



INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION  
COMMISSION OCÉANOGRAPHIQUE INTERGOUVERNEMENTALE  
COMISIÓN OCEANOGRÁFICA INTERGUBERNAMENTAL  
МЕЖПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННАЯ ОКЕАНОГРАФИЧЕСКАЯ КОМИССИЯ  
اللجنة الدولية الحكومية لعلوم المحيطات  
政府间海洋学委员会

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**IOC Circular Letter No 2671**  
(Available in English and French)

IOC/VR/JB  
17 May 2017

**To :** IOC National Official Coordinating Bodies of IOC Member States

**cc. :** Permanent Delegates / Observer Missions to UNESCO of IOC Member States  
National Commissions for UNESCO of IOC Member States  
Chair and Vice-Chairs of IOC and Major Subsidiary Bodies

**Subject : IOC engagement in the UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, the Ocean Conference, 5–9 June 2017, UN Headquarters, New York**

By means of this circular letter, I would like to inform Members States of the main activities that the IOC will contribute to the UN Conference to be held from 5 to 9 June at the UN Headquarters. The UNESCO/IOC delegation will be led by the Director-General of UNESCO. As part of the delegation, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission will be represented by its Chairperson Professor Peter M. Haugan and myself as Executive Secretary.

Partnership dialogues

In parallel to the Plenary session, seven Partnership Dialogues (of a duration of half day each) will address specific issues. The following Partnership Dialogues are particularly relevant to the work of IOC:

- Partnership Dialogue 1 (Marine Pollution) – Monday 5th (p.m.)
- Partnership Dialogue 2 (Marine and coastal ecosystems) – Tuesday 6th (a.m.)
- Partnership Dialogue 3 (Ocean acidification) – Tuesday 6th (p.m.)
- Partnership Dialogue 6 (Scientific knowledge/research capacity) – Thursday 8th (p.m.)

Several experts engaged with IOC programmes will serve on the panels of these partnership dialogues, including myself in relation to Partnership Dialogue 6 (Scientific knowledge/research capacity). The full programme of the Conference is now available on the official Conference website: <https://oceanconference.un.org>.

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### Voluntary commitments

All stakeholders are encouraged to register online [voluntary commitments](#) geared at driving implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 and its associated targets, in the Ocean Conference [Registry of Voluntary Commitments](#). These will be part of the conference outcomes. The IOC has registered several voluntary commitments such as the Global Ocean Science Report, and also in areas such as ocean observation, marine spatial planning, capacity development, Large Marine Ecosystem, ocean literacy amongst others. Information about these commitments can be found on an IOC dedicate webpage for the conference at: <http://en.unesco.org/ocean-conference>. All Member States are encouraged to register Voluntary commitments.

In particular, I would like to draw your attention on the fact the Proposal for an International Decade on Ocean Science for Sustainable Development has been registered as #Ocean Action15527 on the UN Registry. In case your country or institution would like to express support for this commitment in the framework of the UN Conference, and be specifically mentioned, please contact the IOC Secretariat (c/o [j.barbiere@unesco.org](mailto:j.barbiere@unesco.org)).

### Side events

IOC will participate and contribute to 16 side events organized during the week. I would like to highlight in particular the lead IOC event entitled “Building ocean knowledge for sustainable development—How science will contribute to the achievement of SDG 14” on 8 June, 13.15-14.30. This event will be opened by the Prime Minister of Samoa, the UNESCO Director-General and the IOC Chairperson. This event will also be the occasion of the official launching of the Global Ocean Science Report and the presentation of the proposed International Decade on Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

Secondly, IOC is organizing a media event —Ocean’s 8— celebrating global cooperation on ocean science, on 6 June (13.00-15.00). This event will be hosted by Sky News and organized in cooperation with UN Environment. All information related to IOC side events can be found at <http://en.unesco.org/ocean-conference>.

### Conference outcome declaration: Call of Action

The Conference shall adopt by consensus a concise, focused, intergovernmentally agreed declaration in the form of a "Call for Action" to support the implementation of Goal 14. Attached to this circular letter, you will find the second version of the Draft Call for Action negotiated by UN Member States. A final consultation meeting will take place at the UN on 22, 23 and 25 May with the objective to finalize the Call for Action prior to its adoption by the Conference. Whilst some of the language proposed by IOC has been included in this version, the proposed reference to the proposed International Decade on Ocean Science for Sustainable Development has not been retained. The Secretariat therefore propose the following amendment (text in Bold) with regards to para. 13 (f):

*Dedicate greater resources to marine scientific research, such as inter-disciplinary research and sustained ocean and coastal observation, as well as the collection and sharing of data and knowledge, including traditional knowledge, in order to increase our knowledge of the ocean, to better understand the relationship between climate and the health and productivity of the ocean, and to promote decision-making based on the best available science, to encourage scientific and technological innovation, as well as to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular SIDS and LDCs, **and in this respect welcome the proposed international decade on ocean science for sustainable development (2021–2030) under the auspices of the United Nations as a framework for concerted action for all States and relevant stakeholders to generate and consolidate the research and related capacity development needed to achieve SDG 14.***

We are therefore seeking the support of Member States to explicitly convey this amendment at the final consultation meeting next week (22–25 May 2017).

Further information on the proposal of an International Decade on Ocean Science for Sustainable Development can be found at <http://en.unesco.org/node/268984>.

*[signed]*

Vladimir Ryabinin  
Executive Secretary

Enclosure: Second Draft of the UN Ocean Conference “Call for Action”



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

9 May 2017

Excellency,

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/303 on the modalities for the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, I have the honour to enclose herewith, the letter of the co-facilitators of the preparatory process, H.E. Mr. Alvaro Mendonça e Moura, Permanent Representative of Portugal and H.E. Mr. Burhan Gafoor, Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations, attaching the revised draft of The Call for Action, following the second round of consultations held on 24, 25 and 27 April 2017.

I encourage your positive and constructive engagement at the final round of consultations to be convened on 22, 23 and 25 May 2017.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Thomson'.

Peter Thomson

All Permanent Representatives and  
Permanent Observers to the United Nations  
New York



New York, 8 May 2017

Excellency,

We are pleased to write to you in our capacity as co-facilitators appointed by the President of the General Assembly to oversee the preparatory process and to conclude the intergovernmental consultations on a “Call for Action” for the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

In our letter dated 7 April 2017, we enclosed a revised draft of the “Call for Action” that reflected the discussions during the first round of consultations in March 2017. This revised draft was in turn the basis for the second round of consultations, held on the 24, 25 and 27 April 2017. The consultations were very constructive and fruitful, providing the co-facilitators with a clearer understanding of the different concerns and of the possibilities for bridging existing gaps. We thank delegations for their active participation at that meeting.

Taking into consideration what we heard during the second round of consultations, and with the purpose of moving closer towards consensus, we have prepared a second revised draft of the “Call for Action”, which is enclosed.

We wish to point out that in the second revised draft we have not modified the text of paragraphs 11 (relating to UNCLOS) and 13(p) (relating to fisheries subsidies) as the last round of consultations in April clearly revealed the need for further technical discussions and continued engagement between delegations in order to find consensus. Accordingly, the text of these two paragraphs is in italics to differentiate them from the rest of the draft text which has been revised to reflect our last discussions in April.

We remind delegations that the final round of consultations will be held on Monday, 22 May 2017, Tuesday, 23 May 2017 and Thursday, 25 April 2017 from 10:00am to 1:00pm and 3:00pm to 6:00pm. The venue will be Conference Room 2.

We look forward to delegations once again engaging actively and constructively.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Álvaro Mendonça e Moura  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative  
of Portugal to the United Nations

Burhan Gafoor  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative  
of Singapore to the United Nations



## **OUR OCEAN, OUR FUTURE: CALL FOR ACTION**

1. We, the Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives, meeting in New York from 5 to 9 June 2017 at the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda, with the full participation of civil society and other relevant stakeholders, affirm our strong commitment to conserve and sustainably use our oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
2. We are mobilised by a strong conviction that our ocean is critical to our shared future and common humanity in all its diversity. As leaders and representatives of our Governments, we are determined to act decisively and urgently, convinced that our collective action will make a meaningful difference to our people, to our planet, and to our prosperity.
3. We recognise that our ocean covers three quarters of our planet, connects our populations and markets, and forms an important part of our natural and cultural heritage. It supplies half the oxygen we breathe, absorbs a third of the carbon dioxide we produce, plays a vital role in the water cycle and the climate system, and is an important source of our planet's biodiversity. It contributes to sustainable development and sustainable ocean-based economies, as well as to poverty eradication, food security and nutrition, maritime trade and transportation, decent work and livelihoods.
4. We are particularly alarmed by the adverse impacts of climate change on the ocean, including the rise in ocean temperatures, ocean and coastal acidification, deoxygenation, sea-level rise, coastal erosion and extreme weather events. We acknowledge the need to address the adverse impacts, including cumulative impacts, that impair the crucial ability of the ocean to act as climate regulator, source of marine biodiversity, and as key provider of food and nutrition, tourism and ecosystem services, and as an engine for sustainable economic development and growth. We recognise, in this regard, the particular importance of the Paris Agreement adopted under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.
5. We are committed to halting and reversing the decline in the health and productivity of our ocean and its ecosystems and to protecting and restoring its resilience and ecological integrity. We recognise that the well-being of present and future generations is inextricably linked to the health and productivity of our ocean.
6. We underline the integrated and indivisible character of all Sustainable Development Goals as well as the inter-linkages and synergies between them and reiterate the critical importance of being guided in our work by the 2030 Agenda, including the principles reaffirmed therein. We acknowledge that each country faces specific challenges in its pursuit of sustainable development and the most vulnerable deserve special attention, as do others recognised in the 2030 Agenda.
7. We reiterate our commitment to achieve the targets of Goal 14 within the timelines, and the need to sustain action over the long term, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. We recognise, in particular, the special importance of certain targets in Goal 14 for small island developing States (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs).
8. We stress the need for an integrated, interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach as well as enhanced cooperation, coordination, and policy coherence, at all levels. We emphasise the critical importance of effective partnerships enabling collective action and reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of Goal 14 with the full participation of all relevant stakeholders.
9. We underline the need to integrate Goal 14 and its inter-related targets into national development plans and strategies, to promote national ownership and to ensure success in its implementation by involving all relevant stakeholders, including national and local authorities, members of parliament, local communities, indigenous peoples, women and youth, as well as business and industry. We recognise the importance of gender equality, and the crucial role of women and youth in the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

10. We stress the importance of enhancing understanding of the health and role of our ocean and the stressors on its ecosystems, including through assessments on the state of the ocean, and through science and traditional knowledge systems. We also stress the need to further increase marine scientific research to inform and support decision-making, and to promote knowledge hubs and networks to enhance the sharing of scientific data and best practices.

11. *We emphasise that our actions to implement Goal 14 should be in accordance with, reinforce and not duplicate or undermine, existing legal instruments, arrangements, processes, mechanisms, or entities. We affirm the need to be consistent with international law, as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea which provides the legal framework for all the activities in the oceans and seas.*

12. We recognise that the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources require the necessary means of implementation in line with the 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and other relevant outcomes, including the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. We stress the importance of the full and timely implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and emphasise the need to enhance scientific knowledge and research, scale up capacity building at all levels and facilitate transfer of technology, taking into account internationally agreed criteria and guidelines, in order to support the implementation of Goal 14 in developing countries.

13. We commit to work in concert with all stakeholders to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development by taking, *inter alia*, the following actions on an urgent basis, including by building on existing institutions and partnerships:

(a) Approach the implementation of Goal 14 in an integrated and coordinated way and promote policies and actions that take into account the critical interlinkages among the targets of Goal 14, the potential synergies between Goal 14 and the other goals, particularly those with ocean-related targets, as well as other processes that support the implementation of Goal 14.

(b) Strengthen cooperation, policy coherence and coordination amongst institutions at all levels, including between and amongst international organisations, regional and sub-regional organisations and institutions, arrangements and programmes.

(c) Strengthen and promote effective and transparent multi-stakeholder partnerships, including public-private partnerships, by enhancing engagement of governments with global, regional and sub-regional bodies and programmes, the scientific community, the private sector, donor community, non-governmental organisations, community groups, academic institutions, and other relevant actors.

(d) Develop comprehensive strategies to raise awareness of the natural and cultural significance of the ocean, as well as of its state and role, and of the need to further improve the knowledge of the ocean, including its importance for sustainable development and how it is impacted by anthropogenic activities.

(e) Support plans to foster ocean-related education, for example as part of education curricula, to promote ocean literacy and a culture of conservation, restoration and sustainable use of our ocean.

(f) Dedicate greater resources to marine scientific research, such as inter-disciplinary research and sustained ocean and coastal observation, as well as the collection and sharing of data and knowledge, including traditional knowledge, in order to increase our knowledge of the ocean, to better understand the relationship between climate and the health and productivity of the ocean, and to promote decision-making based on the best available science, to encourage scientific and technological innovation, as well as to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular SIDS and LDCs.

(g) Accelerate actions to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, particularly from land-based activities, including marine debris, nutrient pollution, untreated wastewater, solid waste discharges, hazardous substances, pollution from ships, abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear, and plastics and microplastics, as well as to address other human-related activities that adversely impact on the ocean and on marine life, such as ship strikes, underwater noise and invasive alien species.



- (h) Promote waste prevention and minimization, develop sustainable consumption and production patterns, adopt the 3Rs – reduce, reuse and recycle – including through incentivising market-based solutions to reduce waste and its generation, improving mechanisms for environmentally-sound waste management, disposal and recycling, and developing alternatives such as reusable or recyclable products, or products biodegradable under natural conditions.
- (i) Implement long-term and robust strategies to reduce the use of plastics and microplastics, particularly plastic bags and single use plastics, including by partnering with stakeholders at relevant levels to address their production, marketing and use.
- (j) Strengthen the use of effective and appropriate area-based management tools, including marine protected areas and other integrated, cross-sectoral approaches, including marine spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management, based on best available science, stakeholder engagement and applying the precautionary and ecosystem approaches, in accordance with international law and national legislation, to enhance ocean resilience and better conserve and sustainably use marine biodiversity.
- (k) Develop and implement effective adaptation and mitigation measures that contribute to increasing and supporting resilience to ocean and coastal acidification, sea-level rise, and increase in ocean temperatures, and to addressing the other harmful impacts of climate change on the ocean as well as coastal and blue carbon ecosystems such as mangroves, tidal marshes, seagrass, and coral reefs, and wider interconnected ecosystems impacting on our ocean, and ensure the implementation of relevant obligations and commitments.
- (l) Enhance sustainable fisheries management, including to achieve commitments concerning maximum sustainable yield, through the implementation of science-based management measures, precautionary and ecosystem approaches, monitoring, control and enforcement, promoting the consumption of sustainably managed fish stocks, and strengthening cooperation and coordination, including through regional fisheries management organisations, bodies and arrangements.
- (m) End destructive fishing practices and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, addressing their root causes and holding actors and beneficiaries accountable by taking appropriate actions, so as to deprive them of benefits of such activities, and effectively implementing flag State obligations as well as relevant port State obligations.
- (n) Accelerate further work and strengthen cooperation and coordination on the development of inter-operable catch documentation schemes and traceability of fish products.
- (o) Strengthen capacity building and technical assistance provided to small-scale and artisanal fishers, to enable and enhance their access to marine resources and markets and improve the socio-economic situation of fishers and fish workers within the context of sustainable fisheries management.
- (p) *Act decisively to prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, including by completing the ongoing negotiations in the World Trade Organization on this issue without further delay, recognising that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of those negotiations.*
- (q) Support the promotion and strengthening of sustainable ocean-based economies, which inter alia build on sustainable fisheries, tourism, aquaculture, maritime transportation, renewable energies, marine biotechnology, and sea water desalination, as means to achieve the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, in particular for SIDS and LDCs.
- (r) Increase efforts to mobilise the means necessary for the development of sustainable ocean-related activities and the implementation of Goal 14, particularly in developing countries, in line with the 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other relevant outcomes.
- (s) Actively engage in discussions and the exchange of views in the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly Resolution 69/292 on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of



marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, so that the General Assembly can, before the end of its seventy-second session, taking into account the report of the Preparatory Committee to the General Assembly, decide on the convening and on the starting date of an intergovernmental conference.

(t) Welcome the follow-up on the partnership dialogues and commit to implement the voluntary commitments we have made in the context of the Conference.

(u) Contribute to the follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda by submitting the results from the Conference as an input on the implementation of Goal 14 to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, including on opportunities to strengthen progress in the future.

(v) Consider further ways and means to support the timely and effective implementation of Goal 14.

14. We strongly call upon the UN Secretary-General to support the implementation of Goal 14, in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in particular by enhancing coordination and coherence throughout the UN system on ocean issues, building on the work of UN-Oceans.

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