



**INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION  
(of UNESCO)**

**Thirty-first Session of the Assembly**  
UNESCO, 14–25 June 2021 (Online)

Item 4.3 of the Provisional Agenda

**REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON  
OF THE INTERSESSIONAL FINANCIAL ADVISORY GROUP**

Summary

This document presents a brief report of the Chairperson of the Intersessional Financial Advisory Group (IFAG) on the work accomplished in the intersessional period April–June 2021.

The proposed decision is referenced IOC/A-31/Dec.4.3 in the Second Revised Action Paper ([IOC/A-31/AP Rev.2](#)) of the 31st Session of IOC Assembly.

1. In accordance with Resolution [EC-53/2](#), the open-ended Intersessional Financial Advisor Group (IFAG) was reconstituted through a call for nominations addressed to Member States in the [IOC Circular Letters, 2837](#) of 18 March 2021. Twenty-two (22) Member States—Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Madagascar, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Russian Federation, Turkey, UK, USA—nominated representatives to constitute the core membership of the Group, chaired by IOC Vice-Chair Karim Hilmi from Morocco.

2. As customary, the Group started working by correspondence and finalized its conclusions at an on-line meeting on 10 June 2021.

3. Focussing, as mandated by the Executive Council at its 53<sup>rd</sup> session, on the matters to be covered by Draft Resolution [A-31/\[4.4\]](#), the Group structured its discussions in four main parts as follows.

#### **I. 2020–2021 budget implementation as at 31 December 2020 and Financial situation of the IOC Special Account as at year end 2020 and Forecast for 2021**

4. The Group noted the change in the presentation, with the information now organised in a set of two documents—[IOC/A-31/3.2.Doc\(2\)](#) and [IOC/A-31/3.2.Doc\(3\)](#)—in order to better align with the approach adopted by UNESCO in its reports on financial management.

5. Noting a slightly lower than usual implementation rate in the first year of the 2020–2021 biennium, due to the working conditions under the COVID-19 pandemic, IFAG acknowledged the Secretariat's intention to fully implement the biennial programme of work by the end of 2021.

6. The Group was satisfied that the extrabudgetary resource mobilisation targets set for the 2020–2021 biennium have been achieved to the level of 76% overall, while noting considerable variances between the Commission's Functions;

#### **II. Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2029 and**

7. IFAG welcomed the revised version of the Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2029 presented in [IOC/A-31/4.1.Doc\(1\)](#) as consistent with the recommendations of the IOC Executive Council through [Resolution EC-53/2](#). In preparing for the discussion at the Assembly, IFAG members felt that further improvements could be considered. Several Member States committed to sending to the Secretariat their proposed edits and comments with a view of preparing a revised consolidated document for consideration at the sessional Financial Committee.

#### **III. Draft Programme and Budget for 2022–2025**

8. As regards the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022–2025, and the budgetary proposals for the first biennium 2022–2023 presented in [IOC/A-31/4.2.Doc](#), the Group considered that they were overall consistent with the guiding principles set out in Resolution EC-53/2 and the high level objectives defined in the Draft IOC Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2029. In addition to sharing the concern regarding the decrease in the regular programme budget allocated to operations, the Group expressed concern regarding the ambition of resources to deliver, in particular with regard to the need to establish an effective, efficient and sustainably-funded Decade Coordination Unit.

#### **IV. Governance and Working Methods**

9. In the intersessional period leading to the online meeting on 10 June 2021, the main focus of the Group was on the issue of the update to the Rules of Procedure to '*to align and adapt them to the prevailing United Nations' best practices concerning online meetings facilitating informed and timely decision-making by IOC Member States*'. In this context, the following information was provided by the Secretariat, in consultation with the UNESCO Legal Advisor.

10. The [IOC Rules of Procedure](#) do not contain any clauses regarding sessions by videoconference, but they do not either explicitly require the physical presence of the members and therefore do not forbid as such the holding of a session by virtual means.

11. However, certain Rules are drafted in a manner that suggests the holding of a session with the physical presence of the members—ex. voting by secret ballot in electing members of the Executive Council and IOC Officers, for which technology is not currently available.

12. It is to be noted that, UNESCO's governing bodies did not amend their Rules of Procedure to accommodate the specific issue of online meetings, although the Executive Board already met several times online. However, the Executive Board, at its 209<sup>th</sup> session, adopted recommendations on the working methods for a virtual session ([209 EX/ Decision 30](#)). IOC could, therefore, consider a similar approach.

13. In addition, the initial version of draft resolution EC-53/2 proposed in the EC-53 Action Paper ([Add. & Corr.](#)) read as follows: '*... the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the need to review and possibly update the Commission's Rules and Procedure in order to align and adapt them with the prevailing United Nations' best practices in order to facilitate informed and timely decision-making by IOC Member States*' and the intention was to propose a more in-depth review of the Rules. There is a number of issues pertaining to the current [Rules of Procedure](#) that could benefit from a review/clarification, as explained below and taking into consideration that the examples provided are not exhaustive.

14. First, unlike other Rules of Procedure, the IOC has one set of Rules of Procedure which applies both to the Assembly and to the Executive Council. As a consequence, the Assembly and the Executive Council do not have separate procedures which apply to each of them distinctively and which each of these bodies can amend or suspend. In particular, the English version of [Rule 56](#) foresees that the Rules "*may be suspended only by a decision adopted by a majority of all Member States of the Commission present and voting*". The only body which is composed of all the Member States of the Commission is the Assembly, and, as a consequence, although not explicitly stated in the Rules of Procedure, it would appear that only the Assembly may suspend the Rules of Procedure.

15. Second, there are a number of discrepancies between the language versions of the Rules of Procedure. For example, while the English version of Rule 56 foresees that "*[a]ny of these Rules may be suspended only by a decision adopted by a majority of all Member States of the Commission present and voting*", the [French version](#) explicitly refers to a decision of the Assembly ("*L'application de l'un quelconque des articles du présent Règlement ne peut être suspendue que par décision de l'Assemblée, adoptée à la majorité de tous les États membres de la Commission présents et votants*"). The Spanish and Russian versions follow the English version on this point. Another example concerns [Rule 19.3](#) on the convening of extraordinary sessions of the Executive Council. While the English version specifies that "*[e]xtraordinary sessions may be convened by a decision of the Executive Council, or of one-third of its members, or at the request of the Officers of the Commission who have submitted such a request to the Executive Secretary at least four months before the proposed date*", the [French version](#) does not refer to the possibility of convening a session at the request of one-third of the members of the Council.

16. Third, there are certain Rules which could be further clarified or elaborated. For example, while [Rule 19.2](#) provides that the time and place of ordinary Executive Council sessions are determined by the Executive Council, the Rules of Procedure do not foresee a specific and simplified procedure to modify the date of the session, unlike the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board of UNESCO which enable the Chairperson to modify the date if necessary. Another example concerns [Rule 23](#) which foresees that "*[f]ollowing the instructions of the Executive Council the Chairperson or the Executive Secretary may consult Member States of the Commission by correspondence on substantial matters prior to taking action and may establish a reasonable time limit for replies*". This procedure by correspondence could be further broadened or clarified.

17. In view of the above, and in order to avoid undue haste and ensure a careful review of the Rules of Procedure and a broad and inclusive consultation of all Member States on amendment proposals, IFAG recommended that the Assembly, at its 31<sup>st</sup> session, in its resolution 'Governance, Programming and Budgeting Matters of the Commission':

request the Executive Secretary to prepare, in consultation with the UNESCO Legal Advisor and IFAG, a preliminary proposal for the revision of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly and Rules of Procedure of the Executive Council which would be aligned with the prevailing best practices for review and adoption by these two bodies.

18. The proposed timeframe would be as follows:

- The first draft of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Council would be reviewed by the Executive Council at its 55<sup>th</sup> session in 2022.
- The draft Rules of Procedure of the Assembly would be presented for review and adoption at its 32<sup>nd</sup> session in 2023.
- The Executive Council would hold an extraordinary session following the 32<sup>nd</sup> session of the Assembly in order to adopt its Rules of Procedure.
- Both Governing Bodies will also adopt the recommendations on the working methods for a virtual session at the same time as the Rules of Procedure, following the practice of the UNESCO Executive Board.

While welcoming the proposal to establish two separate sets of Rules, one for the Assembly and one for the Executive Council as described above, Member States agreed that the review should focus on clauses that may benefit from a clearer formulation and on aligning the language versions, without any substantial changes to the current Rules.

19. Finally, with regard to the Assembly decision to start considering ways of improving reporting on Member States in-kind contributions, the discussions stemmed from the draft note provided by the United States of America and attached as Annex I to this document. Member States agreed that the proposal was very timely and that indeed the current reporting on in-kind contributions as provided in talbe 5 of document IOC/A-31/3.2.Doc(2) does not offer a comprehensive overview and is not based on an approach collectively agreed by Member States. They welcomed the draft note's attempt to establish both the criteria for a more comprehensive reporting and a more systematic approach to collecting the information from Member States through a circular letter. Member States agreed that this was a starting point for discussions in the sessional Financial Committee, also bearing in mind the need to avoid any substantial increase in the Secretariat's workload.

## Annex I

### Reporting on Member States' in-kind contributions to the IOC

The IOC Executive Council at its 53<sup>rd</sup> session in February 2021 through Resolution EC-53/2 revised the “Guiding Principles for Programming and Budgeting” to encourage extra-budgetary and in-kind contributions at a time of increasing fiscal constraints for the Regular Programme Budget. This guidance encouraged:

1. *‘Programmes should develop strong partnerships which would increase financial resilience in the event of funding pressures, enabling partners to take a greater share in supporting these programmes, on the condition that those partners respect the objectives and guidelines established by the IOC’s governing bodies and respond to the IOC Secretariat in this regard;*
2. *Identify Member States willing to establish funded and staffed offices to take a larger share of an IOC programme based on existing good practices, on the condition that those Member States respect the objectives and guidelines established by the IOC’s governing bodies and respond to the IOC Secretariat in this regard;*
3. *Identify activities that can be sustained with extrabudgetary funding and in-kind contributions, and, according to that, prioritize the allocation of resources from the regular budget to activities and functions of the IOC that cannot be sustained with extrabudgetary funding, in order to ensure that resources from both the regular budget and extrabudgetary sources will be expended in a way that enables the adequate and balanced implementation of all IOC’s functions.’*

#### **Thus Contributions may be reported if they:**

- Strengthen coordination of IOC programs, and national and regional activities including strengthening regional subsidiary bodies, decentralised offices, including Decade Coordination Offices, Decade Coordination Centres and C2Cs,
- Are guided by and support IOC’s international governing body guidelines; and
- Facilitate coordinated international engagement in IOC programmes.

In-Kind includes contribution of coordination capacity consistent with IOC governing body guidelines, including services provided indirectly through a third party (eg contractor or partner).

**1. Reportable In-Kind Contributions to IOC Secretariat Coordination Function**

Report for your country or organization	Do Not report
<p>Hosting an IOC office under a formal partner arrangement and subject to IOC guidance (staff, office and building costs), e.g., host to regional IOC Committees or Sub-commissions; IOC affiliated training centers (supporting international participation); hosted secretariat (IODE &amp; HAB); or hosted IOC services (OBIS, regional tsunami warning services which are authorized by IOC)</p> <p>Task oriented staff work, whether in person or remote in direct support of the IOC program coordination</p> <p>Staff time devoted to international coordination of IOC and subsidiary body international programs and projects e.g. international coordination of IIOE2, OceanOPS, ITIC and TPOS as a secretariat coordination function</p> <p>Hosting IOC programme meetings including cost of sponsoring participants from other countries</p>	<p>Building, office or staff costs or any part of time that is unrelated to IOC programmatic work, e.g. facilities that are dual purpose can only report IOC related activities or staff time</p> <p>National points of contact, Scientists, or technical staff working on the national component of a standing IOC program; National Scientists or technical staff serving on IOC technical standing bodies or as an officer of same e.g. member or leader of Data Buoy Cooperation Panel</p> <p>Cost of Physical infrastructure (ships, buoys, floats etc) in international science programs, vessel support for training at sea</p> <p>Member state experts who participate in expert committees/task groups</p> <p>Cost of national participation in IOC meeting</p>

**2. Reportable IOC Formalized Arrangements for Programme Management through In-kind Contributions**

Report for your country or organization	Do Not report
<p>Activities that directly support IOC operational mission needs through formal arrangement or designation (Tsunami Service Provider)</p>	<p>Activities, including ocean observing and early warning systems, that primarily support national interests only</p> <p>Cost of Physical infrastructure (ships, buoys, floats etc) in international science programs, vessel support for training at sea</p>

## TEMPLATE FOR IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

The Secretariat will send requests for updated calendar year in-kind contribution information to Member States via annual circular letters in June/July. Response will be requested by 31 January of the following year.

<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION</b>			
<b>In-kind contributions provided in calendar year 2xxx</b>			
<b>Donor</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>IOC Function</b>

Deadline for submission - 31 January of the following year.

Note: Distinguishing between two separate categories of in-kind contributions could need further discussion. There may be only a very thin line between both categories except for informal in-kind contributions such as hosting travel or a workshop.