

57th Session of the IOC Executive Council (25-28 June 2024)

Opening Statement by Yutaka Michida, IOC Chair

25 June 2024, UNESCO Headquarters

Dear distinguished delegates of IOC Executive Council, representatives from partner organisations, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and friends. It is my deepest pleasure and honour to stand here as the Chair of the Commission at the opening of the 57th Session of Executive Council of the Commission. This is my first opportunity to chair the session of governing body since having been elected as the Chair at the 32nd Assembly in June last year.

Before going to my statement, I would like to express my sincere welcome to our new Executive Secretary, Mr. Vidar Helgesen, who officially has come to the Commission on March 1. I do hope, and I believe it, that he will excellently lead the Secretariat under close cooperation with all Member States of the Commission based on his outstanding long experiences in international activities.

As we see the environment surrounding the Commission, our Commission's tasks have been expanding and becoming much more important in the world ocean, in promoting international cooperation and coordinating programmes in research, services and capacity building. To fulfil our mission and the objectives set collectively by the Member States, it is essential for us all to continue all aspects of our efforts and commitments with a spirits of cooperation and collaboration among Member States and the Secretariat.

We are now in the fourth year of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and the third year of the IOC Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029. During the last intersessional period since 32nd Assembly, there was a significant change improving financial situation of the Commission, which was a result of strong support by Member States that made it possible for the UNESCO Executive Board at its 216th session in May 2023 to recommend to increase the share of UNESCO regular budget allocation to IOC and the recommendation was approved at 42nd Session of UNESCO General Assembly.

I also express my sincere welcome to the United States of America re-joining the UNESCO in July 2023, which also resulted in increased allocation of budget to the Commission. The financial matters based on such new budget allocation from UNESCO will be discussed under relevant agenda item and also in a series of sessional financial committee.

With regard to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, we organised 2024 Ocean Decade Conference in April in Barcelona, Spain. It was successfully concluded with a wide range of outcomes, particularly, Barcelona Statement. I also participated in person in the Conference and totally enjoyed discussions including those at several satellite events. For such very successful Conference I, as the Chair of the Commission, would like to express my deepest appreciation to all partners engaged in the preparation and implementation of the Conference, in particular, the Government of Kingdom of Spain for hosting the Conference, Decade Advisory Board, members of Working Group for Vision 2030, Member States, scientists, participants, and the Secretariat.

In terms of science-policy interface in ocean related issues, the Commission has been facing strong and emerging expectation by the related communities to play a key role internationally, regionally, even nationally. It is one of the key points in UN Decade implementation, and there have been several ongoing initiatives related to science-policy interface. UN regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects has now been producing the 3rd edition of World Ocean Assessment, and BBNJ agreement was adopted in 2023, and so forth.

Mr. Ariel Troisi, the former Chair of the Commission, mentioned in his statement at the last Assembly that the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission has a crucial role to play in these global efforts as an intergovernmental platform for international collaboration and cooperation, as 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. I would like to exactly follow his statement in this regard.

At the present session of the Executive Council, we will discuss some of programme matters within the mandate of the Council, and the session is important in terms of implementation and management of key programmes in between the 32nd and 33rd Assemblies.

Now, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to our five vice Chairs, who have taken numerous responsibilities with their remarkable professionalism. Their dedication and hard work have been instrumental in our progress. I would like to express my utmost appreciation to all members of the Secretariat for their tireless efforts under the really excellent leaderships of our Executive Secretaries, Vladimir Ryabinin until the end of February and Vidar Helgesen since March, not only those at the Headquarter in Paris but also at regional offices across the world. I would like again to thank for Vladimir's huge and invaluable contributions during his term for about 10 years. During his term we

suffered from the situation of lack of financial resources to manage the Secretariat and whole programmes of the Commission, and in addition, we encountered an unforeseeable situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic for about 3 years since 2020. We could not keep a certain level of our activities during that period without his excellent leadership. In turn, we could launch successfully the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, despite such difficult environment around us, which with no doubt highly owed to his enthusiastic and continued efforts.

Finally I like to invite all of you to engage in open and constructive dialogue and discussion for the next 3 and half days, to share your expertise and experiences, and to seek common ground in pursuit of our shared goals. Let's get together with the Commission's spirit 'One Planet, One Ocean.' Discussions here will provide an effective platform to catalyse positive changes towards more sustainable future of the ocean and planet.

Thank you all, for your kind attention.