



INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
COMMISSION OCÉANOGRAPHIQUE INTERGOUVERNEMENTALE
COMISIÓN OCEANOGRÁFICA INTERGUBERNAMENTAL
МЕЖПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННАЯ ОКЕАНОГРАФИЧЕСКАЯ КОМИССИЯ

اللجنة الدولية الحكومية لعلوم المحيطات
政府间海洋学委员会

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IOC Circular Letter No 2981
(Available in English and French)

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20 December 2023

To : IOC Member States (Official National Coordinating Bodies for liaison with the IOC)
Permanent Delegates/Observer Missions to UNESCO, and
National Commissions for UNESCO in IOC Member States
Officers of Major IOC Subsidiary Bodies (Scientific, Technical and Regional)

C.c. : The Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission

Subject: Nomination of experts to serve on the IOC Working Group on User Requirements and Contributions to General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) Products

This circular letter has been prepared further to Decision EC-XLIX/Dec.4.4 of the IOC Executive Council in 2016 to establish the above-mentioned working group and subsequent Decision A-31/3.5.1 to conduct a review of user requirements and potential contributions to GEBCO on a triennial basis.

This Working Group has been tasked in particular to:

- (i) collect, integrate and assess user requirements to inform the development of present and future GEBCO products; and
- (ii) address ways for strengthening the contributions of IOC programmes and Member States activities to GEBCO data and products. In accordance with its terms and reference, the Working Group is comprised of representatives of IOC Member States and one expert each from the GEBCO Guiding Committee, and relevant IOC technical and regional subsidiary bodies (GLOSS, GOOS-SC, IODE, TOWS-WG, IOCAFRICA, IOCARIBE, IOCINDIO, IPHAB, WESTPAC and GOOS Regional Alliances).

As per Decision EC-XLIX/Dec.4.4 attached hereafter, the Working Group shall:

- (i) Collect, integrate and assess the user needs and requirements to GEBCO data and products.
- (ii) Facilitate and guide the use of GEBCO datasets and products through the user communities that represent relevant IOC technical and regional subsidiary bodies.

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The Working Group shall take into account:

- (i) The goals of the IHO-IOC GEBCO Project;
- (ii) Capacity-development needs in relation to GEBCO products;
- (iii) Possible ways to strengthen cooperation between GEBCO and IOC technical and regional subsidiary bodies and GOOS Regional Alliances;
- (iv) Possible mechanism to identify user needs in GEBCO datasets and products and provide input to GEBCO Guiding Committee;
- (v) Possible contributions of data from Member States to GEBCO.

By this letter, interested Member States and Chairpersons of relevant IOC Subsidiary Bodies are invited to designate one representative on the Working Group.

Experts nominated by chairs of relevant IOC technical and regional subsidiary bodies and GOOS Regional Alliances, as well as national experts will work by correspondence and in English under the chairpersonship of an IOC Officer.

The task of the members of the Working Group will consist primarily in:

- (i) providing inputs on the basis of a questionnaire to be developed by the Secretariat in consultation with the Chair of the Working Group; and
- (ii) review the synthesized results to the questionnaire and identify recommendations towards identifying potential contributions to GEBCO products and enhancing relevance thereof to users. The group will report its findings to the Executive Council at its 57th session in June 2024 (third report of the Group).

I would appreciate receiving your letters of nomination no later than 20 January 2024 by e-mail to Mr Julian Barbière (j.barbiere@unesco.org) with cc to Ms Isabel Chavez (i.chavez@unesco.org).

This invitation to nominate experts is also sent to chairpersons of the IOC programmes and regional subsidiary bodies concerned.

Looking forward to your earliest reply, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

[signed]

Vladimir Ryabinin
Executive Secretary

Enclosures: 1/ Decision EC-XLIX/4.4 on IOC Role in Support of the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) Project, State of Progress in the Associated Review
2/ Decision A-31/3.5.1 Triennial assessment to be conducted by the Working Group on User Requirements and Contributions to GEBCO Products

Electronic resources:

Biennial assessment of the Working Group on User Requirements and Contributions to GEBCO Products (2021) ([IOC/A-31/3.5.1.Doc](#))

First Report of the IOC Regular Working Group on User Requirements and Contributions to GEBCO Products (2018) ([IOC/EC-LI/2 Annex 7](#))

Decision EC-XLIX/4.4

(49th Session of the IOC Executive Council, Paris, 7–10 June 2016)

IOC Role in Support of the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) Project, State of Progress in the Associated Review

Having examined documents IOC/EC-XLIX/2 Annex 8 and Addendum,

Recalling decision IOC-XXVIII/6.2(II) on the review of IOC's role and involvement in the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO),

Noting the finding of the Review that GEBCO's "traditional" and "shallow water" products are indispensable to IOC activities,

Further noting the conclusion of the review group with regard to IOC's role and involvement in the GEBCO Project,

Decides to:

- (i) Enhance the IOC involvement in the GEBCO project;
- (ii) Establish a regular working group tasked to collect, integrate and assess the user requirements to GEBCO products; and
- (iii) Address ways of potential contributions to GEBCO data and products;

Encourages Member States to:

- (i) Cooperate to advance basin-scale, campaign mapping and accelerate the delivery of GEBCO objectives and general knowledge of the ocean; and
- (ii) Facilitate GEBCO capacity development including training opportunities;

Requests the Executive Secretary to:

- (i) Convey this decision to the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the GEBCO Guiding Committee;
- (ii) Establish the working group in accordance with the terms of reference of the working group contained in the Annex to this decision, in consultation with IHO and GEBCO Guiding Committee; and
- (iii) Explore the possibility of seeking additional funds to GEBCO, including extrabudgetary sources.

Annex to IOC/EC-XLIX, Dec.4.4

Terms of Reference of the IOC Working Group on user requirements and contributions to GEBCO products

Mandate

The Working Group shall:

- (i) Collect, integrate and assess the user needs and requirements to GEBCO data and products.
- (ii) Facilitate and guide the use of GEBCO datasets and products through the user communities that represent relevant IOC technical and regional subsidiary bodies.
- (iii) Identify potential contributions to GEBCO data and products.

The Working Group shall take into account:

- (i) The goals of the IHO-IOC GEBCO Project;
- (ii) Capacity-development needs in relation to GEBCO products;

- (iii) Possible ways to strengthen cooperation between GEBCO and IOC technical and regional subsidiary bodies and GOOS Regional Alliances;
- (iv) Possible mechanism to identify user needs in GEBCO datasets and products and provide input to GEBCO Guiding Committee.
- (v) Possible contributions of data from Member States to GEBCO.

Modus operandi

The bulk of the Working Group's work will be done by correspondence, co-ordinated by the Executive Secretary IOC.

The Working Group should work, where appropriate, in close cooperation with GEBCO Guiding Committee.

The Working Group will produce a document assessing and summarizing the needs and requirements and potential contributions of the IOC community in bathymetric data and products.

The assessment will be conducted every two years, unless otherwise decided.

The document reporting the assessment is reviewed and finalized by IOC governing bodies and forwarded by the Executive Secretary to the Secretariat of the International Hydrographic Organization and GEBCO Guiding Committee.

Membership

The Working Group shall consist of:

- (i) Experts nominated by chairs of relevant IOC technical and regional subsidiary bodies and GOOS Regional Alliances.
- (ii) Experts nominated by the chair of GEBCO Guiding Committee.
- (iii) Experts nominated by interested IOC Member States.

The Chair shall be elected by the Working Group members.

The representative of the International Hydrographic Organization / other partners and stakeholders may participate in activities of the Working Group on a specific item, if deemed appropriate.

IOC Decision A-31/3.5.1

(31st Session of the IOC Assembly, Paris, 14–25 June 2021)

**Triennial assessment to be conducted by the Working Group
on User Requirements and Contributions to GEBCO Products**

The Assembly,

Recalling [Decision EC-LI/4.5](#) to, inter alia, conduct the Review of User Requirements and Potential Contributions to GEBCO on a biennial basis,

Having examined the report of the working group presented in IOC/A-31/3.5.1.Doc,

Recognizing the continued need of the IOC scientific community for bathymetric products and the fact that access to high quality bathymetry is important not only for navigation, but also for other purposes including ocean science, tsunami warning and preparedness and climate modelling,

Noting that significant amounts of bathymetric data are collected by the scientific and commercial sector for purposes other than chart improvement, but are not easily made discoverable or available for secondary purposes,

Takes note of the conclusions of the Working Group contained in IOC/A-31/3.5.1.Doc;

Requests the Executive Secretary to:

- (i) convey the conclusion of this review to the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the GEBCO Guiding Committee;
- (ii) identify ways and means to increase the participation of respondents, particularly representing the interest of IOC programmes, as well as regional subsidiary organs, in future assessments carried out by the working group;
- (iii) share the findings of the review with relevant IOC communities;

Decides to conduct the Review of User Requirements and Potential Contributions to GEBCO on a triennial basis, with the next assessment to be presented to the IOC Executive Council in 2024;

Encourages Member States to:

- (i) cooperate to advance basin-scale campaign mapping and accelerate the delivery of GEBCO objectives and general knowledge of the ocean in particular by supporting and contributing to the Nippon Foundation–GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project;
- (ii) facilitate GEBCO capacity development, including training opportunities; and
- (iii) actively participate in the next assessment, to be conducted by the Working Group;

Agrees that the regular budget for these activities will be identified as part of the Resolution on Governance, Programming and Budgeting Matters of the Commission (IOC Resolution A-31/2).