

IOC Circular Letter No 3015
(Available in English and French)

IOC/VH/IA/AC
25 October 2024

To : Official National Coordinating Bodies for liaison with the IOC

C.c. : Permanent Delegates/Observer Missions to UNESCO and
National Commissions for UNESCO in IOC Member States
Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission
Officers of Major Subsidiary Bodies of IOC

**Subject: Call for Nominations to the African and Adjacent Island States
Taskforce for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for
Sustainable Development (2021–2030)**

Following a call for nominations through Circular Letter No [2901](#) (2022), the first group of the African and Adjacent Island States Ocean Decade Taskforce (hereafter the Taskforce) was nominated for a two-year term that commenced on 22 November 2022 and ends on 22 November 2024. In its period of service, the inaugural Taskforce has successfully carried out a number of tasks, including:

- (i) Strengthening partnerships among key regional and international stakeholders;
- (ii) Developing the Terms of reference for the establishment of the Decade Coordination Office (DCO) for Africa at the IOCAFRICA Secretariat;
- (iii) Developing the Science and Knowledge for a Resilient and Sustainable Ocean Economy for Africa (SEAWARD Africa) Programme, which is an endorsed Ocean Decade Programme and serves as an umbrella programme for the Ocean Decade in Africa by aiming to coordinate Decade Actions working in Africa;
- (iv) Facilitating co-design and endorsement of several Decade Actions that advance the implementation of the Ocean Decade Africa roadmap; and
- (v) Representing the Ocean Decade and created awareness of the Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap in several fora in and outside the continent.

By this circular letter, I am inviting nominations for experts for the next two-year term of the Taskforce, from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2026, a multi-stakeholder body charged with overseeing and advancing the implementation of the [Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap](#). The Taskforce plays a pivotal role in fostering collaboration and coordination among stakeholders, ensuring the creation of an enabling environment to successfully co-design and co-deliver Decade Actions across the region.

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The new members of the Taskforce will be nominated through an open call for nominations. The Taskforce will comprise up to 15 experts from governments, the private sector, philanthropy, civil society, Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) and the scientific community from the Africa and Adjacent Island States. At least five current members from those who have expressed interest in a second term will be included in the expert group for the second term of the Taskforce, and new members will be added to reach a total of 15 expert members. Five additional seats will be reserved for regional organizations, UN agencies and NGOs to be identified through consultation with the IOCAFRICA Officers.

Proposals for nominations may be submitted by Member States of UNESCO-IOC, the United Nations or United Nations entities, as well as by intergovernmental organizations. Self-nominations are also encouraged in order to facilitate nominations from non-governmental and private sector entities.

In my capacity as IOC Executive Secretary, I will select the expert members of the Taskforce, with the technical support of the IOCAFRICA Secretariat and the Decade Coordination Unit, after consultation with the IOCAFRICA Chairperson and three Vice Chairpersons.

I will ensure that the proposed members possess the necessary skills, knowledge, influence, and impartiality required to align with the vision and objectives of the Decade. These members must be capable of fulfilling the responsibilities set out in the terms of reference of the Taskforce and their skills and expertise will cover one or several of the following areas:

- (i) Intergovernmental processes and coordination;
- (ii) The ocean aspects of sustainable development;
- (iii) Ocean Science ;
- (iv) Science-policy/decision/end-user interface and engagement;
- (v) Ocean Economy/ finance/partnerships;
- (vi) Innovation/ technology/ infrastructure development;
- (vii) Capacity development, training and transfer of marine technology, education, communications and outreach;
- (viii) Resource mobilisation and development of large-scale multi/inter-disciplinary international programmes/projects.

Experts will be selected taking into account expertise, geographical, generational and gender balance and will serve on a voluntary and unpaid basis. Members of the African Ocean Decade Taskforce will serve on a two-year term, renewable once for a second term, with staggered terms of office.

The Taskforce works mainly remotely (teleconferences, virtual meetings). A physical meeting is anticipated at least once a year, resources permitting. The IOCAFRICA Secretariat will act as the Secretariat to the Taskforce.

The nomination form for taskforce members is available at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SS7PWXY>. The call for nominations will be open until 13 December 2024.

With the assurances of my highest consideration, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

[signature]

Vidar Helgesen
Executive Secretary

Enclosure: Terms of reference of the African and Adjacent Island States Ocean Decade Taskforce

1/ Terms of reference of the African and Adjacent Island States Ocean Decade Taskforce

Introduction

The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, 'Ocean Decade' (2021-2030), is guided by the vision of 'the science we need for the ocean we want.' This initiative offers a comprehensive global framework to foster innovative ocean-based solutions to address societal challenges and promote sustainable development. Given the critical role of Africa's ocean resources in driving sustainable progress, the Ocean Decade presents a valuable opportunity for the region to enhance its efforts towards sustainable development.

In the foundational work leading up to the Ocean Decade, which took place from 2018 to 2020, a significant Regional Consultation for Africa and Adjacent Island States was convened in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 2020. This event successfully brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including government officials, researchers, and community representatives, all committed to advancing the sustainable management of ocean resources. Following this consultation, experts developed a comprehensive Regional Gap Analysis report, carefully identifying critical areas requiring focus and enhancement. Building on the insights derived from this analysis, early 2022 featured a series of dynamic multi-stakeholder pre-conference workshops. These gatherings provided a robust platform for in-depth discussions, allowing participants to examine the findings thoroughly and collaboratively identify priority actions for ocean science and management. These collective efforts culminated in the prominent "African Conference on Priority Setting & Partnership Development for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development," held in May 2022. This conference served as a forum for knowledge exchange and a pivotal milestone in strengthening international collaboration. It resulted in the launching of the Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap, a strategic blueprint to foster cooperative initiatives that enhance sustainable ocean health throughout the region. This roadmap represents a crucial step forward in guiding the region toward a more sustainable future for its ocean resources.

The Africa Roadmap articulates a clear vision and a strategic plan that unites diverse stakeholders around a common set of nine priorities. With robust support and active engagement from various regional actors, we are confident that these priorities will evolve into impactful Ocean Decade Actions—comprising Decade programmes and projects—through a dynamic process of co-design and co-delivery in the coming years.

Recognising the need for accelerated progress in implementing the Ocean Decade in Africa, the IOCAFRICA secretariat established the inaugural African Ocean Decade Taskforce in November 2022. This Taskforce was created to energise the efforts outlined in the Africa Roadmap, foster collaborative partnerships, and amplify endorsed Ocean Decade actions across the continent. Over nearly two years of operation, the Taskforce has made significant strides, including:

- (i) Strengthening collaborations among critical regional and international stakeholders.
- (ii) Developing the Terms of Reference for establishing the Decade Coordination Office (DCO) for Africa at the IOCAFRICA Secretariat.
- (iii) Launching the Science and Knowledge for a Resilient and Sustainable Ocean Economy in Africa (SEAWARD Africa) Programme, an endorsed Ocean Decade Programme that serves as a comprehensive framework for coordinating Decade Actions in Africa.
- (iv) Facilitating the co-design and endorsement of several Decade Actions that align with the goals of the Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap.
- (v) Actively representing the Ocean Decade and raising awareness of the Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap across multiple platforms.

Objectives of the Africa Regional Taskforce

The primary objective of the African Ocean Decade Taskforce is to convene regional stakeholders to coordinate and advance the implementation of the Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap. This ensures that ownership of the Africa Roadmap is systematically reconfirmed and strengthened among African nations, regional organisations, indigenous organisations, and fora.

Mandate

The African Ocean Decade Taskforce will oversee and drive the implementation of the Africa Roadmap, ensuring the necessary environment for its success. The Taskforce is essential in coordinating stakeholders as they unite to execute the Africa Roadmap, co-designing and delivering Decade Actions. Its specific objectives are to:

- Provide strategic vision and clear direction for targeted actions,
- Create an enabling environment that transforms the Africa Roadmap into impactful co-designed Decade Actions across various levels, from coordination to research and policy initiatives,
- Facilitate the creation of co-designed programs, projects, and initiatives for submission in response to Calls for Decade Actions,
- Ensure effective communication about the Ocean Decade in Africa and the Africa Roadmap among existing networks, institutions, experts, and stakeholders,
- Identify and engage in multisector/multistakeholder outreach activities to broaden regional involvement, raising awareness of the Decade. This will include tailored mechanisms to involve priority groups such as Indigenous and local knowledge holders, Early Career Ocean Professionals, ports authorities, maritime services, businesses, and philanthropy,
- Establish specific thematic working groups as necessary to advance our objectives.

The African Ocean Decade Taskforce fulfills its objectives by working closely with the IOC's Sub Commission for Africa & the Adjacent Island States (IOCAFRICA) and the Decade Coordination Unit/IOC Secretariat. Within this cooperative framework, the Taskforce and its members have the flexibility to tailor detailed mandates that align with regional circumstances, ensuring an effective and appropriate response.

Composition and selection process

The African Ocean Decade Taskforce is poised to include up to 15 expert members, each serving in their individual capacities. These members will be drawn from diverse sectors, including government, private industry, philanthropy, civil society, and the scientific community. Additionally, five members will represent regional organisations, such as UN agencies, intergovernmental organisations, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to be identified through thorough consultations with the IOCAFRICA Officers.

Proposals for nominations will be welcomed from IOC-UNESCO, United Nations Member States, and intergovernmental organisations, and self-nominations will be permitted to encourage contributions from non-governmental entities. The selection process will carefully consider the necessary expertise and considerations for geographic, generational, and gender balance. It is important to note that the expert members will serve on a voluntary basis and in their personal capacities without representing their respective institutions or countries.

Members of the Taskforce will be expected to allocate sufficient time to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and will be encouraged to seek authorisation from their employers for participation in this vital endeavour. The anticipated membership term will be two years, with eligibility for renewal for a second mandate. To foster continuity and knowledge sharing, members' terms will be staggered,

thus facilitating an exchange of information and mentoring opportunities between both current and incoming members.

Operational procedures for the taskforce process will be collaboratively defined with the Chair and its Vice-Chairs, ensuring a structured and efficient approach to advancing ocean governance in the African region.

The IOC Executive Secretary with the technical support of the IOCAFRICA Secretariat and the Decade Coordination Unit, will select the expert members of the Taskforce following consultation with the IOCAFRICA Chair and three Vice Chairs.

The IOC Executive Secretary will ensure that the proposed members possess the necessary skills, knowledge, influence, and impartiality required to align with the vision and objectives of the Decade. These members must be capable of undertaking the responsibilities outlined in the terms of reference and their skills and expertise will encompass at least one of the following areas:

- (i) Intergovernmental processes and coordination.
- (ii) The ocean aspects of sustainable development.
- (iii) Ocean science (natural/social dimensions);
- (iv) Science-policy/decision /end-user interface and engagement.
- (v) Ocean Economy/finance/partnerships.
- (vi) Innovation/technology/infrastructure development.
- (vii) Capacity development, training and transfer of marine technology, education, communications and outreach; and
- (viii) Development of large-scale multi/inter-disciplinary international programmes/projects.

Leadership and Governance

The African Ocean Decade Taskforce will appoint a Chair and two Vice-Chairs from its members for a term of one year (12 months). The selection of the Chair and Vice-Chairs will follow a rotational approach that ensures gender and geographical balance. IOCAFRICA will serve as the Secretariat, collaborating with the Decade Coordination Unit and IOC Secretariat to provide robust administrative, technical, and editorial support to the African Ocean Decade Taskforce.

Working modality

The African Ocean Decade Taskforce will convene four (4) times each year, with a minimum of one (1) in-person meeting annually whenever feasible. Additional in-person or virtual meetings will be scheduled as necessary. The Chair of the African Ocean Decade Taskforce holds primary responsibility for developing the Taskforce Meeting Agenda and leading the meetings. All Taskforce Members are encouraged to propose agenda items. Attendance at the in-person meeting and participation in at least 75% of the online meetings is mandatory for expertmembers to continue in their role in the Taskforce. The Taskforce may also invite external experts as necessary to address specific issues or tasks, with the decision to invite such experts resting solely with the Taskforce. The Secretariat will prepare and distribute the minutes of the Regional Taskforce meetings to all members.

Furthermore, the Taskforce will provide an annual report to the IOCAFRICA Officers and deliver updates during the biannual sessions of the IOC's Sub Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States.

Duration

The mandate of this African Ocean Decade Taskforce starts on 1 January 2025 and will last for two (2) years, up to 31 December 2026.