



INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

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Item 3.5.2 of the Provisional Agenda

PROGRESS REPORT
OF THE INTERSESSIONAL OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON THE STATUS
OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE CENTRAL INDIAN OCEAN (IOCINDIO)

Summary

This document provides information on the implementation of the Decision A-31/3.5.6, which requested the Executive Secretary to establish an open-ended intersessional Working Group on the Status of IOCINDIO and to invite interested Member States to participate in the working group, with the view to reporting the progress to the Executive Council, at its 55th session. Subsequently, the Working Group was established in January 2022 following the IOC Circular Letter [2872](#). The working Group held two meetings at the time of drafting this documentation for the Executive Council. A third meeting is scheduled for the 24th May 2022. It is also anticipated that the Working Group shall hold side meetings during the period of this Executive Council to pursue consultations among Member States and partners. All meetings of the working group are online. The overall objective of the working group is to submit to the Assembly, at its 32nd Session in 2023, a working document containing a proposal for the establishment of an IOC Sub-Commission for the Indian Ocean, together with a draft resolution on the subject.

The Executive Council is requested to take note of this Progress Report and provide guidance to the working group.

Introduction

1. The Assembly at its 31st Session welcomed the IOCINDIO-VIII Recommendation for changing the status of IOCINDIO into an IOC Sub-Commission and the responsive views of Member States, following the provisions of the IOC Manual with the Guidelines for the Structure and Responsibilities of the Subsidiary Bodies of the Commission (Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the Manual) and its section 5 on Sub-Commissions; and decided to pursue further towards the establishment of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Indian Ocean, taking into account the proposal for changing the status of IOCINDIO into an IOC Sub-Commission, as a framework to improve coordination of IOC Member States in the region and to ensure implementation of IOC programmes in the Indian Ocean with a view to presenting a draft resolution to the Assembly of IOC at its 32nd Session.

2. The Assembly also decided to undertake the remaining steps towards establishment of the IOCINDIO Sub-Commission through an intersessional Working Group in order to complete the work on: terms of reference; determination of the geographic scope; programme of work; the proposed projects and funding support; and mechanisms for coordination with adjacent Sub-Commissions; and requested the Executive Secretary to:

- (i) establish an open-ended intersessional working group and invite interested Member States to participate in it;
- (ii) work closely with the Government of India to explore appropriate arrangements for the establishment of the Regional Secretariat of the IOCINDIO Sub-Commission; and
- (iii) report to the Executive Council, at its 55th session, on the status of implementation of this decision.

3. Subsequently, the Working Group was established in January 2022 following the mailing of the Circular Letter [2872](#).

4. Both adjacent IOC Sub-Commissions IOCAFRICA and WESTPAC are represented by its Chair for the former and one of its co-Chair for the latter. The Regional Centre for Operational Coordination (RCOC) based in Seychelles nominated its international liaison officer as an observer to the working group. The Group is now formed under the co-chairmanship of Captain Ariel Troisi, and Rear Admiral (Retd) Khurshed Alam, respectively Chair of IOC and Chair of IOCINDIO, exemplifying its importance. The Acting Technical Secretary of IOCINDIO, Mr Justin Ahanhanzo, serves as the Secretary of the working group. The Group held two meetings at the time of drafting this document. A third meeting is scheduled for 24 May 2022. All meetings of the working group are held online.

First meeting of the working group, 28 February 2022

5. Thirty-five (35) participants representing 15 IOC Member States, IOCAFRICA, WESTPAC, RCOC and the former Officers of IOCINDIO met for two hours.

6. The Working Group reviewed the historical background and development of IOCINDIO. The IOCINDIO Chair and the Vice-Chair of IOC electoral Group IV presented an overview on the existing programmes, projects, and activities in the IOCINDIO region and noted a wealth of sound ocean science research, observations, and services, ocean and blue economy, early warning systems including regional tsunamis centres. Finally, the working group adopted its Terms of Reference as well as its timeline schedule of work.

7. The Terms of Reference include the following:

- The objectives aiming at: (i) identifying necessary steps remaining for the establishment of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Indian Ocean; (ii) presenting a written progress report for discussion by the Executive Council at its 55th session (this document); (iii) preparing a

proposal for the establishment of an IOC Sub-Commission for the Indian Ocean including: its title and terms of reference; geographic area of responsibility; programme of work with the proposed projects and funding support; mechanisms for coordination with adjacent sub-commissions, and other necessary specifications, and submit it to the IOC Assembly at its 32nd Session as a working document as well as a draft resolution on the above subject.

- Membership comprises representatives of IOC Member States whose names were submitted to the IOC Secretariat in the response to the corresponding circular letter. In addition, the working group includes the IOC and IOCINDIO Chairs as Co-Chairs, the current and past IOC and IOCINDIO Officers, Chair of IOCAFRICA, Vice Chair of WESTPAC and representatives of partners organizations including RCOC.
- Organization of work is based on the Terms of Reference and a series of online meetings.

8. The full report of the first meeting is available online at <https://oceanexpert.org/document/30423>

Second meeting of the working group, 31 March 2022

9. Forty-two (42) participants representing 17 IOC Member States, IOCAFRICA, WESTPAC, RCOC and former officers of IOCINDIO met for two hours.

10. The group adopted the report of its first meeting and pursued its discussion on the terms of reference of the future sub-commission; determination of its geographic scope, programme of work including the proposed projects and funding support, and mechanisms for coordination with adjacent sub-commissions.

11. The IOC Chair presented the historical background of IOCINDIO based on the report of the first meeting of IOCINDIO (Islamabad, Pakistan, 3–7 July 1988). He recalled that at its first session, IOCINDIO agreed on its geographical scope together with terms of reference adopted without modifications by the IOC Assembly at its 15th Session in 1989. The current terms of reference include the following:

Section 1.: Basic functions: (i) Plan, promote and coordinate the implementation of cooperative regional marine scientific projects, ocean services and the supporting TEMA activities (Training, Education and Mutual Assistance in the Marine Sciences) of direct interest to its Member States and to meet specific regional needs; (ii) assist in the implementation of regional components of the Commission's global ocean science programmes and ocean services; (iii) facilitate the transfer of scientific knowledge and technology in the field of marine research and related ocean services, especially to the developing countries of the IOCINDIO region; (iv) facilitate the exchange of oceanographic data and information within and outside the region; (v) identify needs for training, education, and mutual assistance in the marine sciences in its Member States.

Section 2.: Programme development. (i) Planning; (ii) Promotion; (iii) Coordination; (iv) Scientific and technical advice and guidance; (v) Cooperation and (vi) Evaluation.

Section 3.: Other functions: (i) Programme of work and financial requirements; (ii) Overall policy recommendation; (iii) Technical policymaking and (iv) reporting.

12. The IOC Chair drew the attention of the meeting on the fact that for more than three decades of existence, IOCINDIO has gathered invaluable experience, lessons learned and best practices that the working group can use to adapt and improve the terms of reference towards the transformation of the Committee into a vibrant sub-commission.

13. Dr Vladimir Ryabinin, the IOC Executive Secretary, continued this introduction with a presentation entitled "Elements for establishing IOCINDIO as an IOC Sub-Commission", the salient points of which are the following:

The proposed title of the potential future Sub-Commission: It is proposed to retain the title “IOCINDIO” in order to keep the corporate memory as a legacy of the Committee in the region. In fact, the acronym IOCINDIO is intuitive because when it is pronounced, it naturally points to the Indian Ocean and sounds clear, while IOCIO (standing for IOC sub-commission for Indian Ocean) does not offer any hint of being related to the Indian Ocean.

The geographical area: The Executive Secretary proposed to use the publication [S-23](#) of the International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO), Draft 4th Edition of 2002 on *Limits of Oceans and Seas*. This definition is different from the one in the Report of the First session of IOCINDIO in 1988 that was adopted by the Assembly in 1989. Appropriate cooperation and coordination with IOCAFRIKA and WESTPAC with joint efforts and complementary activities are required owing to the overlapping areas.

14. The other elements of the presentation included the following:
- (i) Programme of work with the proposed projects and funding support (*to be discussed further*)
 - (ii) Mechanisms for coordination with adjacent Sub-Commissions
 - (iii) Governance of IOC programmatic activities in the Indian Ocean region
 - (iv) IOCINDIO meetings
 - (v) Policies and standards
 - (vi) Draft Resolution for the transformation of the IOCINDIO into an IOC Sub-Commission
 - (vii) Adhesion of IOC Member States to IOCINDIO.

15. With reference to item (vii) Adhesion, the IOC Chair took the opportunity to provide a clarification on the composition of the future potential IOCINDIO Sub-Commission. He recalled that according to the IOC Statutes and Rules and Procedures, any Member State may join any Sub-Commission of interest, but not forced to join any; even those Member States having coastlines in the region concerned are not forced to join. He stressed that the terms of reference adopted by the Assembly in 1989 required future adjustments. For instance, Training Education and Mutual Assistance (TEMA) referred to at the time does not exist anymore and has been replaced by the IOC Capacity Development Programme.

16. The Executive Secretary offered the following suggestions.

The Proposed Terms of Reference of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO) would include the following taking into consideration the current development of IOC:

- (i) Mission
- (ii) Objectives
- (iii) Area of responsibility
- (iv) Structure
- (v) Member States: The Sub-Commission will include the IOC Member States that appropriately informed the IOC Executive Secretary about their adhesion to the Sub-Commission. IOCINDIO membership will not be limited to Member States geographically attached to the Indian Ocean. IOC national focal points for IOCINDIO Member States will be the same as for IOC;
- (vi) Officers of the Sub-Commission: The Bureau of the Sub-Commission will comprise the Chair and two Vice-Chairs elected by the Member States of the Sub-Commission; they will serve in accordance with the *Guidelines for Structures and Responsibilities of the Subsidiary Bodies of the IOC*;

- (vii) Working Groups or Task Teams, as required;
- (viii) Secretariat for the Sub-Commission: IOCINDIO Secretariat will operate as a part of the IOC Secretariat under the authority of the IOC Executive Secretary, capitalizing on UNESCO representation in the Indian Ocean region;
- (ix) IOCINDIO meetings: IOCINDIO Member States will meet at least once in two years, preferably in the first part of the year of an IOC Assembly and well in advance of that Assembly to ensure quality statutory reporting. IOCINDIO meetings may include observers if agreed by the IOCINDIO Chair;
- (x) Programme and budget: IOCINDIO budget will comprise regular programme budget and extra budgetary contributions, consistent with the funding for all IOC Sub-Commissions. The Sub-Commission will explore opportunities for raising additional resources for implementation of its programmes including in-cash and in-kind contributions by its Member States and other sources.

17. With the exception of one country present (France which requested further consultations), the Group agreed to keep the title/name of IOCINDIO for the further potential sub-commission. It should be noted that a collective decision was not taken.

18. Regarding the terms of reference (ToRs), it was noted that those proposed in the IOC Assembly document [IOC/A-31/3.5.6.Doc](#) should serve as the starting point. However, the Executive Secretary suggested that judgments, wishful statements, statements related to current issues or wishes, and thanks need to be replaced by more “constitutional” formulations.

19. Regarding the **Geographic Area of Responsibility**: With reference to the definition of the Indian Ocean Limits by International Hydrographic Organization(IHO) S-23 in its [draft publication](#) of 2002, the Executive Secretary suggested that the IOCINDIO area of responsibility will be the whole Indian Ocean, taking into account on one hand, that interactions of the Indian Ocean with the global ocean and climate variability including the Indian Ocean Monsoons and the Indian ocean dipole oscillations are global phenomena with impacts beyond its geographic limits and, on the second hand, that the Indian Ocean borders the Southern Ocean which is not covered by any dedicated regional subsidiary body. In short, all issues of relevance for the Indian Ocean and its global interactions can be considered through IOCINDIO.

20. On this particular point of the geographic area of responsibility, there were intense discussions with diverging views. In general, there seemed to be a consensus that the future potential IOC Sub-Commission for the Central Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO) should be restricted to the current geographical area of the Committee. However, due to time constraints, discussions were not concluded. Some representatives sent statements for inclusion in the meeting report. Those statements, which were not discussed at the meeting, cannot be included and subsequently are not in the report.

21. The report of the second meeting (subject to its adoption at the third meeting of the group) together with the presentations of the IOC Chair and the Executive Secretary and the whole documentation of the working group are available at <https://oceanexpert.org/event/3572>.

22. The Working Group shall pursue its activities according to its scheduled timeline.

23. On 29 April, the Secretariat informed the Members of the working group that the third online meeting of the group was scheduled on 24 May 2022.