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INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

**UPDATE OF IOC CONTRIBUTIONS
TO THE OCEAN DECADE AND RESOURCE NEEDS**

Summary

This document complements the information and analyses in IOC/INF-1416 presented to the 31st Session of the IOC Assembly in June 2021, and IOC/INF-1418 presented to the 55th Session of the IOC Executive Council in June 2022. It updates the status of IOC-led initiatives that have been registered as Decade Actions and identifies other endorsed Decade Actions where IOC is playing a key role. It discusses central and decentralised coordination structures where IOC is playing a lead role and identifies opportunities, challenges including issues related to resource mobilisation, and perspectives for future IOC contributions to the Decade.

Introduction

This document has been prepared to provide updated information on the IOC contribution to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development ('the Ocean Decade'). It builds on and complements the information and analyses provided in [IOC/INF-1416](#) presented to the 31st Session of the IOC Assembly in June 2021, and IOC/INF-1418 presented to the 55th Session of the IOC Executive Council in June 2022 that included a comprehensive mapping of IOC activities that make a significant direct contribution to almost all Ocean Decade Challenges.

This document provides an update on newly registered Decade Actions, identifies the newly endorsed Decade Actions where IOC is a key partner, provides an overview of the central and decentralised coordination mechanisms where IOC is playing a lead role, and discusses key challenges and opportunities for IOC's future contribution to the Decade.

Existing Endorsed IOC-led Decade Actions & Resource Needs

IOC is leading nineteen endorsed Decade Actions including seven endorsed Decade programmes, nine endorsed Decade projects and three endorsed contributions in the form of Decade Coordination Offices¹. These Decade Actions are summarized in the table below, together with an estimate of secured resources for Action implementation and an indication of the remaining annual resource gap for full implementation. Newly registered IOC-led Decade Actions are indicated in the table.

Endorsed Decade Action	Estimate of Secured Resources 2023 – 2024 (USD)	Annual Resource Gap 2023 – 2024 (USD)
<i>Endorsed Decade Programmes</i>		
Ocean Acidification Research for Sustainability (OARS) - Providing society with the observational and scientific evidence needed to sustainably identify, monitor, mitigate and adapt to ocean acidification; from local to global scales	350,000	2,800,000
Ocean Observing Co-Design - Evolving ocean observing for a sustainable future	250,000	4,000,000
Observing Together: Meeting Stakeholder Needs and Making Every Observation Count	TBD	TBD
Ocean Literacy With All (OLWA): the change we need for the ocean we want	280,000	825,000
An Ocean Data and Information System supporting the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (OceanData 2030)	100,000	200,000
Ocean Practices for the Decade	850,000	1,080,000
The Ocean Decade Tsunami Programme (<i>*newly registered</i>)	1,936,000	1,000,000
<i>Endorsed Decade Projects</i>		
OceanTeacher Global Academy: Building Capacity and Accelerated Technology Transfer for the Ocean Decade	460,000	460,000
Pacific Islands Marine Bioinvasions Alert Network	220,000	0
Accelerate Marine Spatial Planning in the Western Pacific	200,000	280,000

¹ Three Decade Actions that were developed by the Tropical America and Caribbean Regional Planning Group and that were previously identified as IOC-led Decade Actions have been re-assigned to the partner institutions leading implementation of the Action, and are thus no longer included in the analysis of IOC-led Decade Actions although IOCARIBE Secretariat remains engaged in coordination and planning of these Actions.

Endorsed Decade Action	Estimate of Secured Resources 2023 – 2024 (USD)	Annual Resource Gap 2023 – 2024 (USD)
Stem the tide of Asia's riverine plastic emission into the ocean	200,000	280,000
Accelerating capacity development transformations in the Western Pacific - Regional Network of Training and Research Centers (RTRCs) on Marine Science	200,000	450,000
Explore the strongest ocean current in the Western Pacific: the 2nd Cooperative Study of Kuroshio and Adjacent Regions – from its sciences to human well beings	200,000	200,000
Strengthening the Resilience of Coastal Communities in the Northeast Atlantic, Mediterranean Region to the Impact of Tsunamis and Other Sea Level-Related Coastal Hazards (<i>*newly registered</i>)	1,400,000	0
E-DNA expeditions in marine World Heritage sites	362,000	0
OBIS 2030 - The biodiversity data hub for the Ocean Decade Actions (OBIS 2030) (<i>*newly registered</i>)	1,000,000	2,140,000
Endorsed Decade Contributions		
Decade Coordination Office for the Western Pacific	239,000	Resources fully secured
Decade Coordination Office for Ocean Observing	100,000	680,000
Decade Coordination Office for Ocean Data Sharing	100,000	570,000

Based on available information, IOC-led Decade programmes and projects have a combined secured annual budget in the order of USD 7,600,000. The annual resource gap for the full implementation of IOC-led Decade programmes and projects is in the order of USD 13,300,000. The three DCOs have a combined secured annual budget of USD 439,000, and an annual resource gap of USD 1,250,000.

In addition to the above, IOC has a substantive engagement in the following endorsed Decade programmes:

- Global Ocean Oxygen Decade (Lead institution(s): GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel, on behalf of the Global Ocean Oxygen Network (GO2NE), Lead IOC Programme: Ocean Science Section)
- CoastPredict - Observing and Predicting the Global Coastal Ocean (Lead institution(s): Alma Mater Studiorum, University of Bologna, Lead IOC Programme: The Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS))
- Global Ocean Decade Programme for Blue Carbon (GO-BC) (Lead institution: The University of St Andrews - United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK), Lead IOC Programme: Ocean Science Section)

Coordination Costs for the Ocean Decade

The Decade Coordination Unit (DCU) is housed within the IOC Secretariat and comprises two part-time regular programme staff, full time secondments from France and Japan, one full loan from Fugro, three project appointment (PA) staff, and eight consultants supported by extra-budgetary resources. Excluding the costs of regular programme staff, the current operational costs of the DCU are in the order of USD 1.3 million / year. However, as widely recognised in previous reporting on

the status of Decade implementation, the DCU team is under-resourced for the functions that it is required to play. This amount therefore represents the lower end of the envelope required for full and effective functioning of the DCU.

While the extrabudgetary resources provided by Member States to support consultants are fundamental to the operation of the DCU, the unpredictable nature of extrabudgetary support affects the DCU's ability to attract and retain key staff over the long-term. Urgent financial or in-kind support is needed to fill these crucial positions and also to increase the security of consultant positions within the team.

Planned IOC-led Decade Actions & Resource Needs

In addition to the existing Decade Actions, two other substantive IOC-led Decade Actions are in the scoping phase, namely the Africa Decade Coordination Office (DCO) that would be based in the IOCAFRICA Secretariat, and the Tropical Americas and Caribbean Decade Coordination Office that would be based in the IOCARIBE Secretariat. Establishment of these two DCOs would have the dual advantage of: (i) providing robust Decade decentralized coordination structures in priority areas where there is currently low engagement in the Decade and a clear need for increased coordination and stimulus of new initiatives; (ii) contributing to the strengthened positioning and role of IOC as the lead UN agency in ocean science during and following the legacy in these regions through increased staff capacity, partnerships and visibility.

Both these DCOs are at similar stages of the planning. Initial scoping studies for each DCO were discussed at the IOCAFRICA meeting (March 2023) and the IOCARIBE meeting (May 2023) and the proposals received the support of Member States in those meetings. To date, neither of the DCOs has any secured budget. Initial annual budget estimates have been prepared for each DCO as summarized in the below table. These estimates are for the fully staffed and operational DCO, although in practical terms, DCOs could be built out in a progressive manner allowing resource needs to be progressively secured. Resource needs are presented in USD; however, a significant proportion of the resource needs of each DCO could be met through the provision of in-kind resources (e.g., staff loans or secondments).

DCO	Annual Resource Needs (USD)
Africa DCO (IOCAFRICA)	404,000
Tropical Americas & Caribbean (TAC) DCO (IOCARIBE)	740,000

In addition to the above, technical work has commenced on the development of a Decade programme related to sustainable ocean planning in cooperation with Norway and members of the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy. This initiative would build on IOC's significant experience in marine spatial planning and act as a natural framework to galvanise different aspects of IOC's work. This initiative will be developed to make a significant contribution to the development and implementation of a new IOC-wide strategy on sustainable ocean planning and integrated coastal management as outlined in IOC-32/4.7.Doc(1).

Perspectives for IOC-led Decade Actions

As the mandated coordinating agency of the Ocean Decade, the IOC occupies a unique position to make a substantive contribution to the Decade through the implementation of the High-Level Objectives contained in the IOC Medium Term Strategy 2022–2029 and the Programme and Budget for 2022–2026. This position has been reinforced following the first thirty months of implementation of the Ocean Decade. Over this period IOC-UNESCO has become the leading UN entity in terms of the number of Decade Actions registered as part of the Decade and has become the first UN entity to establish Decade Coordination Offices.

The evaluation carried out by UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service "The Evaluation of the Strategic Positioning of IOC-UNESCO" [IOS/EVS/PI/197 and the related Action Plan presented to the 55th](#)

[Session of the Executive Council in IOC/EC-55/AP](#), further highlighted the unique opportunity that IOC's lead role in the Decade creates for the long term reinforcement and growth of the Secretariat. Notably, this analysis highlighted the opportunity presented to coalesce initiatives of the Ocean Decade under the umbrella of sustainable ocean management and use this momentum to create a lead role globally for the IOC in sustainable ocean planning and management by aligning the work of the Ocean Decade with the ambitions of the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy. Such an approach builds on the recommendations contained in the 2021 analysis of the [links between the Ocean Decade and the Ocean Panel](#).

Provided that adequate resources are available, the creation of the DCU generates opportunities to attract new talent and expertise within the IOC Secretariat, including skills that have traditionally not been represented in the Secretariat team. Such skills will have flow on effects to other programmatic work within the IOC and may create the foundation for a diversified and enhanced Secretariat beyond the Decade. Similarly, the creation of DCOs with GOOS and IODE, and in the WESTPAC, IOCAFRICA and IOCARIBE offers a significant opportunity to bolster these key components of the IOC Secretariat, and assure their leadership as coordinating structures in their respective areas of work throughout the Decade and beyond. It also creates opportunities for broadening partnerships with funders and stakeholders including user groups that IOC is not traditionally interacting with.

However, such opportunities also generate challenges. The main challenges in this regard relate to the need for increased and sustained resource mobilisation for Decade coordination structures, both the Decade Coordination Unit and the proposed Decade Coordination Offices, and Decade Actions that IOC is leading or engaged in. Urgent in-kind or financial support is required from Member States and other partners to meet the resource needs for IOC-led Decade Actions and Actions in which IOC is playing a key role, as well as for Decade coordination structures. Such support could take the form of extrabudgetary resources or in-kind resources, including secondments or loans of expert staff members. Previous reporting to the Executive Council and Assembly has highlighted such needs, however with the significantly increased momentum and visibility of the Decade over the last eighteen months, such needs are now critical. Failure to attract necessary resources will undermine the capacity of IOC to continue playing a lead role in Decade Actions and will handicap its coordination functions. Combined, this could lead to the loss of significant opportunities to use the Decade as a lever for the future development and strengthening of IOC.