



INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

**NINTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL SESSION OF THE
IOC REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE CENTRAL INDIAN OCEAN**

28–30 March 2023, Dhaka, Bangladesh

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with Rule of Procedure 48.3, the IOC Regional Committee for the Central Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO), as a primary Subsidiary Body of the IOC, is required to report to a governing body on its sessions.

The documentation of the session and more information are available [here](#).

The IOC Assembly at its Thirty-second Session will be invited to consider this Executive Summary and the recommendations it contains.

Introduction

1. The Ninth Intergovernmental Session of the IOC Regional Committee for the Central Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO-IX) was held in presence in Dhaka, Bangladesh, 28-30 March 2023 upon the generous invitation of the Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh. Current IOCINDIO Member States are: Australia, Bangladesh, France, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kuwait, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
2. The session was well attended with both physical presence and online participation of senior governmental officials including Foreign Affairs Minister and State Minister of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic Bangladesh, High Commissioners and Plenipotentiary Ambassadors of IOCINDIO Member States together with IOC national focal persons/institutions, Executive Directors of national oceanographic, meteorological, and environmental agencies and Representatives of international organizations including the United Nations Agencies, notably the UNESCO Office in Dhaka, regional, and national institutions, research institutes and universities, youth associations and leaders, senior, mid-careers and junior professionals as well the Chair of IOCAFRICA.
3. The IOCINDIO-IX session was critical in taking into consideration the ongoing consultations through the IOC Open-ended intersessional Working Group (OEIWG) on the Status of IOCINDIO, which was called by the Assembly at its 31st session to submit to its 32nd session in June 2023, a

draft Resolution for a potential transformation of the Committee into IOC Sub-Commission. The session provided opportunity to IOCINDIO Member States and partners to review the workplan, activities, programmes and progress achieved, and to discuss contributions to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030). The session organized three unique events to ensure regional ownership and leadership in ocean science for sustainable Development, namely the Senior Governmental and Regional Officials' Forum, the IOCINDIO Youth Forum and the IOCINDIO Symposium on Capacity Development.

Conduct of the IOCINDIO-IX session

4. The Foreign Affairs Minister of People's Republic of Bangladesh, Honourable MP, Dr A. K Abdul Momen opened and closed the session with supportive messages to the Committee, to the work of the IOC Open-ended intersessional Working Group (OEIWG) on the Status of IOCINDIO towards the transformation of the Regional Committee into an IOC Sub-Commission.

Statement of the Chair of IOCINDIO

5. The session welcomed and endorsed the statement of the IOCINDIO Chair on the implementation of the workplan during the intersessional period since its adoption in May 2021. The session noted with appreciation that the Regional Committee has fully completed its reactivation process with regular consecutive intergovernmental sessions every two years and is now moving ahead towards its transformation into IOC Sub-Commission for the central Indian Ocean owing to the progress of the IOC Open-ended intersessional Working Group (OEIWG) on the Status of IOCINDIO.

6. Key activities implemented during the reporting period included the following

6. The first Summit in the Indian Ocean on Blue Economy towards the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) on 6 May 2021, which attracted participants from all IOC regions beyond the Indian Ocean region.

7. Regular international training programmes, scientific conferences and seminars by the two IOC-related Category 2 Centres under the auspices of UNESCO, namely, the Regional education and research Centre on Oceanography for West Asia (RCOWA) at the Iranian National Institute for Oceanography and Atmospheric Science in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography (ITCOOcean) at the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) in India. Both Centres significantly contribute to the IOC Capacity Development Strategy, programmes, and activities beyond the IOCINDIO region as they attract the interest and participation from other IOC and UNESCO regions.

8. IOCINDIO workshop on "Methodologies and Approaches of Coastal Vulnerability and Advances in operational oceanography science and technology in the Indian Ocean under the joint patronage of the UNESCO-IOC and the Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Government of India at the International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography (ITCOOcean) on the campus of the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad, 13–17 December 2021. As a result, several IOCINDIO Member States has developed their national coastal vulnerability strategy and plans including Assessment of coastal inundation cost due to future sea level rise.

9. The session encouraged enhanced cooperation and joint implementation with regional and international organisations and Programmes such as the Second International Indian Ocean Expedition (IIOE-2), the CLIVAR/IOC-GOOS Indian Ocean Region Panel, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the Bay of Bengal Program Inter-Governmental Organization (BOBP-IGO), Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA), the Regional Organisation for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME), the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA), the South Asia

Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) serving as the Secretariat of South Asian Seas Programme (the UNEP Regional Seas Programme), the Blue Green Foundation Bangladesh, the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Mercator Ocean International in support to the first Mercator Regional Team meeting for the Indian Seas on May 3rd, 2023.

The IOC Open-ended intersessional Working Group (OEIWG) on the Status of IOCINDIO

10. The session welcomed the progress report of the Open-ended intersessional Working Group (OEIWG) on the status of the Regional Committee for the Central Indian Ocean and expressed appreciation to the participating Member States, the Co-Chairs, namely the IOC Chair and the Chair of IOCINDIO, the respective Chairs of the IOCAFRICA and WESTPAC, the Executive Secretary of IOC, the Technical Secretary of IOCINDIO and the entire Secretariat of the IOC for their contributions and support. The Session encouraged the OEIWG to pursue its deliberations until the submission of the draft resolution on the status of IOCINDIO to the 32nd Session of the Assembly of IOC.

11. The session, subsequently agreed to move forward the transformation of the Regional Committee into an IOC Sub-Commission and expressed national commitments to mobilize resources for its successful development and implementation of programmes. The details of activities and results of the OEIWG are available online and at the IOC Secretariat.

Review of IOCINDIO Workplan and Budget including Priority programmes and projects, establishment of intersessional Working Groups for the period April 2023–April 2025

12. The session welcomed with appreciation the focused specialist presentations by national experts on the following priority programmes and projects:

- National and Regional Framework for Coastal Vulnerability Assessment and Monitoring, Sea-Level Rise, Storm Surges Prediction and Forecasting
- Blue Economy, marine biodiversity conservation, ocean ecosystem and human health
- Ocean observations and data management
- Tsunami Warning and Mitigation Systems
- Second International Indian Ocean Expedition (IIOE-2)
- IOC Strategy for Capacity Development

13. As results, the session reviewed the implementation status of the current IOCINDIO workplan (2021–2023) and established three working groups as follows:

- Working Group 1: Ocean Policy, economy, and governance
- Working Group 2: Coastal vulnerability and
- Working Group 3: Capacity development

14. In addition, the Youth constituted a special Group which presented its own Declaration for a stronger engagement with IOCINDIO.

Strategic Developments in the IOCINDIO region, within UNESCO and the United Nations

15. The session welcomed the presentation by the IOC Executive Secretary on the UN Decade, the IOC Mid-term Strategy, Programme and Budget and expressed appreciation for his active participation and contribution.

Contribution of IOCINDIO Member States to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030)

16. The session recalled with appreciation the **Results and Recommendations of the IOCINDIO Regional Planning Workshop for the Northern/Central Indian Ocean countries as well as ROPME sea area towards the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), 8–10, January 2020, Chennai (India)**; and reiterated that the follow up implementation of these Recommendations should be considered from a strategic perspective aiming at motivating governments to invest own resources for the reinforcement of their national capacities owing to the leveraging, catalytic and advocacy role and capacity of the UNESCO-IOC.

17. Subsequently, the session:

- decided to organize a follow up Regional UN Decade Conference towards the Second UN Decade Conference. This conference should help to review and consolidate the results of the above preparatory workshop.
- urged IOCINDIO Member States to establish UN Decade National and Regional Committees to foster implementation.
- recommended the working groups to submit a programme to the call for Decade Actions on Ocean Decade Challenge 1 – Marine Pollution, with a focus on sub-themes of plastic pollution and nutrient pollution, and/or Challenge 2 – Ecosystem Restoration and Management, with a focus on sub-themes of area-based management, restoration and multiple ocean stressors.

UN FCCC/COP28, United Arab Emirates, 30 November–23 December 2023

18. The session welcomed the briefing provided by the IOCINDIO Vice-Chair, Dr Saif Al Ghais (UAE) on the forthcoming COP-28 to be held in the United Arab Emirates.

19. The session endorsed the invitation of the Vice Chair and recommended the organization of IOCINDIO side event on Education and Global Warming impacts on ocean at the COP-28.

Inter-regional Cooperation with IOC Sub-Commissions (IOCAFRICA, WESTPAC, IOCARIBE)

20. The session, building on the best practices from the OEIWG on the Status of IOCINDIO which called for synergies, complementarities, partnerships amongst IOC Regional Subsidiary Bodies, strongly encouraged the IOC Secretariat, the IOC Regional Subsidiary Body Secretariats with their officers to work closely together with the view to foster inter-regional cooperation and co-design for mutual benefits in the interests of all IOC Member States. The Chair of IOCAFRICA addressed the session in a plenary.

Regional ownership and leadership in ocean science for sustainable development

21. The session took an innovative approach with the exceptional organization of three unique high events including the following:

- **The Senior Governmental and Regional Officials' Forum** which brought together high-ranking policy-making dignitaries including Ministers, High-Commissioners and Plenipotentiary Ambassadors and Diplomats who expressed high-level governmental commitments of Member States to the work of the IOC, the Ocean Decade and to the IOCINDIO with regard to its reinforcement and enhancement in view of its transformation into an IOC Sub-commission for the central Indian Ocean.
- **The IOCINDIO Youth Forum** which fostered involvement of students and early careers ocean scientists in the work of IOCINDIO, promoting networking, mentoring and enhancement of national and regional capacity development.

- **The IOCINDIO Symposium on Capacity Development** which brought together UNESCO Category 2 Centres, Chairs, Ocean Teacher Academy, and partner academic and research institutions in ocean science, enabling exchanges of best practices and brainstorming on further possibilities to share research facilities.

Adoption of IOCINDIO Workplan and Budget (April 2023–April 2025)

22. Based on a thorough review of the implementation of the workplan since its last session in May 2021, and taking into consideration the deliberations of the Working Groups on national and regional priorities, the session adopted the Committee's workplan (2023–2025).

23. The session reiterated the need to pursue the development and reinforcement of the Coastal Vulnerability programme as a flagship towards a multi-hazards warning systems taking into consideration the wide spectrum of time scales of oceanic, atmospheric, and climatic processes and to generate scientific solutions for an increased resilience of coastal communities in the IOCINDIO region. Member States Representatives considered that all the key pillars for the success of this major programme are in place, notably: (i) the science base; (ii) national operational infrastructures; (iii) a clear understanding of the needs and engagement of governments with a strong will to change the situation, which is urgent and imperative in the face of climate change, amplifying sea-level rise, intensification of tropical cyclones, monsoons, and climatic instabilities in the region.

24. Taking into consideration the vital importance of solutions to coastal vulnerability in the region, the session decided that the Committee should plan and organise a first World Conference on Coastal Vulnerability in 2024. The Co-Chairs of the related Working Group suggested that after consultations with interested partners in the region, they would inform the IOCINDIO Officers and Secretariat on the potential joint support from the NIOT and NCCR in Chennai (India) to facilitate the organisation of such an unprecedented exciting scientific event.

Place and date of the IOCINDIO-X

25. The session expressed gratitude to the UAE for its offer to host the next session (IOCINDIO-X) which should be held in the first quarter of 2025 prior to the Ramadan.

Election of officers

The session re-elected with acclamation the outgoing Officers of the Committee for a new intersessional period of two years from April 2023 to the next session in 2025.

Chairperson: Rear Admiral (ret'd) Khurshed Alam (Bangladesh)

Vice-chairpersons: Dr Maryam Ghaemi (Iran) and Dr Saif AlGhais (United Arab Emirates).

Conclusion

26. The session fostered regional and international dialogue, partnerships and cooperation, ocean science-policy interface, and contributed to advance ocean science development, enhanced technical and institutional development through presentations of national scientific research programmes and results, and established intersessional Working Groups to co-design ocean science solutions to critical challenges for sustainable development in the central Indian Ocean, in particular related to the coastal vulnerability.

27. The session expressed gratitude to Member States in the region noting their significant national financial and in-kind resources to maintain, reinforce and build on their existing national research and academic institutional infrastructures and manpower in ocean and climate related sciences, technologies, innovation, and governance.

28. The session also expressed appreciation to the Officers and the Secretariat of IOC for their support.

29. Finally, the session expressed a deep gratitude to the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the generous hospitality with significant in-kind contributions, allowing the successful organisation of the session in Dhaka.