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INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

Fifty-third Session of the Executive Council
Paris, 3–9 February 2021 [Online session]

SUMMARY REPORT

The decisions contained in this report were adopted in plenary session. These are reproduced hereafter for ease of reference.

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1. OPENING

1. The Chair, Mr Ariel Hernan Troisi, opened the 53rd session of the IOC Executive Council at 13:00 Paris time on Wednesday 3 February 2021. He expressed his appreciation to the IOC Member States for accepting to meet online due to the persistence of the Covid-19 pandemic. He welcomed the new Officers elected in the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Tsunami early Warning and Mitigation System in the North-eastern Atlantic, the Mediterranean and connected seas (ICG/NEAMTWS). He congratulated the Commission on its 60th anniversary and delivered his personal reflections on his 19 months as Chairman of IOC and the new challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic on all aspects of social and economic life, with consequences on the oceanographic activity and policy that are difficult to fully evaluate at this stage. He presented some examples of the events he had the opportunity to participate in during this period, both in person and virtually (full statement in Annex ____).
2. He reminded the Council that the choice of limiting the agenda of this session to the issues requiring action before the Assembly meeting in June 2021 is due to the multiple challenges related to conducting sessions of an intergovernmental body online. In this connection, he stressed the need to find solutions to ensure that Member States are able to provide effective and timely guidance to the Secretariat and suggested that the Executive Council may wish to entrust the Intersessional Financial Advisory Group to start the process of reviewing and updating the Commission's Rules of Procedure and submit a set of preliminary proposals to the IOC Assembly at its 31st session in June 2021.
3. The Chair expressed empathy to families that have been affected by the pandemic in the tribute the Council was paying to distinguished individuals who had participated in the work of the Commission and have passed away during the past year and a half.
4. The participants stood for a minute of silence to honour: Art Alexiou (US, 1930–2020), Dr Biliانا Cicin-Sain (US; 1945–2020), Ms Paula Dunbar (US, 1954–2020), Dr Ivan Frolov (Russian Federation, 1949–2020), Prof. Edgardo D. Gomez (Philippines, 1938–2019), Sidney Holt (UK, 1926–2019), Dr George Maul (US, 1938–2020), Prof. Trevor Platt (UK, 1942–2020) and Yves Tréglos (France, –2020).

2. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

2.1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

5. The Chair reminded that the agenda of the Council, held under exceptional circumstances, was voluntarily limited to issues requiring a decision of the governing bodies before the Assembly meets in June 2021. At the programmatic level, it mainly focused on the follow-up to the 75th UN General Assembly decision regarding the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021–2030, the IOC contribution to the Decade and the preparation of the draft IOC Medium-term Strategy for 2022–2029 ([IOC/EC-53/5.1.Doc\(1\)](#)) and draft Programme and Budget for 2022–2025 ([IOC/EC-53/5.1.Doc\(2\)](#)). Several reporting items requested by the Assembly at its 30th session in 2019 are therefore addressed in the report of the Executive Secretary on the work accomplished during the intersessional period ([IOC/EC-53/3.1.Doc\(1\) Part 1 & 2](#)). The documentation initially prepared for the session scheduled in June 2020 was available for the information of the Executive Council at <http://ioc-unesco.org/ec53>. PowerPoint presentations were made available on the webpage of the virtual session (<https://oceanexpert.org/event/2805>) in advance of the session in the four working languages of the Commission. In order to preserve plenary time to the expression of the views of Member States, administrative issues were anticipated to the extent possible and the preferred deadline for submission of draft resolutions by Member States was set to two weeks in advance of the session.

6. Plenary discussions were scheduled from 1.00 to 4.00 p.m. (Paris time) over a period of five days to allow the participation of Member States representatives from various time zones. The online session benefitted from simultaneous interpretation in English, French, Russian and Spanish provided by UNESCO services. Additional meetings of the Financial Committee were organised with English-French interpretation, as usual.

7. A revised provisional timetable for the session was considered in order to provide more time to the Resolutions Committee.

8. There were no comments from the floor.

2.2. DESIGNATION OF THE RAPPORTEUR

9. The representatives of four Member States took the floor.

10. On the proposal of Brazil, seconded by Argentina, Ms Chafica Haddad, representative of Grenada was proposed as the IOC EC-53 Rapporteur. Ms Haddad thanked the delegates for their confidence and the decision was welcomed.

2.3. ESTABLISHMENT OF SESSIONAL COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

11. The Chair invited the Executive Council to form two sessional committees, the Resolutions Committee and the Financial Committee, and invited proposals for sessional working groups.

12. Four Member States took the floor in order to: clarify the decision with regard to the date at which resolutions for consideration at this session of the Executive Council were submitted (corrected to 29 January 2021); to better understand the process for countries to register and participate in the committees. IOC Chair Ariel Troisi provided more detail on this inviting delegates to register to the sessional committees using the appropriate link provided in the invitation letter; as customary the list of Member States who participated in the committees would be added in the summary report. No additional working groups were proposed.

2.4. INTRODUCTION OF TIMETABLE AND DOCUMENTATION

13. The Executive Secretary briefly introduced this item. He reminded the Council that the new referencing of the IOC governing bodies' documentation adopted by the Assembly through [Resolution XXX-3](#) was applied to the documentation for this session. The Executive Secretary also reminded that draft decisions were to be adopted at the end of the discussion of each agenda item. The Action Paper was intentionally drafted as a pre-report and contained two draft resolutions on the UN Decade and on Governance, Programming and Budgeting Matters of the Commission that were examined for adoption under agenda item 7. Pursuant to Decisions [EC-LII, Dec.3.3](#) and [IOC-XXX/13](#) on organizational matters, the narrative part of the report was drafted in English by the Secretariat during the session. The translation and the adoption of the report in four languages would be done by correspondence after the session. Member States wishing to have specific plenary interventions recorded were invited to provide written records thereof, using a dedicated template to iocgovbody@unesco.org ([IOC/EC-53/Guide/Supplement 1](#)).

14. There were no comments from the floor.

15. The Executive Council adopted [Decision IOC/EC-53/2](#) below.

Organization of the Session

The Executive Council,

I. Agenda

Adopts the agenda and the timetable of work as set out in documents [IOC/EC-53/2.1.Doc Rev.4](#) and [Addendum](#);

II. Rapporteur

On a proposal of Brazil, seconded by Argentina,

Designates Ms Chafica Haddad of Grenada (electoral group III) Rapporteur for its present session to assist the Chairperson and the Executive Secretary in the preparation of the draft provisional report of the session;

III. Sessional Committees

Establishes the following sessional open-ended committees and referred to them the following agenda items and responsibilities:

Financial Committee: to finalise a resolution under items 3, 5.1 and 5.2; under the chairship of Dr Karim Hilmi (Morocco, Vice-Chair) with the following Member States participating: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, France, Germany, Grenada, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Japan, Kenya, Korea (Republic of), Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, Philippines, Portugal, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom, and Uruguay. Ms Ksenia Yvinec provided the Secretariat support to the Financial Committee.

Resolutions Committee: to report on all draft resolutions that were duly presented for consideration at the session by 29 January 2021 and on the draft resolution covering financial matters drafted during the session; under the chairship of Ms Monika Breuch-Moritz (Germany, Vice-Chair) with the following Member States participating: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China (People's Republic of), Colombia, France, Gabon, Germany, Grenada, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Japan, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Russian Federation, Senegal, Seychelles, Spain, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States of America. Julian Barbière provided the Secretariat support to the Resolutions Committee.

3. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ON THE WORK ACCOMPLISHED SINCE THE THIRTHIETH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY AND ON BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION

16. The Executive Secretary introduced this item using a [PowerPoint presentation](#).
17. He recalled that a key focus of the Commission in the past year was on the preparation of the Implementation Plan for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021–2030. IOC spared no effort in engaging all Member States, United Nations partners and key civil society stakeholders in regional and global consultations to seize this once-in-a-life-time opportunity to harness advances in ocean science to achieve a better understanding of the ocean system and deliver science-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda. Maintaining the UN-Oceans consultations helped to facilitate collaborative approach in the United Nations system and ensure a meaningful division of labour among the IOC's UN partners.
18. He also highlighted the IOC efforts deployed in all regions in order to provide the ground for using the tremendous opportunity that the Decade represents for all Member States, and in particular for Africa, LDCs (Least Developed Countries) and SIDS (Small Island Developing States), leaving no one behind. The IOC's regional subsidiary bodies continue to play a critical role in this regard. Specific attention was given to SIDS, as well as to the youth involvement and the value of indigenous knowledge. The 2nd International Indian Ocean Expedition (IIOE-2) has engaged in various Indian Ocean-related UN Decade planning meetings, aiming to

ensure that the IIOE-2 is well positioned to make a tangible contribution to the Decade's implementation.

19. Furthermore, the Implementation Plan for the Decade fosters synergies between SDG-5 and SDG-14 by focusing on the role of women in ocean science, improving global ocean knowledge and supporting informed and inclusive decision-making. The Global Ocean Science Report (GOSR), and its 2020 edition ([GOSR2020](#)) with its gender-disaggregated data will continue to serve as a progress monitoring mechanism.
20. On the subject of key regional developments, he noted the intensive planning of the Decade in WESTPAC, IOCARIBE, and IOCAFRICA.
21. The Executive Secretary informed the Council about continuing consultations with the IOC Chair, the IOCINDIO Chair and Officers and the IOC Vice-Chair for electoral group IV regarding the development of IOCINDIO into an IOC Sub-Commission. He thanked the Officers for their commitment and mentioned an overall agreement to further consult IOC Member States on this issue. The first round of consultations was planned for early 2021 in order to further improve the proposal and seek engagement and support. To be truly effective and efficient, the new sub-commission should offer Member States a wider scope for their participation in regional activities according to their priorities and needs. Its work would also be of interest and have implications for some countries of IOCAFRICA and WESTPAC. In this respect, the Executive Secretary reminded the Executive Council that the 8th session of IOCINDIO in the first quarter 2021 would be an opportunity to rally Member States of the entire Indian Ocean rim and beyond. The fully developed proposal could then be presented to the IOC Assembly at its 31st session in June 2021 for decision.
22. The Executive Secretary informed the Council of the active involvement of the IOC in the negotiation process on an International Legally Binding Instrument (ILBI) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). In October 2020, with a view to informing interested participants in the negotiation process, the Secretariat published a Non-Paper on existing and potential contributions of IOC-UNESCO to the BBNJ process ([IOC/INF-1387](#)).
23. He also highlighted that significant progress was made in the development of the methodology to support Member States' implementation of and reporting on the two SDG target indicators 14.3.1 and 14.a, for which the IOC has been assigned the custodianship role.
24. Having stressed main IOC achievements, successes, and issues faced by the Commission during the reporting period, Dr Ryabinin then provided an update on highlights of each of the six IOC Functions, including the work of the regional and technical subsidiary bodies of the Commission, and relevant UNESCO Category 2 Centres.
25. The Executive Secretary presented Member States with a non-exhaustive list of programmatic milestones. It included the GOOS 2030 Strategy ([IOC/BRO/2019/5 rev.2](#)), "OceanObs'19 Conference", progress achieved in the planning of data and information management through ODISCat and OceanInfoHub, continuing expansion of OBIS, advances in research coordination with regard to ocean carbon, the Global Ocean Science Report 2020, launched on 14 December 2020 on the occasion of the IOC 60th anniversary celebration, advances in the work on ocean acidification, deoxygenation, harmful algal blooms, long-time series, expanding work on tsunami preparedness and new service providers, contribution to the IPCC Special Report on Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate, guidance to the co-sponsored World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) on research on ocean and climate, major progress in community engagement and practice of maritime spatial planning and preparations for the new phase of the Ocean Teacher Global Academy.

26. In informing Member States on the progress in relation to GEBCO, the Executive Secretary explained that, while the IOC Regular Working Group on User Requirements and Contributions to GEBCO Products has been formed through a call for membership circulated via IOC Circular Letter 2791 of 21 January 2020, the assessment to be conducted by the Working Group and subsequent report were delayed as a result of the responsible IOC staff being affected by Covid. In consultation with the IOC Chair, the Report will be brought to the IOC Assembly at its 31st session in June 2021.
27. He also spoke about the main developments in integrated ocean management. A vision of the ocean management based on science and involving a broad range of stakeholders, bearing in mind national accounting and economic considerations, human relations with the ocean, considerations of equity, would take the possibilities of sustaining the ocean to a new level. Major progress in thinking and prototyping of this new level of work for sustainability came from the work of the High Level Panel (HLP) for a Sustainable Ocean Economy. Consultation and joint brainstorming of the Advisory Panel for HLP with IOC and the Decade team will shape the research for sustainable ocean management under the Decade. Based on the high interest in ocean science at the 2019 UNFCCC 25th Conference of Parties in Madrid, a Dialogue on Climate and Ocean was established. The Decade's potential for intensifying ocean research, solidifying ideas on ocean management, fostering interest in the sustainable ocean economy, and increasing understanding of the role of ocean in adaptation to and mitigation of climate change sets for the IOC a new, much more important agenda for the future.
28. Dr Ryabinin also briefly introduced the idea and the concept of a potential future State of the Ocean Report (StOR, [IOC/INF-1393](#)). Such a report, coordinated by IOC, would present to the world on the annual basis a summary of key changes in the ocean's state, in terms of its physical, biogeochemical, biological and ecological variables, supplemented by a strategic summary of developments with regard to integrated ocean management, such as percentage of area covered by area management tools, observations, etc. It would facilitate general public's understanding of ocean-related issues and serve as a monitoring mechanism for the Decade's contribution towards its sustainable management.
29. The Executive Secretary explained that due to the cancellation or postponement of many important events due to the Covid-19 pandemic – including the “2020 UN Ocean Conference” – the Secretariat had to explore alternative approaches to the launch of both the Draft Implementation Plan for the Decade and the 2nd edition of the Global Ocean Science Report (GOSR2020). He informed Member States that the implementation of the Commission's programme in 2020 experienced some difficulties and delays, similar to all programme sectors of UNESCO, but the Secretariat was actively looking for solutions. In this context, he also presented the main initiatives of the Secretariat to assess the influence of the pandemic on IOC's areas of competence: surveys and assessments of impact on ocean observation and tsunami warning services, as well as the longer-term effect on investment in ocean sciences and Member States capacities to achieve the SDG target 14.a, to be measured through GOSR.
30. With regard to the Commission's financial situation, he confirmed that the Secretariat implemented 2018–2019 workplans in accordance with the budgetary allocations and resource mobilization targets approved by the IOC Executive Council's [Resolution EC-LI.2](#) and developed 2020–2021 workplans in accordance with [Resolution XXX-3](#), as presented in document [IOC/EC-53/3.1Doc\(2\)](#).
31. The Executive Secretary concluded by pointing out that the main challenge for the Commission's small Secretariat continued to be the dual task to raise not only extrabudgetary resources necessary to maintain its core operational programmes but also significant additional resources to lead and coordinate the Decade preparation phase and contribute to

an expanding ocean agenda. He expressed his high appreciation of the consistent and generous support of many Member States. Belgium (Flanders), Canada, Japan, Republic of Korea, Sweden and United Kingdom provided financial contributions towards the preparation of the Decade Implementation Plan. Norway continued to be the main donor of non-earmarked funds to the IOC Special Account, facilitating implementation with focus on collectively agreed priorities and stepped up its contribution to a new high through the new agreement with its agency for international aid (NORAD). Belgium (Flanders), China, Australia and Colombia continued to support key IOC offices and their programmes in, respectively, Ostend, WESTPAC, Perth and IOCARIBE. GOSR2020 was generously supported by the Republic of Korea, Belgium, Kenya, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In addition, Belgium (Flanders) renewed the UNESCO/Flanders Fund-in-Trust for the support of UNESCO's activities in the field of Science (FUST) and approved three large scale projects submitted by IOC, to be implemented between 2020 and 2022.

32. However, he also expressed concern that IOC programme delivery continues, to a large extent, on an unsustainable basis, with chronic understaffing and shortage of resources. A new approach to fund-raising and outreach, based on highlighting the societal benefits of IOC's work and demonstrating the return on investment in ocean science and observation is being developed. In this context, the Executive Secretary highlighted the key role of ocean literacy, outreach and communication, both to the Commission's core constituencies but also to the society at large, and the increased need to invest in this area in the context of a truly inclusive and transformative approach to the Decade.
33. The representatives of 27 Member States of the Executive Council, 3 observers, two observer organizations, and IOCINDIO took the floor.
34. The Executive Council thanked the Executive Secretary for his report and presentation. It congratulated the Chair, the Officers, and the Secretariat of the Commission for advancing collective work through the challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as for organizing this first online session. Several Member States highlighted the utility of IOC work to survey and mitigate pandemic-related challenges in ocean observations, data systems, tsunami early warning systems, and ocean science investments.
35. The Executive Council welcomed the launch of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021–2030 for opportunities it will create to seek transformative ocean science solutions.
36. Member States described their major contributions to the work of the IOC – individually, regionally, and collectively. They affirmed the relevance of the Global Ocean Science Report, the Global Ocean Observing System, data system activities, tsunami early warning systems and preparedness, marine spatial planning, capacity development and the transfer of marine technology, and the importance of the IOC with strong and visible ocean science in UN processes like the BBNJ and UNFCCC. Many Member States underlined the value of regional cooperation mechanisms and appreciated the priority given to Africa and SIDS.
37. Several Member States expressed interest in the proposal to transform IOCINDIO into a Sub-Commission focused on the Indian Ocean, with the need to develop concrete activities and working coordination with neighbouring WESTPAC and IOCAFRICA, and stated that they would participate in inter-sessional consultation.
38. Member States also supported the development of an IOC State of the Ocean Report, with a clarified scope, target audience, periodicity, and resource need.
39. The Executive Secretary recalled the central role of Member State action in the work of the IOC and the Ocean Decade. He stressed the need to implement capacity development activities, including through regional mechanisms, and called on Member States to take

ownership and build engagement in IOCINDIO. He expressed confidence that the State of the Ocean Report would become an important vehicle for making ocean science knowledge visible and impactful.

40. The following Member States chose to provide records of their plenary intervention on this agenda item for the informational annex to the meeting report: Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, the Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, UK, USA, European Marine Board, SCOR, IOCINDIO.
41. The Executive Council adopted Decision IOC/EC-53/3 below.

Report by the Executive Secretary

The Executive Council,

Having examined documents IOC/EC-53/3.1.Doc(1), IOC/EC-53/3.1.Doc(1) Part 2 and IOC/EC-53/3.1.Doc(2),

Takes note of the comprehensive report of the Executive Secretary on the work accomplished, including the strategic analysis and summary assessment of programme implementation and progress in the delivery of outputs in the biennium 2018–2019, the detailed report on achievements by IOC Functions since the 30th session of the IOC Assembly (July 2019–May 2020);

Welcomes the Secretariat's initiatives to evaluate and/or address where possible the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on ocean observations, tsunami detection and warnings and on strategic investments for ocean science;

Specially acknowledges the continuous support of the IOC Secretariat with respect to the development of methodologies for SDG indicators 14.3.1 and 14.a.1 (IOC/INF-1385), for which IOC is the designated custodian agency, as well as for indicators 14.1.1a and 14.2.1, for which IOC is supporting the work of UN Environment in its capacity as custodian agency for the indicators; and in this context encourages Member States to mobilize support to the IOC Secretariat for the completion of the methodology related to indicator 14.1.1a on an index of coastal eutrophication, in collaboration with UN Environment;

Takes note of the discussions to develop a complete proposal on the possible transformation of IOCINDIO into a sub-commission through further consultation of IOC Member States during the inter-session period and welcomes the discussion and decision on this issue by the Assembly at its 31st session;

Notes with interest the Executive Secretary's proposal and initial steps to develop an "IOC State of the Ocean Report" (StOR) to reflect, on a regular basis, main findings in ocean research and observations and latest evidence on the state of the ocean and related trends, in support of the knowledge base for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

4. PROGRAMMATIC DEVELOPMENTS

4.1. REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECADE ROADMAP AND DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF OCEAN SCIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

42. The Chairperson introduced the item recalling that, in December 2017, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030, building on the efforts of IOC Member States and the IOC Secretariat. The period 2018–2020 focused on the preparation of the Decade Implementation Plan under the guidance of the Decade Executive Planning Group. UNGA Resolution [A/RES/75/239](#) of 31 December 2020 welcomed the steps taken by the IOC to prepare the Decade Implementation Plan and took note with appreciation of the Plan. The Decade commenced on 1 January 2021.

43. A [presentation](#) was delivered successively by the Executive Secretary, Mr Julian Barbière, Head of the Marine Policy Regional Coordination (MPR) section and IOC Decade focal point, and Ms Alison Clausen, Programme specialist from the MPR section.
44. The Executive Secretary provided a brief background and context of the Decade including its link to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and overall vision. The Decade has the ambition to trigger a revolution in ocean science in terms of designing and delivering solutions-oriented ocean research supported by ocean data and information systems, ocean literacy, resources and commitments, capacity-development and transfer of technology, leaving no one behind. The Decade will contribute to sustainable ocean management and will contribute to the priorities of the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy in this regard. The Executive Secretary highlighted that a publication has been prepared by the IOC Secretariat to highlight the contribution of the Decade to the action agenda of the High-Level Panel, and the sustainable ocean economy in general.
45. Ms Alison Clausen provided an overview of the context of the participatory development process that led to the Implementation Plan. A series of global, regional and thematic meetings were organized, and the Decade was widely discussed in several international events and fora. Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPS) played a central role in the preparation of the Implementation Plan. Two review processes were held – the first in March/April 2020 and the second in June/July 2020. Over 300 written submissions were received and resulted in a revised version of the Implementation Plan that was submitted and formally presented to the UNGA in advance of its 75th session. A report documenting the process review is available ([IOC/EC-53/4.1.Doc \(1\) Add.](#)).
46. The Implementation Plan provides a strategic, non-prescriptive and dynamic framework for the Decade. Decade Actions will be co-designed and co-delivered by diverse stakeholders through Decade Calls for Actions. Data, information and knowledge management as well as capacity development are foundational pillars of the Decade. The IOC has carried out targeted engagement with stakeholder groups in the development of the Implementation Plan, including philanthropic foundations, regional and national organizations, private sector, media, and UN partners. This engagement has adapted to the constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic and engagement will continue to be a focus of Decade implementation via the Global Stakeholder Forum.
47. Mr Julian Barbière presented an overview of the governance structure and key coordination processes to operationalize and develop the enabling environment required to support Decade implementation. He indicated that the Decade Advisory Board Terms of Reference and approaches to nominate its members would be presented for adoption by the IOC Assembly at its 31st session. Until the establishment of the Decade Advisory Board in the second half of 2021, it is proposed to extend the current Executive Planning Group (EPG) to act as the Interim Decade Advisory Board, in accordance with the proposed Terms of Reference presented in Document IOC/EC-53/4.1.Doc(3).
48. Mr Barbière outlined the importance and role of Decade Coordination Offices, Decade Collaborative Centres and Decade Implementing Partners and reminded the Council of the information document containing operational guidelines for these two latter structures ([IOC/EC-53/4.1.Inf\(1\)](#)).
49. He informed the Council that in response to the first Call of Actions that closed on 15 January 2021, 213 programme submissions and 27 contribution submissions were received, with a high thematic and geographical diversity of submissions. Mr Barbière highlighted the ongoing process for evaluating the submissions and encouraged UN partners to submit Decade actions. He recalled the resource needs for the Decade and indicated that a resource mobilization strategy will be developed as a priority in 2021. Mr Barbière also outlined the processes underway to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Decade and to

guide communications and outreach, including upcoming global events for the launch of the Decade.

50. The Executive Secretary concluded the presentation with considerations related to IOC's contribution to the Decade. He presented an initial mapping exercise identifying potential contributions and synergies between IOC programmes and the Decade Action Framework, and indicated that development of IOC-led Decade actions and a strategic visioning of the IOC contribution to the Decade will be needed to ensure that the IOC can simultaneously achieve its Medium-term Strategy for 2022–2029 while leveraging support of IOC programmes through the Decade. The Executive Secretary recognized the central role of regional subsidiary bodies and in particular IOC sub-commissions in terms of coordinating Decade actions at regional level or with regards to specific decade themes (e.g. data, observations, ocean literacy). He emphasized that the challenge would be to sustain the IOC coordinating role while maintaining support to IOC programmes and that the provision of extra-budgetary in-kind and financial resources would be required for the Decade Coordination Unit to be adequately staffed.
51. In response to the presentation, delegations of 28 Member States took the floor as well as 6 observers.
52. The Executive Council thanked the IOC Secretariat as well as members of the Executive Planning Group for their tremendous work that resulted in the finalization of the Implementation Plan and for the detailed presentation of the progress of the Decade. Member States welcomed the transparent and participative process of preparation of the Implementation Plan and expressed their support to the Decade Implementation Plan.
53. Numerous delegations confirmed their ongoing support and informed the Executive Council that they have submitted Decade actions in response to the first Call for Actions that closed on 15 January 2021 and/or have established or are establishing National Decade Committees. Several Member States indicated their intention to establish Decade Coordination Offices or Collaborative Centres.
54. Several Member States expressed their support for the revised Terms of Reference and extended mandate of the Executive Planning Group but requested confirmation that this Group would not have a policy-making function. Australia suggested an edit to the proposed Terms of Reference for the EPG acting as interim Decade Advisory Board to clarify that reporting to the IOC governing bodies is by the IOC Executive Secretary (cf. para. 1(viii) as amended in [IOC/EC-53/4.1.Doc\(3\)Rev.](#)).
55. Highlighting uneven capacity of countries in marine scientific research, the Executive Council recognized the critical role of collaboration and capacity-development for the success of the Decade and expressed its wish that the Decade resource mobilization strategy would contribute to significant capacity-development work under the Decade. A particular focus should be paid to African Member States and Small Island Developing States, and Decade programmes should equitably address SIDS challenges.
56. The Executive Council invited the Secretariat to ensure a transparent endorsement process of Decade actions and requested further information on the way in which resources will be optimized to ensure a robust, yet simple, coordination structure to implement the Decade. The Council also invited the IOC Secretariat to continue to inform Member States of its activities in its role as coordinator of the Decade and to organise an information meeting with Permanent Delegations of UNESCO.
57. Interventions by Member States requested clarification on the decision to commence the Decade in January 2021 given the current sanitary situation, and requested consistent use

of the term ‘sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth’ instead of ‘blue economy’ in Decade publications.

58. Following the series of interventions, the Chairman invited the IOC Executive Secretary and IOC Secretariat representatives to share some comments in response. The Executive Secretary stressed that the number of interventions demonstrated the support and interest in the Decade and invited delegations to share their plans regarding national activities to ensure all opportunities can be leveraged. He confirmed the commitment to transparency and clear communication and to share regular progress updates via the reporting process to the IOC governing bodies. He also confirmed that an information session will be organized with UNESCO Permanent Delegations but also inviting the IOC Focal Points and delegations to this Executive Council and IOC Assembly. He recognized that a robust governance and coordination structure that will be based where possible on existing structures is proposed but he stressed the need to strengthen regional presence and regional partnerships, including through IOC sub-commissions. He confirmed that the Interim Decade Advisory Board would be working as an advisory body to the IOC governing bodies and would not have a policy-making function. He indicated that the commencement date of the Decade was mandated by the United Nations General Assembly and that there is convergence of opinion that the Decade is required now more than ever in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.
59. Julian Barbière informed the Executive Council that the selection process of the Decade Advisory Board would encourage geographical diversity, and that identification of geographical gaps in Decade Actions received through the 1st and subsequent Calls for Actions will allow future targeting of underrepresented regions, including in terms of resource mobilization efforts. He noted the importance of National Decade Committees and indicated that the Secretariat will facilitate and consolidate information on these National Decade Committees to inform the development of guidelines for their establishment and operational activities, and will organize a virtual event in April 2021 to share best practices.
60. Ms Alison Clausen recalled that the endorsement process of Decade Actions is required to ensure collective action, identify gaps to target future initiatives and resource mobilization, and allow measuring of progress to Decade Outcomes. She indicated that it will be a transparent process, based on the principles outlined in the Implementation Plan, with regular communication to proponents of Decade Actions. The endorsement process will be coordinated by the Decade Coordination Unit but will draw on the involvement of the decentralized coordination offices and collaborative centres. National Decade Committees will be informed of the results of the endorsement process to allow their effective coordination of Decade actions. Ms Clausen further noted the comments on the use of the terminology related to a sustainable ocean economy.
61. India presented a draft Resolution (Draft Resolution EC-53/[4.1]) on behalf of the group of co-sponsors.
62. The following Member States, organizations and IOC subsidiary body chose to provide records of their plenary intervention on this agenda item for the informational annex to the meeting report: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, France, Germany, India, Japan, Kenya, Morocco, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Togo, Turkey, UK, USA, ISA, SCOR, WMO, ICG/IOTWMS.
63. The Executive Council adopted [Resolution EC-53/1](#) submitted by Argentina, Germany, India, Morocco and Norway.

5. GOVERNANCE, PROGRAMMING AND BUDGETING

5.1. DRAFT IOC MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY FOR 2022–2029 (41 C/4) AND DRAFT PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR 2022–2025 (41 C/5)

64. The Executive Secretary introduced this item. He started with the Draft IOC Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2029 (41 C/4) and reminded Member States that the document, already reviewed by the IOC Assembly at its 30th session in 2019, builds on the current IOC Medium-term Strategy, 2014–2021 ([IOC/INF-1314](#)), preserving the comprehensive framework of six functions for its implementation, while at the same time attempting to further clarify and sharpen the proposed vision statement and five High-Level Objectives of the Commission. The version proposed for Member States consideration in document [IOC/EC-53/5.1.Doc\(1\)](#) was revised in accordance with [Resolution XXX-3](#) and following a review by the Officers of the Commission at their annual meeting, Paris, 13–14 January 2020. It was also subject to examination by the open-ended Intersessional Financial Advisory Group.
65. The Executive Secretary stressed the importance of a constructive and inclusive discussion of these preliminary proposals, both in the plenary and in the Financial Committee, with a view of guiding the future work of the Secretariat on this key document that will define the Commission’s strategy in the next eight-year period, largely concordant with the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.
66. The Executive Secretary further explained that the Secretariat’s proposed approach to the preparation of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022–2025 is substantiated in two parts of the Document [IOC/EC-53/5.1.Doc\(2\) & Corr.](#) The first part contains the IOC Strategic Results Report (SRR) 2020 designed to provide both UNESCO and IOC Member States with an analysis of the programme outcomes over the period from 2016 to 2019. The report highlights to UNESCO Member States the importance of IOC achievements and provides to IOC Member States a basis to review and reassess the programmatic objectives, including possible reorientation, reinforcement or downscaling/termination (‘lessons learned and emerging trends’). The second part of the discussed document contains the proposal for one IOC Expected Result, now expressed as one Output, in the UNESCO Draft Programme and Budget for 2022–2025 (41 C/5), in accordance with Assembly Resolution XXVIII-3, as well as the proposed guiding principles to be followed by the Secretariat in elaborating further proposals in the course of the UNESCO Programme and Budget (41 C/5) preparation process.
67. In referring to [Resolution XXX-3](#) that invited him to ‘provide Member States with an estimate of the necessary budget to effectively operate the IOC at an optimum level, to help identify how and what additional resources might be secured’, the Executive Secretary informed the Executive Council that the Secretariat has conducted an initial analysis in response to the resolution and proposed to consider two levels of the fit-for-purpose IOC in terms of resources and staffing: the “healthy IOC” that is able to sustainably perform its current duties, and the “optimal IOC” that is able to deliver in accordance with current and anticipated future requirements of the world in terms of ocean science. The Executive Secretary briefly introduced to Member States his preliminary considerations on the two levels of IOC resources and welcomed Member States guidance as to the level of ambition they wished to set for the Commission in the context of the need to start managing the ocean sustainably and capitalize on tremendous opportunities presented by the UN Decade. This critically important guidance will inspire future drafting work of the Secretariat with regard to the Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2029 and the supporting Programme and Budget for the first quadrennium 2022–2025.
68. With the IOC having turned 60 years old on 14 December 2020, the IOC strategy, programme and budget for 2022–2025 require deep reflection of Member States keeping in mind IOC Statutes Articles [11.3](#) and [10.4](#). He further recalled that Article 11.3 outlines the possibility for IOC to act as a joint specialized mechanism in the UN system and Article 10.4

allows IOC to establish additional financial arrangements for implementation of its programme of work.

69. The Executive Secretary concluded by reminding the Executive Council that the most recent drafts of both documents will be circulated to Intersessional Financial Advisory Group (IFAG) in the intersessional period leading to the final adoption of the IOC Medium-Term Strategy 2022–2029 by the IOC Assembly at its 31st session in June 2021.
70. The representatives of 12 Member States and 2 observers took the floor.
71. The Executive Council welcomed the high-level objectives and the supporting framework of functions proposed in the Draft IOC Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2029 as well aligned the objectives of the Implementation Plan of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030). Member States expressed their satisfaction with the inclusion of the new objective on science-informed services and the sustainable ocean economy, as well as the efforts to strengthen early hazard prevention systems and operational oceanographic service as some of the most important functional areas of the updated Strategy. The need to support Member States in assessing the value of ocean science, ecosystems, goods and services was also highlighted.
72. The Executive Council valued priority given to Africa and welcomed efforts to strengthen capacity development, as well as synergies with the African Union initiatives. The important role of the OceanTeacher Global Academy was highlighted, including in promoting ocean literacy. Attention given to SIDS as a priority beneficiary group was positively noted, and in particular the importance of building resilience to ocean-related hazards and strengthening tsunami-ready activity.
73. Intersectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration established between the IOC and different UNESCO's programmes was viewed as critical to developing a holistic approach to the implementation of SDGs and the Decade objectives. Inclusion of a broad set of stakeholders, including the private sector and the civil society, fostering gender equality, integration of traditional knowledge, youth engagement and participation are essential to the design and implementation of solutions that will foster sustainable development within the Ocean Decade.
74. The Executive Council appreciated the strengthened partnerships established with other UN agencies and partners. Suggestions were made to further improve and complete the section of partnership, ensuring that all key partners are reflected and emphasizing in this section the advantages of strengthening the IOC's relations with international environmental organizations and the working bodies of regional conventions of programmes for the protection of the marine environment.
75. Several Member States informed the Council about their participation in the discussions on both the Strategy and the Quadrennial Programme and Budget at the 210th session of UNESCO's Executive Board. They highlighted their support of the Board's decision to recognize the importance of reinforcing the support to the IOC and the need to seize the opportunity of the UN Ocean Science Decade to enhance capacities in African countries to protect and sustainably use the oceans.
76. The Executive Council welcomed this message of support to the work of the IOC, which has been delivering not only its core functions but also contributing to new processes such as the Ocean Decade, the negotiations for an instrument to protect the marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, and the Ocean and Climate Dialogue under the Convention on Climate Change – and all that in a context of financial constraints.

77. In his response to the debate, the Executive Secretary thanked Member States for their inputs and support and invited them to further guide the Secretariat's work on the Draft Medium-Term Strategy and Programme and Budget by active participation in the Intersessional Financial Advisory Group, with a view of presenting the final documents to the next session of the Assembly in June 2021 .
78. The following Member States and organization chose to provide records of their plenary intervention on this agenda item for the informational annex to the meeting report: Brazil, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Portugal, Russian Federation, the Philippines, Spain, Sweden, UK, USA, European Marine Board.
79. The Executive Council adopted Decision IOC/EC-53/5.1 below.

**Draft IOC Medium Term Strategy for 2020–2029 (41 C/4)
and Draft Programme and Budget for 2022–2025 (41 C/5)**

The Executive Council,

Having examined documents [IOC/EC-53/5.1.Doc\(1\)](#) and [IOC/EC-53/5.1.Doc\(2\) & Corr.](#),

Thanks the Executive Secretary for the preliminary proposals developed by the Secretariat for the Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2029 and the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022–2025;

Expresses its appreciation that the document has benefitted from inputs of the IOC Officers at their annual meeting, 13–14 January 2020, and from intersessional consultations through IFAG;

Takes note of the documents [IOC/EC-53/5.1.Doc\(1\)](#) and [IOC/EC-53/5.1.Doc\(2\) & Corr.](#) subject to further examination by the Financial Committee with a view of formulating a draft resolution for discussion and adoption in plenary.

5.2. REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE FINANCIAL COMMITTEE

80. The Chair of the Financial Committee, Vice-Chair of IOC Karim Hilmi (Morocco), reported to the Executive Council on the results of the Committee's examination of the items entrusted to it by the plenary in addition to the statutory ones foreseen in the Rule of Procedure 8.1(c) ([IOC/INF-1166](#)). He informed that the Financial Committee's discussions had been extremely constructive and thanked all Member States that participated in the work of the Committee for their commitment and collaboration.
81. He then proceeded to a detailed [presentation](#) of the draft resolution prepared by the Financial Committee for consideration by the Executive Council. He particularly highlighted that the Committee suggested further edits to the IOC Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2029, reviewed and updated the Guiding Principles for Programming and Budgeting adopted by the Assembly in 2013 and agreed on the revised wording of the IOC Output for the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022–2025. The Financial Committee was of the opinion that the intersessional work on the review of the IOC's Rules of Procedure shall focus on adapting them to United Nations' best practice for on-line meetings.
82. Prof. Hilmi also reported that the Committee considered an additional matter, related to in-kind contributions towards programme implementation. With the increasing number and volume of such contributions, as reported by the Secretariat in document [IOC/EC-53/3.1.Doc\(2\)](#) for the period 2018–2019, it would be appropriate to re-open consultations in order to adopt clear guidelines to be followed by Member States and the Secretariat in future reports.
83. He invited Member States to participate in the work of the Intersessional Financial Advisory Group on these issues, with a view of presenting proposals to the IOC Assembly at its 31st session in June 2021.

84. The Executive Council expressed its high appreciation to the Chair of the Financial Committee Karim Hilmi for his effective and efficient way of leading the work of the Financial Committee in a truly inclusive and collegial spirit. Once again, this constructive approach allowed the Committee to complete its challenging mandate in a very limited period of time.
85. The Executive Council adopted [Resolution EC-53/2](#) submitted by Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, France, Germany, Grenada, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Japan, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Uruguay.

6. NEXT SESSIONS OF THE IOC GOVERNING BODIES

86. Dr Ryabinin reminded the Council of the decisions of the Assembly at its 30th session ([Decision IOC-XXX/12.7](#)) on the dates and duration of its next session in 2021. There was consensus among Member States of the Council on the recommendation to keep the duration of 3.5 days of the next regular session of the Executive Council (55th session) in 2022.
87. The Executive Secretary informed the Council that covering the agenda of an Assembly by video conferencing was an extremely challenging task with respect to the duration foreseen for the Assembly. Nevertheless, Dr Ryabinin was confident that the Secretariat will be able to propose an innovative proceeding in close consultation with the Officers and in full compliance with the current Rules of Procedure. In this respect, the Secretariat reserved a conference room to allow for the holding of the IOC Elections in presential by rollcall and secret ballot. Instructions regarding credentials for the vote will be developed in consultation with the Legal Adviser of UNESCO.
88. The Executive Secretary also informed the Council of the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) on 21 June 2021. Dr Ryabinin welcomed the flexibility offered by the online conferencing to respect this important event for a long-standing partner.
89. The representative of 1 Member State took the floor.
90. It was also noted that an intergovernmental special committee meeting of experts related to the draft Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence was convened by UNESCO over the period from 21 to 25 June 2021.
91. The Executive Council adopted [Decision IOC/EC-53/6](#) below.

Next Sessions of the IOC Governing Bodies

The Executive Council,

Recalling [Decision IOC-XXX/12.7](#) of the Assembly to hold its 31st session for a duration of 6.5 plus one Ocean Science Day, at UNESCO Headquarters, over the period from 14 to 25 June 2021, preceded by a one-day session of the Executive Council (54th session) acting as the steering committee of the Assembly,

Having considered potential conflicting dates with important meetings to take place in June 2021 and 2022, in particular the 100 anniversary of the foundation of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) on 21 June 2021,

Taking into consideration the uncertainty the Covid-19 pandemic may still pose on the holding of the 31st session of the Assembly in June 2021, particularly in presentia,

Requests the IOC Executive Secretary to consult Member States three months in advance of the session on the perspective to hold the 31st session of the Assembly around the timeframe originally proposed;

Decides to hold the 55th session of the Executive Council for a duration of 3.5 days in June 2022.

7. ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS AND MODALITIES FOR THE FINALISATION OF THE REPORT

92. The Chairperson thanked the Rapporteur Ms Chafica Haddad from Grenada for her excellent work in support of the session, and the careful review of the Draft Summary Report Part 1 of the session.
93. The Chair of the Resolutions Committee reported to the Council on the work of the Committee during the session (Annex ___ to the present report).
94. The IOC Chair then invited the Executive Council to adopt, in plenary, the two draft resolutions, as discussed in plenary and through the work of the Resolutions and Financial Committees.
95. The representatives of 2 Member States took the floor.
96. Draft Resolution on item 4.1 “Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030)” was adopted without comment. Draft Resolution on item 5.2 “Governance, Programming and Budgeting Matters of the Commission” was adopted with minor text adjustments for consistency and clarity.
97. The Executive Secretary commented on the timescales for the reporting of the Executive Council session, noting that a first draft of the narrative report in English containing the decisions adopted to date, has been prepared under the supervision of Ms Chafica Haddad, the Rapporteur, and that a complete draft summary report for the session will be adopted by correspondence after the session. It is planned to circulate the provisional report in all languages and the list of participants by the beginning of March 2021 and anticipated that adoption of the final report will be completed by mid-April 2021.
98. Ms Chafica Haddad commended the Chairperson for his leadership and thanked the members for their confidence in her role, the Executive Secretary and the IOC Secretariat for their support, and the Chairs of the Financial and Resolution Committees, Karim Hilmi and Monika Breuch-Moritz respectively, for their inclusive handling of comments and questions from the committee members. Decision 7, covering the two resolutions and finalisation of the meeting report, was adopted without comment.
99. The Executive Council adopted Decision EC-53/7 below.

Adoption of Resolutions and modalities for the finalisation of the report

The Executive Council,

Recalling the recommendations of the Executive Council at its 52nd session (EC-LII, Dec.3.3) on organization matters,

Adopts the decisions and 2 resolutions of the session;

Takes note of the draft summary report of the session and the compilation of the decisions adopted (IOC/EC-53/SR(1)Prov.);

Requests the Executive Secretary to circulate the narrative part of the report to Member States in the four working languages of the Commission by 1st March 2021 at the latest for its adoption by correspondence by 15 April 2021.

8. CLOSURE

100. The IOC Chair and Executive Secretary thanked the Member States for their active participation in this first online IOC Executive Council, and their engaged review of the decisions and resolutions. Careful consideration will be given as to how to make the most of the IOC Assembly planned for June 2021, with a much larger agenda.
101. Mr Ariel H. Troisi reminded that the Council worked on a limited agenda over a 5-day plenary session, 3h/day and that 11 agenda items were considered and 5 decisions and 2 resolutions were approved. Some 400 participants were registered on the conferencing platform during the session.
102. The Executive Secretary thanked the delegations and observers for their comments and guidance, particularly with reference to the IOC Medium Term Strategy, and noted that identifying the vision for what would constitute an 'optimal and healthy' IOC is an area of focus for the next months.
103. The IOC Chair and Executive Secretary thanked the Secretariat for their excellent support throughout the meeting, also the UNESCO technical staff and interpreters for all their hard work.
104. The Chair of the Commission closed the 53rd session of the Executive Council at 13:48 Paris time on 9 February 2021.