



INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

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**STATEMENT FROM THE IOC CHAIRPERSON ON THE OCCASION
OF THE 32ND SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY, 21–30 JUNE 2023**

Estimados delegados, señoras y señores, colegas y amigos.

Es con profundo placer que me encuentro hoy ante ustedes en la apertura de una nueva sesión de nuestra Asamblea, principal órgano de gobierno de nuestra Comisión. Han transcurrido cuatro años desde la última vez que hemos podido estar todos juntos, un período muy complejo en el que hemos debido enfrentar circunstancias sin precedentes que han puesto a prueba nuestra resiliencia, adaptabilidad y unidad. La multitud de obstáculos han afectado todos los aspectos de nuestras vidas, incluyendo la salud, la educación, la economía, nuestra capacidad de observación, alerta y respuesta. Sin embargo, frente a la adversidad, también hemos dado muestras de fuerza y determinación.

Nuestra Comisión no cejó un solo momento en su tarea de fomentar la cooperación internacional y coordinar programas en la investigación, los servicios y la creación de capacidades y cumplir con nuestra misión y los objetivos fijados colectivamente por los Estados miembro. Esto se debe al compromiso y esfuerzo colectivo de todos los integrantes de esta comunidad y de nuestra esforzado y dedicado secretariado.

En mi reporte ante la 31^a sesión de la Asamblea ponía de relieve que podía existir la percepción de que, a pesar de invertir nuestros mejores esfuerzos en la preparación del Decenio de los Océanos, podríamos haber dejado en un segundo plano el desarrollo, la discusión o el acuerdo adecuados sobre nuestras propias contribuciones específicas al Decenio. Planteaba, incluso, que si bien todos estaríamos de acuerdo en que existían grandes oportunidades para que la COI contribuyera aún más en el contexto del Decenio, y que este sería una fuente única para desarrollar y fortalecer aún más asociaciones y sinergias, algunos miembros de nuestra comunidad podían ser de la opinión de que las acciones del Decenio constituían posibles competidores, o incluso un factor que desdibujara el papel y las responsabilidades de los COI. Estas últimas percepciones eran algo que debíamos evitar mediante debates adecuados y una actitud proactiva.

As I said before, this space for thought and discussion is essential to give direction to our actions and maintain the leadership role of our Commission in matters related to ocean sciences. You will therefore note that we have an agenda item 5. IOC and the Future of the Ocean: Sustainable Delivery and Expansion of IOC Activities, aimed towards discussing how to continue maximizing the societal benefit of IOC work and on the future IOC evolution towards producing and effectively using the science we need for the ocean we want.

Just as technology and its continuous and rapid development are closely linked to our daily lives, in the same way, are associated to ocean sciences. I trust that this space for reflection and discussion that we are opening will also help us to consider the way and mechanisms, through which we can position you as a reference body in technology, innovation, and development in ocean sciences to, perhaps in the medium term, establish a specific IOC program for this matter.

We are all aware that ocean sciences encompass a broad spectrum of natural and social science disciplines, comprising observations, technology, infrastructure, science-policy interfaces, and services. As a result, fostering partnerships and maintaining active communication with key stakeholders are vital mechanisms to accomplish the objectives of the IOC Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 and the Ocean Decade. These collaborative efforts serve as cornerstones for advancing our understanding of the ocean and its sustainable development.

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Assembly has a crucial role to play in this global effort. As a platform for international collaboration and cooperation, we have the unique opportunity to harness the collective wisdom, expertise, and resources of our member states to find innovative solutions, develop effective policies, and implement concrete actions to address the complex issues facing our oceans.

As global responsibilities in the realm of ocean management and planning continue to expand and rely more heavily on scientific knowledge, it is essential for the Intergovernmental Ocean Commission to maximize its global leadership and influence. By harnessing the organization's extensive scientific, data, and technical expertise, the IOC can effectively support Member States in fulfilling their commitments and obligations.

Throughout this Assembly, we will deliberate on a wide range of topics, including ocean science, observation systems, services, capacity development, and the integration of science into policy-making. Together, we will seek to enhance our understanding of the ocean, improve our ability to predict and mitigate the impacts of change and promote a sustainable ocean economy that balances human needs with the preservation of our marine ecosystems.

The Ocean is increasingly present on the international agenda, including several UN Conventions and Frameworks. Ensuring our involvement on the international stage, and delivering on our mandate we have been very active and visible in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties in Glasgow and Sharmk-el Sheik, the Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal, as well as in the final rounds of negotiation of the BBNJ agreement. We were also present at the 22nd UN Informal Consultative Process, focusing on Ocean Observations. In all these cases, sustained ocean observations, data and information management, dedicated capacity development, and the best available ocean science, knowledge, and advice are required.

In July 2022, we had the opportunity to play an active and relevant role in the much-awaited 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference, co-hosted by the Governments of Kenya and Portugal.

Themed around “Scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: stocktaking, partnerships, and solutions”, the Conference aimed to unlock ocean-based solutions to address some of the most defining issues of our time, from climate change to economic inequality. The Conference sought to propel science-based innovation to start a new chapter of global ocean action.

Quoting the UN Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, Miguel de Serpa Soares, “[The Conference] has given us the opportunity to unpack critical issues and generate new ideas. It also made clear the work that remains, and the need to scale up that work for the recovery of our ocean”, Mr. Serpa Soares said, adding that it was essential to turn the tide.

Following a week of discussions and events, the Conference concluded with governments and heads of state agreeing on a new political declaration to Save Our Ocean. We, as IOC, are driving development for the Decade of action with the mission to generate and use knowledge for the transformational action needed to achieve a healthy, safe, and resilient ocean for sustainable development by 2030 and beyond.

Another key element of the Lisbon document relates to financing and the necessity of discovering innovative financial strategies to propel the transition toward sustainable ocean-based economies. Additionally, it stresses the importance of scaling up nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches to bolster the resilience, restoration, and conservation of coastal ecosystems.

When it comes to financial strategies, it is essential for us to keep in mind the various possibilities outlined in Article 10 of our Statutes, particularly those mentioned in 10.4. I encourage all of you to persist in exploring methods and approaches that allow us to maximize the potential of this article.

In my case, in addition, I have engaged in multiple productive meetings and events that have furthered our objectives. Notably, I had the privilege of conducting working meetings with academia and global stakeholders with a particular focus on empowering women in ocean sciences. Additionally, I actively participated alongside our vice-chairs in meetings promoting IOC and UN Decade-related activities at a regional level.

These engagements and initiatives exemplify our commitment to advancing ocean science and sustainable development. Together, we are forging partnerships, exchanging knowledge, and driving progress toward a better future for our ocean and the communities that rely on it.

Je me souviens toujours que Jean le Rond D’Alembert écrivait dans le Discours préliminaire à l’Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers « Ce sont les hommes inspirés qui éclairent le peuple, et les enthousiastes qui l’égarent. »

Now, I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude and appreciation to my fellow Officers, who have shouldered numerous responsibilities with remarkable professionalism and unwavering commitment to the collective benefit. Their dedication and hard work have been instrumental in our progress. I would also like to extend my heartfelt acknowledgment to our esteemed former Chairperson, Professor Peter Haugan of Norway, for his consistently valuable guidance and wisdom. His insights have greatly contributed to our endeavors.

I would like to express my utmost appreciation for the unwavering dedication and tireless efforts of our esteemed secretariat, both here in Paris and across the various locations where they

diligently carry out their responsibilities. Under the exceptional leadership of our Executive Secretary, their commitment has been instrumental in driving us toward the accomplishment of our goals. It is through their hard work and commitment that we have been able to make significant strides and progress. Without their invaluable contributions, our achievements would not have been possible.

I urge all of you to engage in open and constructive dialogue, to share your expertise and experiences, and to seek common ground in pursuit of our shared goals. Together, we have the power to shape the future of our oceans and secure a sustainable and prosperous future for generations to come. As we deliberate on the pressing issues that demand our attention, let us approach our discussions with our traditional openness, empathy, and spirit of collaboration. May this Assembly catalyse positive change, inspiring us to take bold steps toward a healthier and more sustainable future.