INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

Thirty-second Session of the Assembly
UNESCO, 20-30 June 2023

Item **4.4.** of the Provisional Agenda

REVISION OF THE IOC OCEANOGRAPHIC DATA EXCHANGE POLICY (2003, 2019)

Summary

Purpose of the document: The IOC Assembly, during its 31st Session (June 2021), recognized that a revision of the 20-year-old IOC data exchange policy was timely and adopted Decision A-31/3.4.2 (International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange) including part III *Revision of the IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy (2003, 2019)* which established the IOC Intersessional Working Group on the Revision of the IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy (2003, 2019) (IWG-DATAPOLICY) and defined its terms of reference. This document provides a report on the work of the working group.

Financial and administrative implications: There are no financial and administrative implications

The proposed decision(s) is referenced IOC-32/4.4 in the Action Paper (document IOC-32/2 Prov.)

Revision of the IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy (2003, 2019)

Background

1   The IOC Assembly, during its 22nd Session, adopted Resolution XXII-6, IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy. The 25th Session of IODE (February 2019) revised Clause 5 of the policy which was adopted by the 30th Session of the IOC Assembly (June 2019) (attached as Annex 1).

2   At its meeting on 17 February 2021, the Management Group of the International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange Programme (IODE) agreed that there were enough elements that warrant a revision of the IOC data exchange policy and a new IOC data policy should further promote and support free and open exchange of data in the framework of IOC activities and programmes. The Management Group acknowledged the amount of effort that went into building consensus on the current policy, especially with respect to acknowledging the rights of countries and the non-binding nature of the policy, so any changes should be carefully considered. Suggestions were made to build on other models such as the data policy of WMO that has a main policy with core principles, and modular extensions pertaining to specific data types or applications and products. This way the scope of the policy could be further expanded more easily if needed without opening a debate on the core elements. The ultimate goal of the IOC policy is to increase global cooperation, improved sharing and uptake of data and it is therefore important that data policies should not hamper, but streamline this within commonly agreed terms (e.g., use of a Creative Commons licence). The review of the current policy should ensure better alignment with data policies at national, regional and international level as well as those from other sectors, and should reflect current international principles (such as FAIR), which did not exist in 2003.

3   The IOC Assembly, during its 31st Session (June 2021), recognized that a revision of the 20-year-old IOC data exchange policy was timely and adopted Decision A-31/3.4.2 (International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange) including part III *Revision of the IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy (2003, 2019)* which established the IOC Intersessional Working Group on the Revision of the IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy (2003, 2019) (IWG-DATAPOLICY) and defined its terms of reference[1]:
    (i)   Create an inventory of existing international, national and organizational data policies,
    (ii) Review and compare existing international, national and organizational data policies
    (iii) Develop a glossary with clear definitions (e.g., open vs free and unrestricted; data vs metadata vs information, licence options),
    (iv) Investigate the expansion of scope and name of the IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy,
    (v)   Gather advice from partner/sister organizations and recognized data provider/manager organizations,
    (vi) Organize a broad consultation on the proposed revised IOC Ocean Data Policy with Member States, IOC global and regional programmes,
    (vii) Submit a revised IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy to the 32nd Session of the IOC Assembly (2023).

4   In view of the complexity of the issue and the need for the most extensive inclusiveness possible the IODE Co-Chairs subsequently agreed on the following process to facilitate the work of the inter-sessional working group starting January 2022 with the following tentative timeline:
    • STEP 1 (December 2021–February 2022): implementation of desk study on existing policies (IOC, UN, non-UN) by the IOC/IODE Secretariat;

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[1] *A-31 Summary Report of the 31st Session of the IOC Assembly, 14-25 June 2021*

- STEP 2: (December 2021–February 2022): The IOC/IODE Secretariat will invite the following IOC regional subsidiary bodies and IOC programmes and projects to designate representatives to the IWG-DATAPOLICY as follows:
  - IOCAFRICA: 1-2 representatives
  - IOCARIBE: 1-2 representatives
  - IOCINDIO: 1-2 representatives
  - WESTPAC: 1-2 representatives
  - IODE: 1-2 representatives
  - Ocean Science (HAB, Ocean Acidification and GOSR): 3 representatives
  - GOOS: 1-2 representatives
  - Marine Policy and Regional Coordination: 1-2 representatives
  - Tsunami: 1-2 representatives.
- STEP 3: (March–May 2022): The IWG-DATAPOLICY will be invited to discuss the issue and draft a first version of the new policy (the group will be invited to elect a Chair and possibly a Co-Chair);
- STEP 4: (May–July 2022): The IWG-DATAPOLICY will share the draft with selected UN and non-UN organizations and partners and seek their comments;
- STEP 5: (August/September 2022): An information session will be organized (online) for IOC Member States (national focal points) to collect feedback;
- STEP 6: (September–November 2022): The IWG-DATAPOLICY will revise the first draft of the new IOC data policy based on input from steps 4 and 5;
- STEP 7: (February/March 2023): The IWG-DATAPOLICY will submit the first draft of the new IOC data policy to IODE intergovernmental Committee at its 27th session;
- STEP 8: (May/June 2023): The IWG-DATAPOLICY will submit the final draft of the new proposed policy to the IOC Assembly at its 32nd session for adoption.

5   To inform Member States about this step process IOC Circular Letter 2864 was issued on 9 November 2021.

Progress

6   STEP 1: a desk study on existing policies (IOC, UN, non-UN) was prepared by the IOC/IODE Secretariat (Mr Greg Reed) and published on 8 February 2022 as Document IOC/IWG-DATAPOLICY-I/5.

7   STEP 2: IOC global and regional programmes were invited to designate their representatives as members of the inter-sessional working group as indicated above. This process was completed in February 2022.

8   STEP 3: the First meeting of the IOC Inter-sessional Working Group on the Revision of the IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy (IWG-DATAPOLICY-I) was held as a hybrid meeting on 5-6 April 2022. The report is available as Document IOC/IWG-DATAPOLICY-I/3.
The meeting recommended that revisions should add "terms of use/licensing" to the policy. The meeting also agreed on a work plan, timetable and assignment of responsibilities and identified UN and non-UN organizations and other partners that should be consulted in the process. The IWG designated Mr Taco De Bruin (IODE Co-Chair) as its Chair.

9   STEP 4: online drafting by the IWG membership took place in April and May 2022 with a draft policy as a result. It was now entitled "**IOC Data Policy and Terms of Use (2023)".** This draft was shared with the 18 organizations identified under Step 3 in June 2022 inviting their comments.

10   STEP4A: based on the feedback received by the mentioned organizations a revision was prepared by the Secretariat which was shared with the IWG membership and discussed with the membership on 23 September 2022.

11   <u>STEP 5</u>: on 30 September IOC Member States (through their official contact points) were invited to a briefing session that was held online (with interpretation to/from English, French, Spanish and Russian) on 21 October 2022. The session was organized twice that day to enable participants from different time zones to participate. During this information session the draft version of the new policy (IOC Data Policy and Terms of Use (2023)) was presented and explained. Participants were able to ask questions after the presentation. The main comments and feedback received are summarized as follows:

- Licenses may be different for each data centre/data provider or even between individual data sets. Data centres or data services that collect these from various sources may face huge challenges dealing with this variety of licenses;
- There should be a stronger focus on "free and open" as was the case in the 2019 data policy and more encouragement of member states to share data;
- It was noted that, unlike organizations like WMO, IOC does not operate under a convention so all participation in IOC is based on voluntary participation and contributions;
- Need to split FAIR and CARE;
- Need to elaborate more regarding best practices (documented);
- Should the principles of OIH be mentioned?

12   <u>STEP 6</u>: based upon the feedback in steps 4 and 5 a revised version of the draft policy was prepared.

13   <u>STEP 6A</u>: The version of the draft policy mentioned in Step 6 was shared with the IODE community of IODE national coordinators for data management, IODE national coordinators for marine information management, ADU contact points and AIU contact points in December 2022.

14   <u>STEP 7</u>: The IWG-DATAPOLICY submitted the first draft of the new IOC data policy to IODE-XXVII (UNESCO HQ, Paris, France, 22-23 March 2023) through Document IOC/IODE-XXVII/6.4. The IODE Committee expressed its great appreciation to the inter-sessional working group as well as all other experts who participated in the process leading to the new Policy and adopted Recommendation IODE-XXVII/6.4 (IOC Data Policy and Terms of Use (2023)).

15   It is important to note that the policy is an "umbrella" policy that provides general guidelines agreed upon across all IOC programmes and projects. The IWG noted that IOC projects/programmes deal with a wide variety of data types that require different timelines, conditions of sharing and use licenses. It is therefore recommended that each of these communities develop more detailed implementation guidelines that respect the IOC Data Policy and Terms of Use (2023) but take into account specific issues related to the data types they handle. Similarly, these programmes/projects will need to consider that data centres/ data systems that collect and disseminate data from a wide variety of data sources may face substantial technical challenges if they need to deal with widely varying use licenses. Specific agreements may be needed in such cases.

<u>Proposed decision</u>

16   In light of the foregoing, the IOC Assembly may wish to consider: IOC-32**/**Dec.4.4 proposed in the Action Paper (IOC-32/2 Prov.)