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Intergovernmental
Oceanographic
Commission



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**

IOC-FAO Invitation Letter
(IOC Circular Letter N° 3012)
(Available in English only)

IOC/VH/HE/ss
15 November 2024

To : Official National Coordinating Bodies for liaison with the IOC, and
Permanent Representatives to the Food and Agriculture Organization of
the United Nations

Cc : Permanent Delegations/Observer Missions to UNESCO, and
National Commissions for UNESCO of IOC Member States
IOC Officers
FAO Decentralized Offices
FAO Representatives
Officers of IOC Intergovernmental Subsidiary Bodies
Executive Director, SCOR
Executive Director, ICS
Relevant Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations

**Subject: Seventeenth Session of the IOC-FAO Intergovernmental Panel on
Harmful Algal Blooms (IPHAB-XVI), 18–20 March 2025, UNESCO, Paris**

We have the pleasure to invite you, in your capacity as representative of your country or organization, to take part in the forthcoming IPHAB-XVII session, which will be hosted by UNESCO-IOC at its Headquarters in Paris.

The Panel was established by IOC Assembly Resolution XVI-4 in March 1991 (Annex 1). At its Thirty-second Session, June 2023, the IOC Assembly decided to convene a seventeenth session of the IPHAB in order to maintain and accelerate momentum in the development and implementation of the Harmful Algal Bloom Programme (see Annex 2 hereafter).

In April 2024, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, after many years of collaborations on Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) and toxins related work, joined IOC to host the IPHAB Secretariat.

The basic reason to form the IPHAB was the need to improve the managerial, scientific and financial resources available for the implementation of a global HAB Programme. A primary task is still to identify the required resources, so that the international community jointly can continue to implement activities addressing capacity building, international cooperative research, and communication networks.

For those Member States that have not yet declared their intention to participate actively in the HAB Programme but wish to do so, they are invited to send a letter of intent to the IOC Executive Secretary or the Assistant Director-General/Director of the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Division and to nominate a representative to the Panel. The Panel shall include representatives of IOC regional or other subsidiary bodies, and other interested international organizations, in particular the Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research (SCOR).

With reference to section 3 of the IPHAB Terms of Reference, we would like to remind that the IPHAB sessions are intergovernmental as indicated by the name. Therefore, for the IPHAB session to be effective, it is essential that nominated representatives have responsibilities in HAB

science or management activities at the national level, and that their designation on the Panel are acknowledged by the [National Coordinating Body for Liaison with IOC](#) or [FAO](#).

IPHAB sessions are conducted in English. The Executive Summary for the session as well as the adopted decisions and recommendations will be translated in the working languages of the IOC and FAO for the consideration of their respective governing body: the IOC Assembly in June 2025 and the 37th session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries in 2026. The documentation for the session will be sent to the IPHAB members in due time and be available at the IPHAB home page at <https://prod.hab.ioc-unesco.org/ioc-intergovernmental-panel-on-harmful-algal-blooms-iphab/>.

At this session, the Panel will review progress and actions on issues raised at the last session in 2023 ([IOC/FAO-IPHAB XVI](#)). The draft Provisional Agenda for the session annexed hereafter remains open to other priorities expressed by Member States by e-mail by 1 March 2025 at the latest (att. the IPHAB Technical Secretary: Mr Henrik Enevoldsen, h.enevoldsen@unesco.org for IOC Members, and Ms Esther Garrido Gamarro, IPHAB@fao.org for FAO Members). Member States who wish to update their representative to the programme are invited to inform IOC and FAO in the same way.

As an outcome of the session, IPHAB will recommend a workplan for the IOC HAB Programme and activities for the period 2026–2027, which will be presented to the IOC and FAO governing bodies at their next sessions.

By this letter, we are requesting additional information to be received by 1 March 2025 at the latest. It concerns:

1. Composition of your delegation at the Seventeenth Session of IPHAB;
2. Comments on the draft Agenda and suggestions for supplementary items requiring attention;
3. Nominations for IPHAB Chair and one Vice-chair. Elected Officers have a two-year mandate between two sessions, renewable once. The current Officers, Dr Philipp Hess (France) as Chair and Dr Maggie Broadwater (USA) as Vice-chair will complete their first mandate at the close of IPHAB-XVII and are therefore eligible for re-election. Candidates should submit their names and contact information, as well as a *curriculum vitae* and a short statement outlining their views on the future of IPHAB. Nominations should be emailed to the IPHAB Technical Secretary, Mr Henrik Enevoldsen, h.enevoldsen@unesco.org for IOC and Ms Esther Garrido Gamarro, IPHAB@fao.org for FAO. Elected Officers of the IPHAB are expected to actively work together with the Secretariat in implementing the workplan adopted by the Panel. They may need to participate in meetings, on-line discussions during the intersessional period of the Panel and be involved in the drafting of documents, and other activities in support of the IPHAB.

With the assurance of our highest consideration, we remain,

Yours sincerely,



Vidar Helgesen

Executive Secretary of IOC
Assistant Director-General of UNESCO



Manuel Barange

FAO Assistant Director-General and Director
of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division

Enclosures (3): 1/ Terms of Reference of the ad hoc IOC-FAO intergovernmental Panel on Harmful Algal Blooms (Resolution XVI-4, 1991)
2/ Decision A-32/3.4.3 and summary of discussions
3/ Draft Provisional Agenda (IOC-FAO/IPHAB-XVII/1 prov.(draft))

1/ Terms of Reference of the ad hoc IOC-FAO intergovernmental Panel on Harmful Algal Blooms (Resolution XVI-4, 1991)

The IOC Assembly, at its Sixteenth Session, Paris, 7–21 March 1991, adopted the following resolution with respect to the formation of an *Ad hoc* Intergovernmental Panel on Harmful Algal Blooms in order to identify adequate resources for a sufficiently broad programme to solve some of the real problems caused by algal blooms.

Resolution XVI-4

AD HOC INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission,

Recalling that the IOC, at the Fourteenth Session of its Assembly, endorsed the development of the sub-programme on Harmful Algal Blooms, and that the Twenty-third Executive Council, through its Resolution EC-XXIII.1, endorsed the programme development so far,

Being aware of the increasing socio-economic risks posed by toxic algae and harmful algal blooms to marine organisms, fisheries, aquaculture, human health and the coastal environment,

Approves the formation of an *Ad hoc* Intergovernmental Panel on Harmful Algal Blooms, with the Terms of Reference shown in the Annex hereto;

Invites FAO to co-sponsor the *Ad hoc* Panel;

Invites Member States which intend to be involved in the implementation of a programme on Harmful Algal Blooms to nominate their representatives for the *Ad hoc* Panel and inform the Secretary IOC accordingly;

Decides to review, at the Seventeenth Session of the Assembly, the Terms of Reference of the *Ad hoc* Panel, in conjunction with the Commission's review of the overall organization of the OSLR Programme;

Instructs the Secretary to convene the First Session of the *Ad hoc* Panel as soon as possible.

Annex

Terms of Reference of the *Ad hoc* Intergovernmental Panel on Harmful Algal Blooms

1. FUNCTIONS

The *Ad hoc* Intergovernmental Panel on Harmful Algal Blooms is established to meet the scientific, managerial, implementation, and resource needs of the Harmful Algal Blooms Programme.

The Panel will carry out the following functions:

- 1.1 Review and identify programme requirements;
- 1.2 Promote efficient and cost-effective implementation of the HAB programme and prepare recommendations on this implementation to the Assembly and Executive Council;
- 1.3 Identify the resources necessary to meet HAB programme needs;
- 1.4 Ensure effective interaction and communication with regional intergovernmental (e.g., ICES, ICSEM and GFCM) as well as regional and global non-governmental (e.g., SCOR) organizations involved in research on toxic algae and harmful algal blooms; and
- 1.5 Report to the Twenty-fifth Session of the Executive Council and the Seventeenth Session of the Assembly.

2. COMPOSITION

The membership of the *Ad hoc* Panel is open to Member States of IOC (and FAO, if it agrees to co- sponsor the Panel) which have declared to the Secretary IOC their involvement or intention to participate in the development and implementation of the Harmful Algal Bloom Programme on a global, regional, or national scale. The Panel shall include the Chairman of the OSLR Guiding Group of Experts, representatives of IOC regional and other subsidiary bodies, and of other interested international organizations, particularly SCOR. Invitations to participate in Panel activities may be extended to scientific experts at the request of the Panel and with the approval of the Secretary of the IOC.

3. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSIONS

- 3.1 The Panel will, prior to the closure of each Session, elect from its members a Chairman who will serve in that capacity until the closure of the next Session.
- 3.2 The Sessions shall, in principle, be arranged without financial costs to IOC. Sessions will be conducted, documentation will be provided, and the report of each session will be prepared in English and in other working languages of the Commission as appropriate and required.
- 3.3 Secretariat support for the Panel will be provided by the Secretary IOC.

** The IPHAB is by decision of the IOC Assembly permanently established and the prefix ad-hoc does no longer apply*

3.4.3 IOC-FAO Intergovernmental Panel on Harmful Algal Blooms: 16th Session of IPHAB, FAO, Rome, 27–29 March 2023

161. Mr Joe Silke, past Chair of the IOC-FAO Intergovernmental Panel on Harmful Algal Blooms (IPHAB), presented the main outputs of the Sixteenth Session of the Panel (IPHAB-XVI), which was held at FAO Headquarters on 27–29 March 2023. He highlighted that that this was the first session with FAO back as cosponsor of IPHAB as set out in IOC Assembly Resolution XVI-4.

162. The Panel reviewed the actions completed during the intersessional period, noted the progress made and that several of the UN Ocean Decade challenges are being addressed. The Panel concluded that the Decisions and Recommendations of the Fifteenth session (March 2021) had been implemented highly satisfactorily within the available resources.

163. The Panel took 11 decisions and endorsed two recommendations for the consideration of the IOC Assembly at its thirty-second session, and of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI). The decisions concern: (i) Regional HAB Programme Development taking into account the difference of support for the various groups and networks depending on whether they are affiliated to a regional IOC subsidiary body or not; (ii) the continuation of the Task Team on the Early Detection, Warning and Forecasting of HAB Events; with new terms of reference; (iii) the continuation of the Task Team on the development of the Harmful Algal Information System and a periodic Global Harmful Algal Bloom Status Report with new terms of reference; (iv) the continuation of the Task Team on a Global Ciguatera Strategy for Improved Research and Management with new terms of reference with updated terms of references; (v) the continuation of the Task Team on Harmful Algae and Desalination of Seawater to formulate a proposal for a joint FAO/WHO water safety risk assessment for drinking water coming from desalination plants; (vi) the continuation of the Task Team on Biotoxin Monitoring, Management and Regulations with new terms of reference; (vii) the continuation of the Task Team on Algal Taxonomy with new terms of reference; (viii) the continuation of the Task Team on Fish Killing Microalgae and Ecosystem Effects with new terms of reference; (ix) establishment of a Task Team on HAB Communication; (x) IOC-SCOR GlobalHAB beyond 2025; and (xi) the development of HAB Solutions (HAB-S) an UN Ocean Decade Programme Proposal.

164. In addition to the above, the Intergovernmental Panel submitted to the Assembly its planned intersessional activities in the form of a workplan and budget for the IOC HAB Programme 2024–2025 and recommended to it the continuation of IPHAB as a major technical subsidiary body with unchanged terms of reference.

165. The past Chair of IPHAB informed the Assembly that the Memorandum of Understanding between FAO, IAEA, IOC and WHO on Ciguatera Poisoning, presented to the 30th session of the Assembly as IOC-XXX/Inf.4, and subsequently approved by the UNESCO's Executive Board, had not been signed by WHO and therefore remains on hold. He also informed the Assembly that a MoU with FAO on IPHAB was being considered by all parties or as part of a wider agreement with UNESCO, as a follow-up to IOC Assembly Resolution XVI-4.

166. The Assembly was informed that Dr Philipp Hess (France) was elected as Chair and Dr Maggie Broadwater (USA) was elected as Vice-Chair.

167. The representatives of seven Member States took the floor.

168. The Assembly warmly welcomed FAO back as a partner in IPHAB.

169. The Assembly highlighted the importance of further development predictive modelling of HAB events and recognised how changes in the ocean-climate nexus and the interaction between multiple ocean stressors, including ocean acidification, eutrophication and deoxygenation, are closely linked with changes in HAB event occurrences and their impacts on coastal ecosystems and the services of these to society. The Assembly welcomed the initiative by IPHAB to frame

societal priority HAB challenges in the UN Decade HAB-Solutions Programme and thereby broaden partnerships and strengthen co-design for better mitigation of HAB impacts on marine ecosystem services (including aquaculture, seafood safety/public health, recreation & tourism, drinking water, biodiversity). The Assembly confirmed the focus of the Decade HAB-Solutions Programme on novel and transformational technologies, on demands for sharing of HAB data, and on strategies for safe seafood, drinking water and healthy coastal ecosystems.

170. The following Member States chose to provide records of their plenary intervention on this agenda item for the informational annex to the meeting report: Chile, Colombia, France, Japan, and USA.

171. The Assembly adopted Decision A-32/3.4.3.

IOC Decision A-32/3.4.3

Harmful Algal Blooms

The Assembly,

Having considered the Executive Summary Report of the 16th session (Rome, Italy, 27–29 March 2023) of the IOC-FAO Intergovernmental Panel on Harmful Algal Blooms (IPHAB),

Endorses the Executive Summary Report of IPHAB-XVI and the recommendations contained therein (IOC-FAO/IPHAB-XVI/3s);

Notes that the regular budget for these activities will be identified as part of the overall Resolution on Governance, Programming and Budgeting matters of the Commission.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

**Seventeenth Session of the IOC-FAO Intergovernmental Panel
on Harmful Algal Blooms**

18–20 March 2025

DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. OPENING

1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS

1.2 DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE IOC ASSEMBLY and FAO

2. ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

2.1 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

2.2 DESIGNATION OF RAPPORTEUR

3. SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE IOC HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM PROGRAMME, FAO HAB ACTIVITIES AND THE IPHAB STRATEGY

4. DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE INTERSESSIONAL PERIOD

4.1 CHAIR IPHAB AND TECHNICAL SECRETARY'S SUMMARY REPORT

4.1.1 Implementation of IPHAB-XVI decisions

4.2 HAB Capacity Building

4.3 REGIONAL HAB WORKING GROUPS

4.3.1. IOC/IOCARIBE-ANCA

4.3.2. IOC/WESTPAC-HAB

4.3.3. IOC/WESTPAC-Toxic Marine Organisms

4.3.4. FANSA

4.3.5. HANA

4.3.6. IOCAFRICA

4.4. IPHAB XVI TASK TEAMS

4.4.1. Task Team on the Early Detection, Warning and Forecasting of HAB Events

4.4.2. Task Team on the development of the Harmful algal Information System and a periodic Global Harmful Algal Bloom Status Report

4.4.3. Task Team on a Global Ciguatera Strategy for Improved Research and Management

4.4.4. Task Team on Harmful Algae and Desalination of Seawater to formulate a proposal for a joint FAO WHO water safety risk assessment for drinking water coming from desalination plants

4.4.5. Task Team on Biotxin Monitoring, Management and Regulations

4.4.6. Task Team on Algal Taxonomy

4.4.7. Task Team on Fish Killing Microalgae and Ecosystem Effects

4.4.8. Task Team on HAB Communication

4.5. GlobalHAB

4.6. HAB SOLUTIONS (HAB-S): AN UN OCEAN DECADE PROGRAMME

4.7. OTHER ACTIVITIES

4.7.1. ISSHA and the ICHA

5. REVIEW AND FINALIZATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SESSION

6. WORKPLAN FOR 2026–2027 INCLUDING OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES AND NEEDS

7. OPERATION OF THE IPHAB

8. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10. ADOPTION OF EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

11. CLOSURE