitted in response to the Call for Decade Actions No. 01/2020. The Arctic taskforce is finalizing an action plan defining priority actions for implementation throughout the Decade.

24. National Decade Committees have been established in Brazil, Colombia, France, Germany, Japan, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Many of these committees have held national launch events over this period. Committees are emerging in a number of other countries including Bangladesh, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, China, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain and Sweden. The establishment of voluntary National Decade Committees will be encouraged throughout the Ocean Decade as a means of convening and engaging national stakeholders and facilitating national contributions to the Decade. The IOC Secretariat developed an online survey via [Circular Letter 2840](#) to collect information from Member States on their progress in establishing National Decade

Committees and to inform the development of operational guidelines on the establishment and activities of National Decade Committees ([The Ocean Decade Series, 24](#)). The Secretariat will organize regular meetings and virtual sessions to facilitate linkages between these groups.

ECOPs & Gender Mainstreaming

25. The Informal Working Group (IWG) of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP) which was established in November 2019 was very active over this period. The IWG's global survey of over 1,400 ECOPs provided the foundation for the development of a programme submission to the Call for Decade Actions No. 01/2020. ECOPs participated in selected EPG task-groups, attended the EPG meetings and the Interim Decade Advisory Board Meeting No. 01/2020. They were represented in the Decade launch event "[Brave New Ocean](#)" and will participate in the First International Ocean Decade Conference that is being hosted by the German Government.

26. Planning of all events during this period took into account the need to ensure generational, geographic, gender diversity both in terms of participants and in terms of speakers, moderators, and panelists. In order to ensure gender diversity in the implementation phase of the Decade, the Implementation Plan contains specific strategies to ensure barriers to diversity are overcome in the planning of Decade actions and in the establishment of governance and coordination structures. A virtual session on gender diversity and equity during the Ocean Decade was held as part of the Ocean Decade Virtual Series in October 2020 and was attended by over 380 participants from 67 countries. A programme submission led by the World Maritime University seeks to establish a specific action plan for ensuring gender inclusivity throughout the Decade.

Ocean Literacy

27. The development of an Ocean Decade Ocean Literacy Action Framework was completed in this period ([The Ocean Decade Series, 22](#)). The document, which will complement the Implementation Plan, provides a framework for ocean literacy Decade Actions to be developed and implemented over the course of the Decade and discusses the role of IOC in coordinating these initiatives. The development of the framework involved a series of stakeholder consultations, including an open questionnaire with over 300 respondents from across the world, a participatory multi-stakeholder workshop as well as bibliographical review. The draft Action Framework preparation involved a workshop held in Venice in December 2019, that was attended by 37 people from 34 countries and developed a set of recommendations for the strategy including a focus on four priority areas, namely: mainstreaming Ocean Literacy in policy formulation; formal education; corporate action; and community engagement.

28. An IOC-led Ocean Literacy programme is being developed for registration and will be discussed at the next meeting of the Interim Decade Advisory Board.

Data management

29. Following the first "Workshop on data sharing between UN agencies as a contribution to the UN decade of ocean science for sustainable development" convened by IOC' IODE as an online meeting on 20 April 2020, a second similar meeting was held with non-UN agencies in September 2020. This meeting included representatives of private sector, philanthropic Foundations, NGOs.

30. During the meetings the participants shared information on the ocean related-data and information held or coordinated by their organization and discussed needs, challenges and opportunities presented by the Decade in relation to data sharing and use. UN agencies agreed to establish working groups that will follow-up on issues related to improved sharing of data and information. These include: (i) working group on ODISCat development; (ii) working group on a conceptual framework; and (iii) working group to identify stakeholders to invite non-UN, IGO, NGO and private sector workshop. After the meetings, a number of participants became members of the inter-sessional working group to propose a strategy on ocean data and information stewardship for

the UN ocean decade (IWG-SODIS) that has now been finalised. Efforts in coming months will focus on the establishment of the Data Coordination Platform referred to above, including the creation of a Community of Practice related to data, information and knowledge management that builds upon the data-related Decade Actions.

Launch Events

31. **Brave New Ocean:** ‘Brave New Ocean’ was a virtual event held on 3 February 2021 to launch the Ocean Decade. It brought together ocean experts and leaders from around the world to highlight the immense challenges and opportunities that the ocean knowledge can offer humanity to build a better and stronger post-pandemic world. The event had more than 15,000 viewers on its first broadcast, and has also now more than 9,100 views in English and more than 1,550 in French on social media. The event featured a number of founding members of the Ocean Decade Alliance including H.E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta President of Kenya, H.E. Erna Solberg Prime Minister of Norway, H.S.H Prince Albert II of Monaco, H.R.H. Princess Lalla Hasnaa of Morocco and H.E. Hon. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa of Portugal. Philanthropic leaders, heads of UN partners, sportspeople, Early Career Ocean Professionals and youth also actively participated in the event.

32. **First International Ocean Decade Conference:** Following the offer by Germany to host the First International Ocean Decade Conference in Berlin in 2021 (31 May–2 June 2021) the IOC Secretariat has been working with the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) to plan the conference. The structure of the conference has been adapted to take account of the COVID-19 pandemic and will comprise a high-level opening event on 1 June 2021, followed by a series of seven “Ocean Decade Laboratories” from July 2021 to May 2022 that are structured around the seven Decade outcomes and which aim to convene partners in the development of Decade Actions. IOC will organise the first of these Laboratories on “An Inspiring and Engaging Ocean” on 7–8 July 2021 in collaboration with partners.

33. **Regional Launch Events:** Egypt has offered to host a regional kick-off conference for Africa. Planning for this conference is underway with the involvement of colleagues from the IOC Sub-Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States. The conference will be a hybrid conference from 7 to 9 December 2021. Thailand has offered to host a regional kick-off conference for Asia on 24–25 August 2021. Planning for this conference is underway under the leadership of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific. The Decade was also presented to the Italian public and media on October 22, 2020. While not an official launch event, the event aimed to increase awareness on the Decade in the Mediterranean region and several major media partners (including SkyTv24, Forbes) and influencers participated in the event.

Communication, partnerships, and outreach activities

34. **Communications Strategy:** The latest version of the *Advisory Report on the Communications Strategy* for the Decade was finalized in March 2021 (ref. The Ocean Decade Series, 25). The Strategy is based on six global objectives focused on demonstrating the importance of ocean science on a global and regional stage, increasing engagement and involvement in the Decade, communicating clear value propositions to the key target audiences, increase cross-working and collaboration across regions, and building communications capacities at the local, regional and international level. The strategy presents a clear set of actions and messages that must be implemented through the next three years, across a range of different media, to achieve the global objectives.

35. **Global Communications Campaign – Generation Ocean:** The first key pillar of the Decade Communications Strategy, the “Generation Ocean” Communications Campaign will be launched during the second half of 2021. The campaign strategy, brochure, website and presentation deck are available, and social media assets as well as media engagement materials will be prepared in view of the launch. The campaign will be managed operationally through a service provider contracted by the IOC Secretariat via a full-fledged procurement process validated by the UNESCO

Contracts Committee.

36. **Communications Advisory Group:** The Ocean Decade Communications Advisory Group (CAG) is composed of 28 communication officers and experts from a wide range of institutional backgrounds, including philanthropies, scientific institutions, governments, civil society, the private sector and UN organizations. The CAG is co-Chaired by an elected member —presently, Carlie Weiner (Schmidt Ocean Institute)—and by a representative from the Interim Ocean Decade Advisory Board—presently, Linwood Pendleton (REV Ocean). The group was constituted in November 2020 through a mix of open call for applications and direct nominations by UN organizations engaged in the Ocean Decade. The current members will serve for two years until June 2022. The CAG has met four times since November 2020 and has made critical contributions to the Decade Communications by reviewing communication materials put together during the Preparatory Phase, and providing inputs to the 2021–2023 Ocean Decade Communications Strategy. The CAG has constituted four task groups, engaging members in specific projects, including improving language and regional accessibility of communications materials, outreach to Aquariums and Museums, and regional media outreach.

37. **Communications Infrastructure & Assets:** The official Decade website was launched in June 2019. Since its launch, <http://oceandecade.org> has been the main entry point for stakeholders worldwide seeking the latest developments and news about Decade preparations, upcoming events, and resources. Between December 2020 and March 2021 approximately 102,968 visitors (+53%) accessed the website resulting in 352,120 page views (+43%). This compares to 57,120 visitors and 245,644 page views in the same period in 2019/2020. 981 users are now registered on the website to receive updates on Decade progress. 660 partners are now registered on the website to receive updates on Decade progress. Conceived for the final two years of the preparatory phase (2019–2020), the website will be restructured to respond to specific needs of the Implementation Phase, including through the integration of online architecture to facilitate stakeholder engagement and monitoring of Decade progress via the Global Stakeholder Forum. A Request for Proposals was launched for this work in October 2020, a contractor was selected in March 2021, and work has commenced with a tentative delivery date of September 2021.

38. The IOC Secretariat finalised the Ocean Decade Brand Guidelines (ref. [The Ocean Decade Series, 18](#)), which orients partners and stakeholders on the appropriate processes required to use the Decade brand, including its logo, slogan, colour palette, typeface, icons and other graphic guidelines.

39. Since June 2019, the IOC Secretariat also invested heavily—by itself and with partners—in the production of key videos and institutional publications to showcase the Decade and highlight its benefits to society. This includes a series of videos on the ten Ocean Decade Challenges which will be used in launch events throughout 2021. A full up-to-date list of publicly-available Decade videos can be found on the UNESCO YouTube Channel account, under a [dedicated playlist](#) and brochures, with an updated version of the official [Decade brochure](#).

40. **Global, Regional and Partner Events:** Communications and outreach activities supported global, regional and partner-led Decade events during the current period. Communications and outreach activities for each event typically included inputs to the event concept and agenda, framing of event messaging, design and production of event dissemination materials, event promotion via social media platforms, and post-event write up of news releases.

41. **Media Coverage and Partnerships:** The IOC Secretariat has been actively pursuing media partnerships to grow the organic coverage and overall media interest in the upcoming Decade. Conversations are underway to enlist more active participation in the Decade from major global media, including BBC and The Economist (through its World Ocean Initiative). The Decade has been particularly well covered by major regional and national media outlets in Brazil, India, Italy, New Zealand, and Portugal, showcasing the need for further media outreach at the national level, preferably via national partners and collaborators who are familiar with the media landscape and

many times have direct contacts with members of the press. An editorial partnership has been signed with [Environment Coastal & Offshore \(ECO\) Magazine](#) ensuring a dedicated space for publishing editorials, analytical pieces, or Decade preparatory updates in every issue of ECO Magazine. A Special Issue dedicated entirely to the Ocean Decade will be published in May 2021, and promoted throughout the main communication channels. Additional partnerships are in the process of being set with other national, regional and global outlets.

42. **Partners' use of Decade logo:** In the final six months of the preparation phase partners were encouraged to request logo use for their Decade related-activities that contributed to the preparation of the Decade. With the start of the Decade, a new process for requesting endorsement of Decade Activities – including events, workshops, publications, conferences, and training opportunities, among other creative ideas such as podcasts – was put in place. Over the period, 82 activities were granted use of the logo (preparation phase) and endorsed as Decade Activities (implementation phase). Participants in the activities are typically scientists, students and youth. Since June 2020 approximately 4.1 million individuals have engaged with these activities across the world. The 48 Decade Activity submissions that were not yet granted use of the logo are either still under consideration, have been re-categorised as other types of Decade Actions (e.g. projects) or were refused as they did not align with the endorsement criteria for Decade Activities.

Category	June-Nov 2020 (Preparation Phase)	Dec-May 20/21 (Implementation Phase)	Total
Total submissions (including UN)	28	102	130
Total submissions accepted	28	54	82
Total participants estimated to engage with activities	140,000	4,000,000	4,140,000

43. **The Ocean Decade Virtual Series:** On September 24, 2020 the Ocean Decade Virtual Series was launched. This series of webinars is convened with diverse partners, to provide high-level and scientific dialogues organized around the Ocean Decade Challenges as well as some key priorities and cross-cutting issues. It features action-oriented dialogues among ocean science experts and speakers from the global ocean community to foster active participation. From September 2020 to March 31 2021, 17 sessions took place including 10 specifically on co-design both at regional and global level (refer below), the ocean-human health nexus, 3 sessions on gender equity, partnerships for SIDS, and aquatic foods. A further webinar on the *Global Ocean Science Report 2020* findings is planned in April. The virtual sessions were attended by more than 3,100 participants from around the world and all sectors. Each session presented strong panels of international experts from different sectors, locations, gender to ensure diversity and inclusivity.

44. As part of this Series, two global and eight regional webinars “Co-designing the science we need for the Ocean Decade” were organised from September 2020 to January 2021 to explore regional opportunities, challenges and approaches to deliver transformative Decade Actions. This sequence resulted in the production of a synthesis report that provides guidance on co-design approaches throughout the Decade. Building on the outcomes of this series, two training modules are being developed in partnership with the IOC-UNESCO’s Project, Ocean Teacher Global Academy and the global network of Regional and Specialised Training Centres on the ways the fundamental barriers, issues and needs for transdisciplinary research to flourish can be addressed and how to recognize complementarities across knowledge systems and include indigenous knowledge. The events were attended by 1,290 participants from more than 90 countries, including 11 SIDS and 5 LDCs and 264 Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs).

Finalisation of Implementation Plan

45. Version 1.0 of the Draft Implementation Plan ([IOC/EC-53/4.1.Doc \(2\)](#)) was reviewed by Member States and UN-Oceans in June–July 2020. Through [Circular Letter 2804](#), IOC Member States were requested to provide comments on Version 1.0 and 45 Members States provided

comments in response to that request. Comments that were received were entered into a database for review by the IOC Secretariat. The review process was complemented by an online information session for IOC Member States that was held in the four working languages of the Commission on 9 July 2020. Over 140 representatives of Member States participated in this session. Verbal comments that were received during this session were also taken into account in the review of the Implementation Plan. The review by Member States was carried out in parallel to a review by members of UN-Oceans. Seven members of UN-Oceans provided comments to the Plan. The majority of these comments were editorial. Overall, strong support was expressed from Member States for Version 1.0 of the Implementation Plan, with recognition of the improvements that had been made to the Plan since the zero draft version of the Plan.

46. The analysis and proposed modifications to the Implementation Plan were presented to the EPG in a meeting on 27 July 2020, and in-principle agreement was reached on the changes to be made to transform Version 1.0 of the Plan to Version 2.0. The most significant modifications that were made in the development of Version 2.0 of the Plan included a discussion of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on ocean science and on the Ocean Decade, restructuring of the Decade objectives that refer to three main elements of the ocean science value chain, and reformulation of the data, information and knowledge management discussion. An analysis of the responses received was documented in [IOC/EC-53/4.1 Doc \(1\) Add.](#)

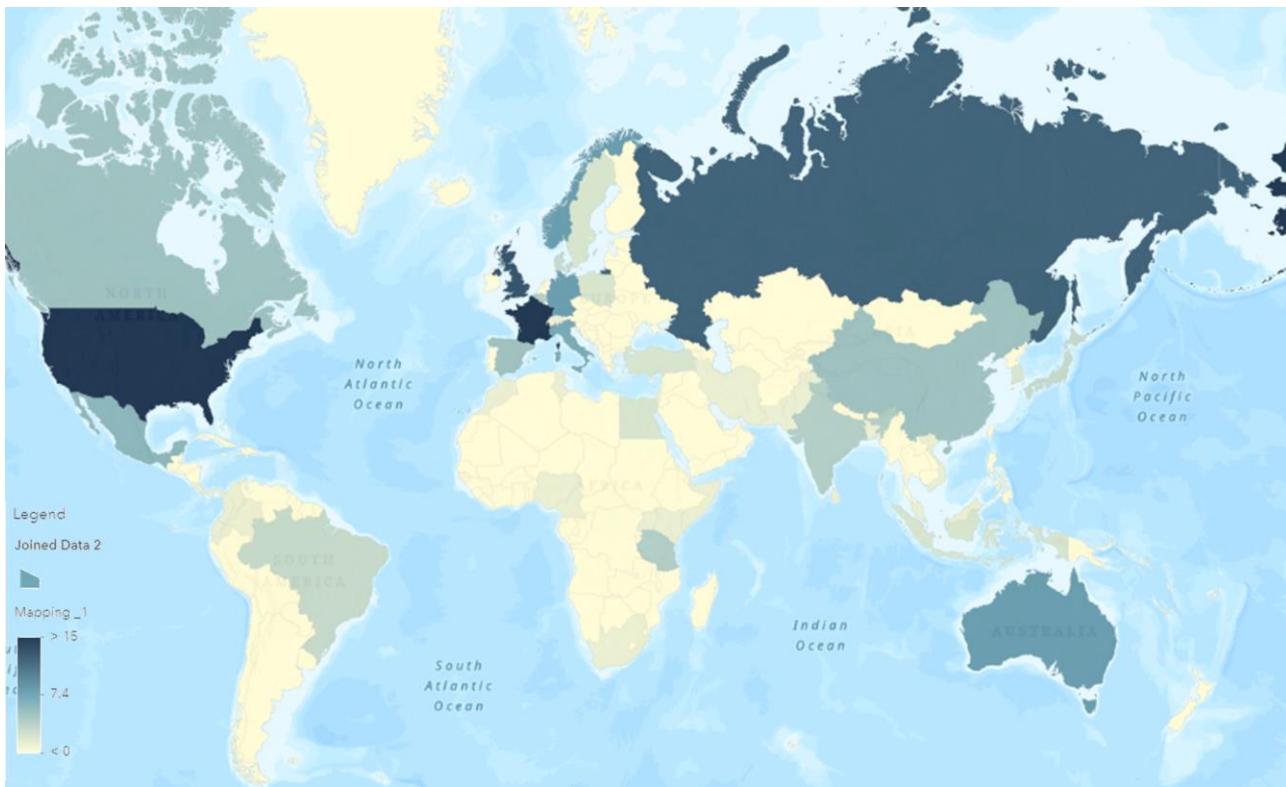
47. Version 2.0 of the Implementation Plan and an accompanying summary version was formally transmitted to the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel in August 2020, who then distributed it to UN Member States in advance of the start of the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly. A virtual information session was held for UN Member States on 15 October 2020 and attracted over 120 participants. On 31 December 2020, General Assembly resolution A/RES/75/239 welcomed the steps taken by the IOC to prepare the Implementation Plan and took note with appreciation of the Plan. It further requested the IOC to regularly consult with, and report to, Member States on the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and its implementation and invited the Secretary-General to inform the General Assembly on the implementation of the Decade through his report on oceans and the law of the sea, on the basis of information to be provided by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. The Resolution also invited UN-Oceans and its participants to collaborate with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission on the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. The final version of the Implementation Plan and its summary report are now available in English and are being translated into the other UN languages (Ref. The Ocean Decade Series, [19](#) & [20](#)). The Implementation Plan is a living document that will be reviewed and evolve over the life of the Decade.

Call for Decade Actions No. 01/2020

48. The first Call for Decade Actions (No. 01/2020) was launched on 15 October 2020 and closed on 15 January 2020. This first Call targeted large-scale, global or major regional programmes, as well as in-kind or financial contributions to the Decade, including support to coordination costs. A comprehensive communications campaign accompanied the launch of the Call, and two live question and answer sessions were held in October and November 2020 that together convened over 350 participants.

49. The Call for Actions resulted in 215 programme submissions and 27 contribution submissions from partners in 53 countries (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Geographic distribution of lead partners for programmes submissions to Call for Decade Actions No. 01/2020



50. The submissions demonstrated a high understanding of and alignment with the Ocean Decade vision and mission. A wide variety of proponents submitted programmes for consideration including Member States, research bodies and non-governmental organizations (Figure 2). Six submissions (five programmes and an activity submission) were received from United Nations partners including one from IOC's IODE programme, two led by GOOS, and two from FAO. All ocean basins were covered within the submissions (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Lead Institution by Type

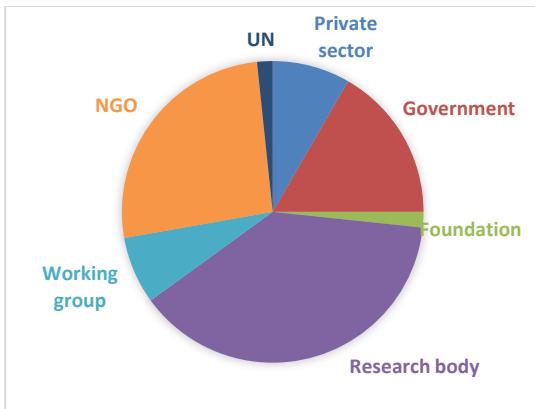
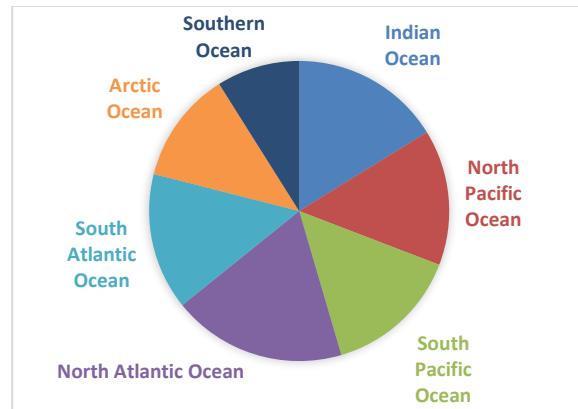
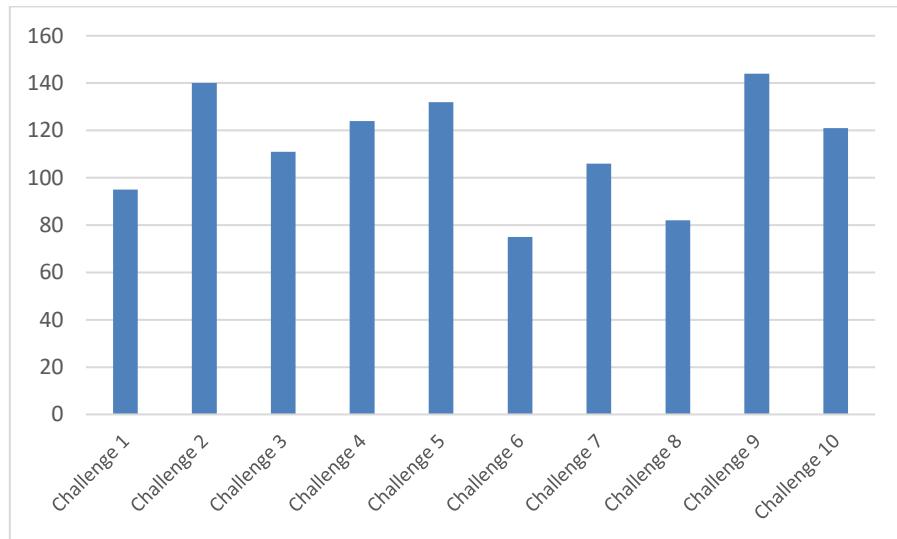


Figure 3: Ocean Basin included in Programme Submission



51. A wide diversity of themes were addressed in the submissions. The majority of submissions addressed multiple Ocean Decade Challenges, with Challenges 2, 4, 5, or 9 most commonly addressed in submissions (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Ocean Decade Challenge included in Programme Submission



52. A rigorous, multi-step review process was carried out within the limits of existing resources of the IOC Secretariat to evaluate the submissions and prepare information for discussion at the Board meeting. A small technical task team was established to carry out this work. The submissions received covered a wide spectrum of types and scales of initiatives. While this was to be expected given the pioneer nature of this first Call for Decade Actions, it increased the complexity of the analysis and necessitated a first robust structural sorting of submissions to identify programmes, potential programmes and contributions using the criteria and definitions contained in the Implementation Plan. Submissions that did not fall into the programme, potential programme or contribution categories were then re-categorised using the definitions in the Implementation Plan i.e. as projects, activities or stakeholder engagement networks. The six UN-led Decade Actions that require registration and not endorsement were carried forward into future steps of the analysis to ensure that their synergies and interactions with other programme and contribution synergies could be understood. At the end of this process, the submissions (excluding UN-led submissions) were re-categorised as 49 programmes or potential programmes, 80 projects, 21 activities, 4 networks, and 54 contributions.

53. After the initial structural sorting was complete, the analysis of programmes and potential programmes focused on: (i) identifying and analysing those programmes that were the most developed in terms of their potential to be presented to the Interim Decade Advisory Board as 'endorsement ready programmes'; (ii) identifying those programmes that required more intensive analysis and discussion and that were suitable for inclusion in a pipeline of future potential programmes; and (iii) identifying geographical and thematic commonalities across the programmes and potential programmes to identify synergies and thus potential areas for collaboration between programmes via a series of Communities of Practice in keeping with the Decade's focus on collective action and impact.

54. The analysis of contributions focused on: (i) categorising the contributions into programmatic, national, coordination, grant making facility, in-kind or impact investment contributions; (ii) creating thematic links to programmes via the series of identified Communities of Practice; and (ii) analysing submissions where necessary on a case by case basis (i.e. for coordination contributions related to Decade Collaborative Centres and several national contributions) to identify next steps.

55. Submissions that were re-categorised as Decade projects, stakeholder engagement networks and activities were informed of the decision in April 2021. Re-categorised activities are being progressively analysed as part of the process referred to above (ref. paragraph 52). Re-

categorised stakeholder engagement networks are being contacted individually to determine the optimal means of aligning with defined Decade mechanisms e.g. as a Decade Collaborative Centre, a Decade Implementing Partner, or a member of the Global Stakeholder Forum. Re-categorised projects are undergoing a more thorough analysis including mapping to endorsed or pipeline programmes and will be the subject of decisions on endorsement in coming months.

56. The results of the preliminary analysis carried out by the IOC Secretariat were presented to Interim Decade Advisory Board Meeting No. 01/2020 (refer below). The discussions in that meeting informed the decision of the IOC Executive Secretary on the endorsement of programmes and contributions as reported in [The Ocean Decade Series, 21.](#)

Interim Decade Advisory Board Meeting No. 01/2021

57. Interim Decade Advisory Board Meeting No. 01/2020 was held virtually from 6 to 8 April 2021. In addition to the members of the re-mandated EPG, two ECOP representatives and representatives from UN partners were invited to the meeting. The objectives of the meeting were as follows: (i) present a set of 'endorsement ready' programmes for technical advice and comments from the participants; (ii) provide an overview of a set of 'pipeline' programmes and clusters of programmes for high level comments and technical advice from the participants; (iii) share initial information on contribution, project, activity and network submissions; and (iv) present the draft monitoring and evaluation conceptual framework for comments and technical advice.

58. In addition to technical advice on programme submissions to inform the IOC Executive Secretary's decision on programme endorsement, key issues that were discussed in the meeting included:

- (i) there is a need for programmes to explicitly document co-design processes that they have implemented and ways in which co-design can be increased in the future to engage users of ocean science. Future Calls for Decade Actions should put more emphasis on co-design requirements;
- (ii) the IOC Secretariat was asked to define a series of voluntary thematic / geographic Communities of Practice that would facilitate collaboration and increase synergies between programmes, contributions and projects working on similar themes;
- (iii) there is an urgent need for mechanisms and resources to be identified to increase the engagement of least developed countries and Small Island Developing States in the Decade; and
- (iv) there is an equally urgent need for additional resource mobilisation to support Decade coordination and Decade Actions. The meeting notes are contained in [The Ocean Decade Series, 21.](#)

59. A second meeting of the Interim Decade Advisory Board is planned for 19 May 2021 to discuss the next set of endorsement ready programmes and provide an update on the analysis of contributions and projects.

Decade Governance and Coordination

60. **Decade Advisory Board:** The Decade Advisory Board will be a strategic advisory body to the IOC Executive Secretary that will provide technical advice on Decade implementation but that does not exercise policy-making functions. The Terms of the Reference for the Board are being tabled at the 31st session of the IOC Assembly for endorsement (ref. [IOC/A-31/3/7/Doc\(1\)](#)). Dependent on this endorsement, it is envisaged that the call for nominations for the Board will be launched in July 2021 with establishment of the Board in the third quarter of 2021.

61. **Decentralised Coordination Structures:** The Implementation Plan envisages that different types of decentralised coordination structures will provide support to implementation of the

Decade. A number of institutions and Member States have informally indicated their interest in hosting structures of this kind. Draft operational guidance for two of these types of structures—Decade Collaborative Centres and Decade Implementing Partners—was presented to the Executive Council in [IOC/EC-53/3.1.Inf\(2\)](#). In response to Call for Decade Actions No. 01/2020, 11 submissions for Decade Collaborative Centres were received, 7 of which were from Member States. The Secretariat is finalising the detailed elements required to advance discussions with partners interested in playing this role including the requirements for an independent Feasibility Study to be carried out in advance of the establishment of an agreement for operation of the Centre. Discussions have also commenced with four European based organisations who are interested in playing a role of Decade Implementing Partners. These discussions will continue in coming months.

62. **Decade Coordination Unit:** With the commencement of implementation of the Decade, there is an urgent need for a fully resourced and functional Decade Coordination Unit. A revised analysis estimates that USD 2 - 2.5 million will be needed annually for the operation of the central Decade Coordination Unit that will be housed within the IOC Secretariat. This is based on staffing of the Unit at minimum by a P5 (optimally, a D-1) coordinator, a senior science officer at P4 level, five P4/P3 programme specialists including specialists in data, capacity development, resource mobilisation and monitoring and evaluation, a communication specialist at P3 level, a junior science officer at P2 level, and an administrative assistant. Currently, none of these positions are sustained. [Circular Letter 2840](#) urgently requested support from Member States for resources in the form of extra-budgetary resources or seconded staff to fill these positions and build out the Decade Coordination Unit.

Financial Implications & Resource Mobilisation

63. Overall, the single biggest challenge for the Commission's small Secretariat, and the single biggest risk to the success of the Decade, continues to be the lack of available resources. The Secretariat remains faced with the dual task of raising both the extrabudgetary resources necessary to maintain its core operational programmes and the significant additional resources required to lead and coordinate the Decade preparation phase. This is particularly problematic in this critical period which couples the need for investment in the Decade Coordination Unit and many of the engagement and operational mechanisms for the Decade, with resourcing constraints of Member States and other organisations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Until now, most of the funds have been provided through extra-budgetary contributions of relatively short duration. The following Member States/organizations have made specific financial contributions to IOC to support planning activities during this period: Belgium, Canada, China, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Sweden and REV-Ocean. The coordination of Decade activities is being managed by the Head of Marine Policy & Regional Coordination on a part-time basis, with the support of a P4 programme specialist also on a part-time basis, supported by two consultants funded through extra-budgetary funds. The Government of Canada has also loaned one full-time expert (June 2019 to June 2021).

64. In order to achieve the Decade vision, a significant increase in the volume and type of financial and in-kind resources available will be required. Resources are needed for:

- (i) support to Decade Actions based on the results of regular resources needs assessments – the first resource needs assessment for endorsed Decade programmes is provided in IOC/INF-1417;
- (ii) support to Decade coordination within the Decade Coordination Unit, and through hosting of decentralised coordination structures; and
- (iii) support to IOC programmatic contributions to the Decade. A draft Resource Mobilisation Strategy has been prepared for the Decade (ref. IOC/INF-1416) which sets out aspirational goals for resource mobilisation as well as a set of priorities to be carried out by the IOC Secretariat and UNESCO, as well as by IOC Member States.

65. The Ocean Decade Alliance will be a key element of the resource mobilisation efforts for the Decade. The Alliance – which was pre-launched as part of the Brave New Ocean event on 3 February 2021 – has been established to leverage and multiply financial and in-kind resource commitments towards the Decade. It is a network of eminent partners from governments, UN agencies, industry and philanthropy that will lead by example to catalyse support for the Decade through targeted resource mobilization, networking, and influence. Alliance members are listed on the [Ocean Decade website](#) and have been invited to join the Alliance both at the individual level (Ocean Decade Alliance patrons) and the institutional level. Sherpas are currently being identified for all members and a first Alliance meeting is planned in coming months.

Next Steps

66. The next twelve months will be a critical period for the Decade in terms of ensuring global visibility through high-level global and regional launch events, and operationalising the first series of endorsed Decade programmes that will form the first building blocks of the Decade, including population of these programmes with projects. It will also be crucial in terms of the establishment of fundamental operational elements of the Decade including the Decade Coordination Unit, decentralised coordination structures, and the Global Stakeholder Forum. This period will also see the establishment of the Decade Advisory Board, and the build out and operationalisation of the Ocean Decade Alliance – both of which will need an adequate level of support to efficiently play their mandated roles. From a programmatic point of view, IOC will also require support to ensure a strong and coordinated programmatic contribution to the Decade as outlined in [IOC/INF-1416](#).

67. 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 programmatically and for staffing. The contribution of Member States and partners will be essential to successfully start and sustain the envisaged central role of the Secretariat in the implementation of the Decade. As highlighted in the draft Implementation Plan and via [Circular Letters 2785, 2798, and 2840](#), Member States are warmly invited to provide support to the Decade coordination activities including hosting of Decade Coordination Offices and Decade Collaborative Centres, establishment of National Decade Committees, possibly building on existing IOC national committees, membership of the Ocean Decade Alliance, and provision of extra-budgetary resources to support coordination and Decade Actions.