



INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
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Item 4.10 of the Provisional Agenda

**STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN DECADE OF OCEAN SCIENCE FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PERSPECTIVES FOR 2024**

Summary

Pursuant to Resolution EC-55/1, this document provides information on the key outcomes of Ocean Decade implementation across the four main pillars of activity: (i) Decade Actions; (ii) Governance and coordination structures and informal working groups; (iii) Resource mobilization; and (iv) Stakeholder engagement and outreach over the period from June 2021 to May 2023. It identifies remaining challenges and opportunities across the pillars and concludes with a vision and outlook for 2023–2024 and beyond.

Financial implications: paragraphs 17 to 22.

Resolution proposed: The Assembly is invited to consider the draft resolution referenced as A-32/[4.12] in the Provisional Action Paper (IOC-32/AP Prov.).

1. In December 2017, building on the efforts of IOC Member States and the IOC Secretariat, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030 (hereafter, the Ocean Decade). The Ocean Decade is a once in a life-time opportunity to deliver a step-change in the generation and use of ocean science. It will influence how countries invest in and participate in science and innovation to embrace societal goals and align research investment to contribute to common goals including the 2030 Agenda.

2. In accordance with Resolution A/RES/72/73 of the UN General Assembly, and IOC Resolution EC-LI.1, after the preparatory phase of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) reported upon in documents [IOC-XXX/2 Annex 3](#) (2019), [IOC/EC-53/4.1.Doc\(1\)Rev.](#) (2020), [IOC/A-31/3.7.Doc\(2\)](#) (2021), and IOC/EC-55/4.1.Doc(3) (2022), the period from June 2021 to May 2023 saw continued intense activity related to the implementation of the Ocean Decade.

3. This period covered a critical first two years of the implementation of the Ocean Decade and was a period of intense activity on numerous fronts. Significant efforts were made on engagement and visibility, building of a strong and supported portfolio of Decade Actions, and the establishment of the central and decentralised architecture for the governance and coordination of the Decade.

Decade Actions

4. Building on the [first Call for Decade Actions \(No. 01/2020\)](#) that solicited close to 250 potential Decade contributions, four additional Calls for Decade Actions were launched during this period. Call for Decade Actions No. 02/2021 was launched in October 2021 and closed on 31 January 2022. This Call solicited programmes contributing to Ocean Decade Challenges related to marine pollution, ecosystem management and restoration, and the ocean-climate nexus. The third Call for Decade Actions No. 03/2022 was launched on 15 April 2022 and closed on 30 August 2022 and solicited programmes contributing to Ocean Decade Challenges related to sustainable blue food and sustainable ocean economy, as well as projects for 16 endorsed Decade programmes. This Call also solicited in-kind or financial contributions to support Decade Actions in Africa and Pacific SIDS. Call for Decade Actions No. 04/2022 was opened on 15 October 2022 and closed on 31 January and solicited programmes related to the digital ocean ecosystem and coastal resilience. Call for Decade Actions No. 05/2023 was opened on 15 April 2023 and will close on 31 August 2023. It is soliciting programmes related to marine pollution, with a focus on the sub-themes of plastic and nutrient pollution; and programmes related to ecosystem management and restoration with a focus on area-based management tools, ecosystem restoration and multiple ocean stressors. All Calls for Decade Actions also solicited projects to attach to already endorsed Decade Programmes.

5. As of May 2023, the Calls for Decade Actions have resulted in the endorsement of 47 programmes, 235 projects and 79 contributions. An additional set of Decade Actions including a new programme and over 30 projects is expected to be endorsed in June 2023. The portfolio of Decade Actions covers all ocean basins and all 10 Decade Challenges. It represents the collective work of thousands of individuals, and hundreds of institutions and is an indication of the continued significant and global interest in the Ocean Decade.

6. The first iteration of the Ocean Decade Monitoring and Evaluation Framework was launched in January 2022 and at the time of preparation of this document 49% of Decade Actions had completed their reporting and despite the fact that not all Decade Actions reported, the data submitted does allow notable trends to be observed on a range of issues related to the implementation of the Decade. Unless otherwise indicated, the following analyses are based on the data reported by this subset of Decade Actions.

7. In terms of leadership of Decade Actions, 39% are led by North American partners, 30% are led by European partners, and 14% by partners in Asia-Pacific. Lead institutions of Decade Actions are predominantly research institutions, followed by governments and universities. Over 3,700 partner institutions were identified, with a similar geographical distribution, and a similar distribution in terms of institution type. Decade Actions reported that 57% of individuals participating in Decade Actions were women, while 43% were men. Over 4,500 Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) are directly engaged in Decade Actions.

8. Notable geographic gaps persist in the portfolio of Decade Actions. Engagement by partners in SIDS remains very low. Only 6% of Decade Actions report that they are working in SIDS, and of these, less than half are led by partners in SIDS. And only 4% of Decade Actions are being led by partners in Africa. Concerted and targeted efforts have commenced to increase engagement in SIDS and Africa including through the development and launching of the [Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap](#) and Africa Ocean Decade Taskforce, as well as the development of a co-design training course for African partners. An initial scoping study and resource needs assessment for the establishment of a Decade Coordination Office (DCO) in the IOC Sub-Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States (IOCAFRICA) office has been completed and was presented to the Seventh session of IOCAFRICA in March 2023. Similarly, a Tropical Americas and Caribbean Taskforce is being established and will oversee development of a regional Ocean Decade strategy for this region, and an initial scoping for the creation of a DCO in the IOC Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Region (IOCARIBE) office was presented to the Seventeenth Session of IOCARIBE in May 2023. Work is continuing with partners in the South Pacific to establish a Decade Collaborative Centre. Additional in-kind and financial resources will be required to fully support these efforts in Africa and SIDS and ensure stronger engagement of these countries in the Decade.

9. Decade Actions reported generating approximately 25,000 knowledge products including scientific literature and a broad range of other types of knowledge products, with Challenge 1 – Marine Pollution, Challenge 2 – Ecosystem Management, and Challenge 9 – Skills and Knowledge for All being the Ocean Decade Challenges where Actions identified the highest numbers of generation of knowledge products. Decade Actions reported 21,000 incidences of knowledge uptake either through scientific citations or uptake to policy, management, education or other uses. Challenge 9 – Skills and Knowledge for All, Challenge 5 – Ocean-Climate Nexus, and Challenge 1 – Marine Pollution were the most commonly cited Challenges for knowledge uptake.

10. Decade Actions reported implementing nearly 4,000 capacity development initiatives, focusing strongly on Early Career Ocean Professionals. The Ocean Decade Capacity Development Facility, supported by the Government of Flanders (Kingdom of Belgium), will become fully operational in coming months and will provide a framework for capacity development within the Ocean Decade.

11. IOC is leading 16 Decade programmes and projects across a range of themes and is substantively involved in several others. There is a significant potential for the IOC contribution to the Decade to reinforce IOC's core programmatic work and human resources. However, additional resources are required to ensure full operationalisation of these initiatives. IOC/INF-1425 provides additional information on the IOC contribution to the Decade as well as a summary of resource needs. In addition to the IOC-led Decade Actions, a small number of Actions are being led by other UN entities including FAO and UNEP. IOC/INF-1428 presents the results of an analysis and action plan to build on the expressed interest of other UN entities to engage more fully in the Ocean Decade.

Governance and Coordination Structures and Informal Working Groups

12. Two meetings of the Interim Decade Advisory Board were held before the group was disbanded in late 2021. The Decade Advisory Board was established in December 2021 and held its first meeting in January 2022 and then met in-person for its first operational meeting in March 2022. Three online meetings followed in 2022 and early 2023, and the second in-person meeting of the Board was held in May 2023. During their meetings, the Board discussed recommendations related to the endorsement of Decade programmes from Calls for Decade Actions and discussed a range of strategic issues related to measuring progress of the Decade, resource mobilisation, the role of indigenous and local knowledge in the Decade, and the means of increasing engagement of Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries. IOC/INF-1426 presents a summary of the work of the Board over this period.

13. During this period, three Decade Coordination Offices (DCOs), six Decade Collaborative Centres (DCCs), and nine Decade Implementing Partners were established. The DCOs and DCCs are playing an essential role in supporting the Decade Coordination Unit to coordinate Decade Actions, catalyse new initiatives, build stakeholder engagement, mobilise resources and communicate on the Decade. The three DCOs are being hosted by IOC (Western Pacific Region – WESTPAC; Data Sharing – IODE; and Ocean Observations – GOOS). The first of these is being supported by Thailand, however additional resources are required for the full operationalisation of the Data Sharing and Ocean Observations DCOs. DCCs have been established by partners and are fully resourced and funded. IOC/INF-1425 provides information on the existing DCCs. In addition to the DCOs in IOCAFRICA and IOCARIBE that are being scoped to play an essential regional coordination role, discussions are ongoing with partners to establish DCCs for the Southern Ocean, Arctic and South Pacific regions.

14. DCCs indicated that since the start of their operations in the second half of 2022, cumulatively they have implemented over 350 capacity development initiatives targeting over 27,000 beneficiaries, of whom 56% were women and 28% were ECOPs. DCCs also reported that they have catalysed the development of 13 new Decade Actions.

15. Thirty-four (34) National Decade Committees have been created and are implementing diverse initiatives to catalyse national interest and resources for the Decade, as well as provide a platform for the discussion of national priorities aligned to the Decade. Notable gaps exist in the global coverage of NDCs, particularly in SIDS. Of the 34 current Committees, 14 reported to the first iteration of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. These Committees regroup in total 597 members, with an average Committee size of 42 members. On average 12% of members of Committees are ECOPs and 36% are women. Committees cumulatively reported carrying out over 500 Decade related activities and estimated the reach of these activities at over 1 million individuals. IOC/INF-1429 presents a recent publication developed with the existing cohort of NDCs.

16. A Data Coordination Group was established in December 2021 to support development and operationalisation of the data, information and knowledge strategy for the Decade. IOC/INF-1427 presents the data, information and knowledge strategy developed by this group that will guide the development of the envisaged interoperable digital ecosystem as part of the Decade. A Corporate Data Group has been established to explore and develop actions to facilitate sharing of data between private sector and the scientific community. The Strategic Communications Group has been renewed and comprises 25 communications experts who provide advice to the Decade Coordination Unit on communications tools and approaches. The Ocean Decade Expert Roster which has over 220 members has been established to create a pool of experts to assist the IOC Secretariat with the identification of strategic targets for Ocean Decade Challenges, in the review of Decade programme submissions, and in regular review processes of the Decade.

Resource Mobilisation

17. The following Member States/organizations have made specific financial or in-kind contributions to support Decade coordination activities during this period: Belgium (Government of Flanders), Canada, France, Fugro, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Research Council of Norway, Sweden and REV-Ocean.

18. Mobilization of in-kind and financial resources remains a key challenge for the successful implementation of the Decade. Resources are needed for coordination costs at the central (i.e. Decade Coordination Unit) and decentralized levels (notably IOC-led Decade Coordination Offices), as well as for Decade Actions, both endorsed and future Decade Actions. Data from the 23 Decade programmes that reported to the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, indicated that for the next 12-month period, approximately USD 37 million (approximately 20% of needs) has been secured, while USD 188 million is required for full implementation over the next 12 months. Decentralised coordination structures reported that they had catalysed mobilisation of approximately USD 11 million in in-kind and financial resources over the last year.

19. The Ocean Decade Alliance has grown during this period and now numbers 10 Patrons and 18 institutional members. Alliance members have been strongly engaged in high-level events and in raising visibility of the Ocean Decade amongst their constituencies. Efforts continue to work with Alliance members to develop joint funding or support initiatives for the Decade. Sponsored Calls for Decade Actions have been concluded with AXA Research Fund, MeerWissen Initiatives, JPI Oceans, and national funding agencies in Canada and Norway. Discussions are underway with other partners to replicate and scale up this model.

20. There have been significant efforts to engage philanthropic Foundations during this period, and an in-person meeting of the Foundations Dialogue was held 1–3 June 2022 in Rabat, Morocco hosted by the Foundation Mohamed VI for the Protection of the Environment and led to the development of new partnerships and initiatives related to co-design, strategic communications and capacity development. The next edition of the Foundations Dialogue will convene over 30 philanthropic Foundations in Monaco in June 2023, hosted by the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation.

21. Secondments and loans of staff from France, Japan and Fugro (a private sector partner) are providing invaluable support to the coordination of the Decade. A private sector taskforce has been established to support the development of a strategic approach for engagement with industry partners.

22. To maintain the current momentum and level of activity, additional financial or in-kind resources are urgently required to allow the full resourcing and operation of the Decade Coordination Unit (IOC/INF-1425). Significant mobilisation of resources will also be required to support Decade Actions; an updated resource needs assessment for Decade Actions is reported in IOC/INF-1424.

Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach

23. There were intensive stakeholder engagement and outreach efforts during this period. In-person or hybrid events focusing on different aspects of the Ocean Decade were held at the IUCN World Conservation Congress (Marseille, September 2021), UNFCCC COPs 26 and 27 (Glasgow, November 2021 and Sharm el Sheikh, November 2022), the One Ocean Summit (Brest, February 2022), the UN Ocean Conference (Lisbon, June 2022), the CBD COP15 (Montreal, December 2022), Our Ocean Conference (Panama, March 2023), and UN Water Conference (New York, March 2023). Of these events the most significant was the extensive engagement at the UN Ocean Conference. The Ocean Decade led a high-level Ocean Decade

Alliance event involving several Patrons of the Alliance, including their Excellencies the Presidents of Kenya, Portugal and Palau. The Decade also ran a highly successful multi-stakeholder event showcasing achievements and partnerships.

24. The revamped Ocean Decade website was launched in October 2021 and continues to be ameliorated. It incorporates the Ocean Decade Network, an online community platform for exchange and collaboration which has over 6,200 registered users and is the digital home to the different groups working as part of the Decade. The GenOcean communications campaign was launched on 4 April 2022 and is the public facing communications campaign of the Decade that aims to incite the general public to take action based on enhanced ocean knowledge. An internal review of this campaign has been undertaken and it will be relaunched in late 2023 to focus on citizen science initiatives.

25. Social media followers across all Ocean Decade platforms have grown to approximately 45,000. Based on reporting to the first iteration of the Monitoring and Reporting Framework, the combined social media reach of Decade Actions, DCCs, DCOs, DIPs and National Decade Committees is over 6 million followers.

Perspectives for the Next Period

26. The Vision 2030 process has been launched and will work over the next 12 months via a series of Expert Working Groups to set a collective and quantifiable strategic ambition for each of the Ocean Decade Challenges. The results of the Vision 2030 process will be used to scope future Calls for Decade Actions to facilitate solicitation of programmes and projects that fulfil the identified priority needs for each Challenge, and in discussions with resource providers to align resource mobilisation with the most pressing needs of the Ocean Decade. Following validation of the results of this process at the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference, an operational framework will be implemented to track and report on progress towards the achievement of the strategic ambition for each Challenge.

27. Planning is underway for the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference that will be hosted by the Government of Spain in Barcelona in April 2024. This milestone event will provide an important platform for the Ocean Decade community to celebrate achievements of the Decade, showcase innovative solutions and outcomes of Decade Actions, and collectively set a vision for the next years of implementation of the Ocean Decade via presentation and discussion of the Vision 2030 process.

28. The 2024 Ocean Decade Conference is being developed in a manner that will ensure strong articulation with other key regional and international events that will occur before and after the Conference including the SDG Summit in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly (New York, September 2023), UNFCCC COP28 (Dubai, December 2023), Pre-United Nations Ocean Conference (Costa Rica, June 2024), and the Fourth International SIDS Conference (Antigua and Barbados, June 2024 TBD). Close cooperation has been established with the co-hosts of the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference (Nice, June 2025) to ensure complementarity with the outcomes of the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference.