|  |
| --- |
| Summary  This document provides a brief report of the Chair of the Intersessional Financial Advisory Group (IFAG) on the work accomplished in the intersessional period January – June 2024.  Decision proposed is referenced Dec. IOC-32/5.2 in the Provisional Action Paper IOC/EC-57/AP Prov.Rev.. |

1. In accordance with IOC Resolution A-32/4, the open-ended Intersessional Financial Advisory Group (IFAG) was reconstituted through a call for nominations addressed to Member States in the IOC Circular Letter [2977](https://oceanexpert.org/document/33451) of 8 December 2023. 19 Member States—Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Egypt, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Türkiye, UK and USA—nominated experts for the ‘core’ membership of the Group, chaired by IOC Vice-Chair Juan Camlo Forero Hauzeur.
2. As customary, the Group started working by correspondence but rather quickly it became apparent that a specific online session to discuss document [IOC/EC-57/5.1.Doc(1)](https://oceanexpert.org/document/34199) – Revised Programme and Budget 2024–2025 (42 C/5) and Preliminary Proposals for 2026–2029 (Draft 43 C/5) would be highly beneficial.
3. Such a session was organised on 11 June 2023, with participation of 21 Member States – Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Colombia, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Japan, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Norway, Seychelles, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Turkiye, UK and USA.
4. The usual pre-session face-to-face meeting on 24 June 2023 allowed the Group to further exchange on all the documents covered by its mandate and to finalise its main conclusions. 22 IOC Member States were represented at the meeting – Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Egypt, France, Germany, Grenada, Iceland, India, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Norway, Portugal, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Türkiye, UK and USA.
5. Overall, thirty-one (31) IOC Member States – Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Egypt, France, Germany, Grenada, Iceland, India, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Mozambique, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Russian Federation, Seychelles, South Africa, Spain, Togo, Tunisia, Türkiye, UK, and USA – participated in the work of the Group.
6. Focusing, as mandated by the IOC Assembly at its 32nd session, on the matters covered by IOC Resolution A-32/4, and in compliance with the IFAG Terms of Reference (Annex 2 of IOC Resolution XXVIII-3), the Group structured its discussions in four main parts as follows:

**I.  
Report on 2022–2023 (41 C/5) budget implementation as at 31 December 2023   
and Financial situation of the IOC Special Account as at year end 2023   
and forecast for 2024–2025**

1. IFAG did not have any particular comments on documents [IOC/EC-57.3.1.Doc(2)](https://oceanexpert.org/document/34535) and [IOC/EC-57.3.1.Doc(3)](https://oceanexpert.org/document/34202), considering that the budget been executed in a satisfactory manner and in accordance with the Approved Programme and Budget 2022–2023 (41 C/5), as endorsed by the IOC Assembly at its 31st session through IOC Resolution A-31/2 and further reviewed by the IOC Executive Council at its 55th session through Resolution EC-55/2.

**II.  
Revised Programme and Budget for 2024–2025 (42 C/5) and   
Preliminary Proposals for 2026–2029 (Draft 43 C/5)**

1. IFAG was unanimous in expressing its appreciation of the considerable increase in regular budget allocation to the IOC within the overall UNESCO 42 C/5 budget ceiling revised due to the United States of America re-joining the Organisation in July 2023, endorsed by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 42nd session in line with Member States priorities and allowing IOC to maintain its core programmes and to fulfil its role in the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030). The Group reiterated its thanks to the United Kingdom and other Member States for including in the agenda of the 216th session of the UNESCO Executive Board item 44 ‘Urgent requirement for increased and more stable resources to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)’ that led to this budget increase.
2. The Group was also unanimous in its assessment that the online session held on 11 June 2024 was extremely useful and productive. It allowed to hear directly from the IOC Executive Secretary on the approach and the main programmatic and budgetary choices and to engage in a very good exchange of opinions that helped clarify some issues and identify where additional information was required. Given the open-ended nature of IFAG, the invitation to the online session was shared with all Member States of the Commission and all presentations as well as the full recording of the session were made available on the IFAG website.
3. As agreed during the online session of 11 June, a document with additional information was prepared by the Secretariat and the Chair shared it with all IFAG members through his communication of 19 June 2024. It was also posted on the IFAG website and is attached to this report as Addendum.
4. The face-to-face meeting on 24 June presented another opportunity to hear a detailed presentation by the IOC Executive Secretary both on the programmatic priorities and rationale for budgetary allocations for 2024–2025 and on his vision going forward.
5. IFAG was of the opinion that the programmatic choices made by the Secretariat in developing the Revised Programme and Budget for 2024–2025 (42 C/5) follow Member States’ strategic guidance provided in IOC Resolution A-32/4.
6. The group particularly welcomed:
7. the stabilisation of all IOC functions, coupled with targeted additional investment in IODE, GOOS, Capacity Development and Regional Subsidiary Bodies, identified by the IOC Assembly as ‘critically vulnerable areas’;
8. Executive Secretary’s staffing choices, aimed at reinforcing the above-mentioned critically vulnerable areas as a matter of priority;
9. the significant improvement in the ratio of staff *versus* non-staff resources support from regular budget;
10. the considerable increase of the regular budget allocated to IOCAFRICA activities, in line with UNESCO’s Global Priority Africa and taking into account the need to avail adequate resources for programme implementation;
11. It notedthat consultations on priorities take place on a continuous basis within the relevant programmes and subsidiary bodies to co-design priority activities and optimise delivery in 2024–2025, and to lay the foundations for the Draft 43 C/5. Group members were of the opinion that some key areas of IOC’s work are still understaffed, and their reinforcement would need to be considered in the next budgetary cycles. Several members used the example of WESTPAC Secretariat in this regard.
12. IFAG also highlighted that the high-level principles of IOC Resolution A-32/4 should continue to guide the development of the next biennium programme and budget proposals.
13. The Group welcomed the IOC Executive Secretary’s intention to strengthen Member States’ engagement in the strategic direction of the Commission and the suggestion to launch an external assessment of IOC’s governance and management processes with a view to streamlining operations and optimizing the use of increased resources so as to be truly fit for purpose of responding to increasing demands of its Member States.
14. IFAG requested the IOC Executive Secretary to hold regular and timely online meetings of the Group, scheduled according to the milestones of UNESCO programming and budgeting cycle, to keep Member States appraised of all developments and ensure a clear and transparent consultation process.

**III.**

**Action Plan in response to the IOS Evaluation   
of the IOC Strategic Positioning –**

**Update on Implementation**

1. IFAG welcomed the update on implementation as contained in the ‘Summary of proposed actions and updates on progress’ of document [IOC/EC-57/5.2.Doc(1)](https://oceanexpert.org/document/34545) and agreed with the IOC Executive Secretary’s assessment that, although some actions have already been implemented and work is in progress on others, a number of strategic actions will require further reflection and discussion with Member States as part of the new phase of the ‘IOC and the Future of the Ocean’ consultation.

**IV.  
Follow up to Resolution A-32/4 Part III – Governance and Working Methods**

**Draft Guidelines for the preparation and participation of Member States in the Biennial Elections for IOC Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons (Officers of the Commission) and Member States of the Executive Council**

1. The Group took note of the information contained in [IOC/EC-57/5.3.Doc(1)](https://oceanexpert.org/document/34561) as intended to highlight the specificities of IOC elections for Member States’ ease of reference, while the complete information is available in the IOC Statutes and Rules of Procedure, constituting the Commission’s regulatory framework. It welcomed the IOC Executive Secretary’s confirmation that an information session will be organised prior to the 33rd session of the IOC Assembly to facilitate Member States’ preparations.

*An Additional information on the revised programme and Budget 2024–2025 (42 C/5) as presented to the Group is attached hereafter in English only.*