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INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

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UNESCO, 21–30 June 2023

Item 4.5 of the Provisional Agenda

**FINAL REPORT OF THE OPEN-ENDED INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP ON THE
STATUS OF THE IOC REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE CENTRAL INDIAN OCEAN
(IOCINDIO), 2022–2023**

**PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN IOC SUB-COMMISSION
FOR THE CENTRAL INDIAN OCEAN (IOCINDIO)**

Summary

This document is a response to the IOC Assembly Decision A-31/3.5.6 (June 2021), which decided to pursue further towards the establishment of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Indian Ocean, as a framework to improve coordination of IOC Member States in the region and to ensure implementation of IOC programmes in the Indian Ocean.

Subsequently, the open-ended intersessional Working Group on the status of IOCINDIO presented a progress report to the Executive Council at its 55th session (June 2022) and continued consultations, including with the IOC Sub-commissions, with the view to submit a recommendation, for consideration by the IOC Assembly at its 32nd Session.

Proposed decision: The Assembly is invited to consider the Working Group's recommendation in the form of the draft resolution referenced A-32/[4.5] in the Provisional Action Document (IOC-32/AP Prov.).

Introduction

1. The Assembly at its 31st session decided to undertake the remaining steps towards establishment of the IOCINDIO as an IOC Sub-Commission through an intersessional Working Group in order to complete the work on: terms of reference; determination of the geographic scope; programme of work; the proposed projects and funding support; and mechanisms for coordination with adjacent Sub-Commissions; and requested the Executive Secretary to establish an open-ended intersessional Working Group and to invite interested Member States to participate in the working group; work closely with the Government of India to explore appropriate arrangements for the establishment of the Regional Secretariat of the IOCINDIO Sub-Commission; and to report on progress to the Executive Council, at its 55th session.

2. This final report completes the progress report of the open-ended intersessional Working Group on the Status of the IOCINDIO, submitted to the 55th session of the IOC Executive Council ([IOC/EC-55/3.5.2.Doc\(1\)](#)).

Open-ended intersessional Working Group on the Status of IOCINDIO (2022–2023)

3. The Working Group chaired by the IOC Chair Captain Ariel Troisi and IOCINDIO Chair Rear Admiral (Retd) Khurshed Alam operated from January 2022 to April 2023 held seven online consultative meetings. The IOC Regional Liaison Officer acting as the part time Technical Secretary of IOCINDIO, Justin Ahanhanzo served as the Technical Secretary of the Working Group. The Executive Secretary of IOC, Vladimir Ryabinin supported the work of the Working Group. The Working Group comprised the following Member States and observers: Australia, Bangladesh, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, France, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Kuwait, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Island, and United States of America as well as the Vice-Chair of electoral Group IV of IOC, the Chairpersons of IOCAFRICA and WESTPAC, the former Officers of IOCINDIO, the Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC) based in Seychelles and some individual scientists.

4. Following the guidance of the IOC Executive Council at its 55th session, the Working Group, through vigorous discussions with a spirit of consensus, fully completed its mandate culminating with the draft resolution herewith submitted to the IOC Assembly at its 32nd session towards the establishment of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Indian Ocean including: its suggested title, terms of reference; determination of the geographic scope; programme of work; the proposed projects and funding support; and mechanisms for coordination with adjacent Sub-Commissions on geographical areas of common interest while avoiding duplications and respecting geographic coverage of other Sub-Commissions.

5. It is worth stressing that the intense discussions with 18 interventions on the progress report at the 55th session of the Executive Council (June 2022) with the major point of concerns raised from Member States, notably WESTPAC and IOCAFRICA on the geographical area and possible overlaps of responsibilities, leading to the adoption of Decision EC-55/3.5.2, provided a most useful guidance to the Working Group to clear divergencies. The high level sense of responsibilities and consensus reached in the Working Group reinforced mutual understanding among Member States, fostering willingness of adjacent Sub-Commissions to work together.

6. Subsequently, the Working Group reached a consensus that the new Sub-Commission should not interfere, undermine, diminish, or weaken the work or/and responsibilities of existing adjacent Sub-Commissions. The Working Group agreed that the IOCINDIO Sub-Commission should maintain the current coverage of the Regional Committee limited to the central Indian Ocean. The establishment of the IOCINDIO Sub-Commission is not by any mean to make prejudices to any other Sub-Commissions. There shall be no overlap in the geographic, nor the programmatic areas, nor in activities in the Indian Ocean with either IOCAFRICA, or WESTPAC when the IOCINDIO Sub

Commission will be established. The efforts are geared to develop synergy between IOCINDIO, IOCAFRICA and WESTPAC towards mutual reinforcement in the benefits of all their Member States. Adequate coordination with existing adjacent Sub-Commissions is proposed to avoid overlaps, focusing on articulation, cooperation, collaboration, and integration of IOC activities for the benefits of all regions towards establishing a vibrant IOCINDIO Sub-Commission.

7. The Working Group successfully tackled two parallel and interacting processes towards the establishment of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Indian Ocean including the following:

- (i) The first process relates to the formal intergovernmental design of IOCINDIO: determining its Terms of Reference, preparing the draft Resolution and the process leading to its endorsement and adherence of Member States.
- (ii) The second process relates to IOCINDIO function. It involved identification of issues and problems, opportunities in the Indian Ocean that IOCINDIO will be meaningfully addressing, leading to interest and genuine commitment of Member States.

8. It is worth noting that the Working Group appeared to be a vivid and strong clearinghouse mechanism for setting best practices which enabled Member States to discuss and express in a transparent manner, concerns, thus; strongly helped to build a consensus on a solid basis of mutual trust towards the establishment of the IOCINDIO Sub-Commission. These discussions were useful and helpful to co-construct the new Sub-Commission with a strong sense of consensus and ownership.

9. Finally, the Working Group unanimously supported the proposal for establishment of the IOCINDIO as a Sub-Commission based on established principles and subsequently drafted the following Draft Resolution and Terms of Reference for the consideration of the IOC Assembly.

Draft Resolution IOC-32/[4.5]

Submitted by Bangladesh, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Kuwait, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates

Establishment of an IOC Sub-Commission for the central Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO)

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission,

1. **Recalling** IOC Resolution XX-14 'IOC Programme Group for the central Indian Ocean' and Decisions A-31/3.5.6 and IOC/EC-55/3.5.2 on the Status of the Regional Committee for the Central Indian Ocean,
2. **Taking into consideration** that the central Indian Ocean plays an important role in, *inter alia*, regional, and global climate, including the monsoons, El Niño-Southern Oscillation, precipitation and snow in Eurasia, weather, and extreme events,
3. **Also taking into consideration** that after more than three decades of activities, IOCINDIO has gathered invaluable experiences, learned lessons, and developed best practices, which contributed to the deliberations of the Open-ended intersessional working Group (OEIWG) on the transformation of IOCINDIO into an IOC Sub-Commission,
4. **Noting with appreciation** that there is a strong interest in many IOCINDIO Member States to work together towards the establishment of the Sub-Commission, strengthen implementation of the IOC programmes in the region, achieve the objectives of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, 2021–2030, and develop the capacity of IOCINDIO Member States in ocean sciences and sustainable ocean management,
5. **Noting further** that it is practice of the IOC to invite every Member State to participate in the work of the Commission and its regional subsidiary bodies,
6. **Expresses its gratitude and appreciation** to the Member States which participated in and contributed to the deliberations of OEIWG;
7. **Acknowledges** the leadership and **appreciates** the commitment of both the IOC Chairperson and IOCINDIO Chairperson, who acted as Co-Chairs of OEIWG;

8. **Expresses its appreciation** to the IOC Vice-Chairperson for Electoral Group 4 and Chairpersons of the IOC Sub-Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States (IOCAFRICA) and the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC) for their contribution to the work of the OEIWG, as well as to Executive Secretary of IOC and the Technical Secretary of IOCINDIO for the support provided;
9. **Decides:**
- (i) to establish the IOC Sub-Commission for the central Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO) with the Terms of Reference laid out in the Annex to this resolution;
 - (ii) that the decision to establish IOCINDIO as IOC Sub-Commission will enter into force after nine (9) formal Letters of Adhesion have been received by the IOC Executive Secretary from competent national focal points of IOC Member States;
 - (iii) that the IOCINDIO as IOC Regional Committee will be dissolved at the beginning of the first meeting of IOCINDIO as IOC Sub-Commission;
10. **Requests** the Executive Secretary to:
- (i) issue, within four (4) months following the adoption of the present Resolution, a Circular Letter inviting Member States to submit a Letter of Adhesion to the IOCINDIO Sub-Commission;
 - (ii) upon entry into force of the present resolution on establishment of IOCINDIO as IOC Sub-Commission, call the first Session of the Sub-Commission at which its Officers will be elected.

Annex to Draft Resolution IOC-32/[4.5]

Terms of Reference for the IOC Sub-Commission for the central Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO)

1. Title

IOC Sub-Commission for the central Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO)

2. Mission

The IOC Sub-Commission for the central Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO) is a primary regional intergovernmental subsidiary body of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, with its area of interest within central Indian Ocean¹, and its purpose is to promote international cooperation and to coordinate programmes in research, services, and capacity development, in order to learn more about the nature and resources of the ocean and to apply that knowledge for the improvement of management, sustainable development, the protection of the marine environment, and the decision-making processes of its Member States.

3. Objectives

The Sub-Commission shall:

- (i) Promote international cooperation and coordinate activities agreed by the governing bodies of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO;
- (ii) Make recommendations to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO on issues and areas of its competency;
- (iii) Prepare a plan for implementation of the agreed activities;
- (iv) Offer a platform for identifying regional issues and solutions based on international cooperation;
- (v) Cooperate with relevant organizations, agencies, and institutions;
- (vi) Cooperate with other subsidiary bodies and programmes of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO on matters of common interest, in particular with adjacent Sub-Commissions, IOCAFRICA and WESTPAC.

4. Structure

The Sub-Commission will include:

- Member States
- Officers

¹ The "central Indian Ocean", as IOCINDIO area of interest, is adjacent, to the West, to that of IOCAFRICA, and to the East, to that of WESTPAC.

- Thematic or subregional Working Groups or Task Teams, as required; and
- Secretariat.

5. Member States

The Sub-Commission will include the IOC Member States that have appropriately informed the IOC Executive Secretary about their adhesion. IOCINDIO membership will not be limited to Member States geographically attached to the Indian Ocean. IOC national focal points for IOCINDIO Member States will be the same as for IOC.

6. Officers

The Board of Officers of the Sub-Commission will comprise the Chair and two Vice-Chairs elected by its Member States. The Board shall serve in accordance with the Guidelines for Structure and Responsibilities of the Subsidiary Bodies of the IOC.

7. Working Groups and Task Teams

The Sub-Commission will establish its subsidiary working bodies as required and in accordance with the Guidelines for Structure and Responsibilities of the Subsidiary Bodies of the IOC. Joint subsidiary working bodies, especially with IOCAFRICA and WESTPAC, may be established.

8. Secretariat

The IOCINDIO Secretariat will operate as a part of the IOC Secretariat under the authority of the IOC Executive Secretary.

9. Meetings

IOCINDIO Member States will meet for the intergovernmental session of the Sub-Commission regularly, at least once in two years, preferably in the first part of the year of an IOC Assembly and well in advance of that Assembly to ensure quality statutory reporting.

10. Budget

The IOC Sub-Commission for the central Indian Ocean shall be funded from the IOC Regular Budget and extrabudgetary contributions. IOCINDIO should actively explore opportunities for raising additional resources for implementation of its programmes.

11. Mechanisms for coordination with adjacent Sub-Commissions

10. The principle will be to maximise the value of joint work of adjacent IOC Sub-Commissions on issues of common interest, exclude duplication, and ensure no interference in governance of IOC subsidiary bodies, including adjacent bodies. Cooperation on issues of common interest and using capacity development opportunities of adjacent regional subsidiary bodies is encouraged. Coordinated contribution of regional subsidiary bodies to IOC global programmatic activities is strongly encouraged. Regular consultations between Sub-Commissions' Chairs, Boards of Officers, and Secretariats will be established to achieve co-design, co-development, and co-delivery. Normative and standard setting functions will be uniform and global, at the IOC level. Regional implementation shall follow global standards and contribute to the development of common best practices, taking into account, where required, regional differences and circumstances.