



**unesco**

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION**  
(of UNESCO)

**Fifty-seventh Session of the Executive Council**  
UNESCO, Paris, 25–28 June 2024

Item 4.2 of the Provisional Agenda

**PROGRESS REPORT OF THE IOC AD HOC INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP  
ON OCEAN OBSERVATIONS IN AREAS UNDER NATIONAL JURISDICTION**

Summary

The present progress report is submitted in pursuance to IOC Assembly Decision A-32/4.8.2 to establish a Working Group on Ocean Observations in Areas under National Jurisdiction.

It documents the activities of the group since December 2023 with a view to presenting a comprehensive report on the consultation of Member States and Global Ocean Observing System networks on the issue of ocean observations in areas under national jurisdiction at the next IOC Assembly in 2025.

The proposed decision is referenced Dec. EC-57/4.2 in the Action Paper (document IOC/EC-57/AP Prov.)

## Background

1. During the Fifty-fifth Session of the IOC Executive Council (EC-55) in June 2022, GOOS recalled the history of IOC in creating a Member State-agreed notification mechanism, in compliance with United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to be applied to profiling floats of the Argo Programme drifting into Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) (Refer to document [IOC/EC-55/3.4.Doc\(1\)](#): *Issues and solutions for enhancing sustained ocean observations in areas under National Jurisdiction, and the role of IOC, WMO and DOALOS*).
2. In February 2020, GOOS organized an Experts Workshop on “Ocean Observations in Areas under National Jurisdiction” (OOJN, [GOOS Report, 246](#)), following a number of requests from the implementers of global ocean observing networks to consider the many challenges of ocean observations in EEZs. The workshop discussed a number of issues that the sustained global ocean observing networks faced in undertaking observations in areas under national jurisdiction, specifically within the coastal States EEZs, it also discussed the value of observations to coastal States, and potential concerns of coastal States regarding sustained ocean observations in areas under their national jurisdiction.
3. The experts proposed a number of potential and practical solution spaces within UNCLOS to be implemented through collaborative action across UNESCO, WMO and the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs through its Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS).
4. The results from the OOJN Workshop together with those from a Member States survey (refer to IOC Circular Letter, [2938](#); which had limited responses) were presented at the Thirty-second session of the IOC Assembly (A-32) in June 2023. Through IOC Decision A-32/4.8.2, the Assembly decided “*to establish an ad hoc intersessional Working Group on Ocean Observations in Areas under National Jurisdiction with the Terms of Reference annexed to this decision.*” The Working Group on Ocean Observations in Areas under National Jurisdiction (WG) was established in December 2023 following an invitation to Member States by IOC Circular Letter, [2971](#) to nominate individuals to become members of the WG. The Working Group was requested to report to the IOC Assembly at its 33rd session in 2025 and to present a progress report to this session of the Executive Council.

## Progress

5. The WG is composed of 25 IOC Member States and has met six times, with the first meeting taking place on 7 December 2023, where it was agreed to meet monthly until the Thirty-third session of the IOC Assembly in June 2025.
6. The monthly meetings have consisted of two-hour blocks in a virtual format.
7. The first meeting focused on a summary by the secretariat on the background for the formation of this Working Group, followed by discussion of the process to nominate and elect the working group co-chairs, Ariel Troisi (Argentina) and Suzan El Gharabawy (Egypt).
8. The second meeting began with the election of the co-chairs followed by a review of the working group mandate (IOC Decision A-32/4.8.2). There was a detailed discussion clarifying the mandate and how to apply it.
9. The third meeting was a review by the working group of the background documents: OOJN Workshop Report; *Details on the results from the 2023 survey to global ocean observing networks on ocean observations in areas under national jurisdiction* (IOC/INF-1431); the survey results presented at A-32; and discussion notes on Ocean Observation in Areas under National Jurisdiction from the IOC-32 report (pages 32-34). The working group also had access to the surveys submitted by the Global Ocean Observing System Networks and some Member States (only some Member

States permitted access to the surveys by the working group). During this meeting of the working group, it was recognized that the working group might benefit from additional Member States responses to the survey of March 2023. The secretariat therefore reissued the Circular Letter 2938 inviting additional Member State responses to the survey.

10. The fourth meeting developed a matrix to analyze and discuss commonalities between the issues identified by the GOOS Networks and by the Member States who responded and permitted access to the survey. The working group determined that additional information, specifically, clarifying material on the impacts to GOOS was needed from the GOOS Networks before additional progress could be made.

11. The fifth meeting focused on the structure and the contents of this progress report for the Executive Council in June 2024.

12. The sixth meeting of the working group finalized this progress report. The working group invited a representative from the Argo Program to clarify and discuss the issues identified by the Argo network and impact on GOOS.

### **Next Steps**

13. The working group asked the secretariat to invite other representatives of some of the observing networks to future meetings of the group to seek clarification and to help understand the challenges faced and the impacts on GOOS. These discussions, in turn, will help the working group to identify and document specific examples of problems or issues that need to be brought to the attention of the Assembly in 2025.