

**IOC and the Future of the Ocean: Phase 1 Consultation of Member State
Focus Group Discussions
Information Note (10 March 2025)**

This Information Note outlines the scope and format of five Focus Group discussions (FGD) with participation by IOC Regional Subsidiary bodies and the Sustainable Ocean Planning and Management (SOPM) Working Group in the 'IOC and Future of the Ocean' Phase 1 consultation process.

Background

At its 32nd session in 2023, the IOC Assembly discussed the long-term sustainability and expansion of the IOC in view of the fast-evolving developments in ocean science and action. In Decision A-32/5, the Assembly called for a consultation on how IOC could optimally facilitate activities of Member States and other stakeholders in science-based sustainable ocean planning, ocean science support to implementation of UN environmental conventions and frameworks, and development of a sustainable ocean economy.

The Executive Council further considered the consultation process at its 57th Session in 2024 and resolved that the 'IOC and Future of the Ocean' consultation would take place over three years synchronized with the calendar of IOC governing body sessions. Resolution EC-57/2 of the Council contained the structure of the consultation process with the following phases:

- (i) Phase 1: June 2024–June 2025: Needs in knowledge, decision-making and action with results to be presented to the 33rd Session of the IOC Assembly in 2025.
- (ii) Phase 2: June 2025–June 2026: Dialogue on the effectiveness of multilateral ocean frameworks with results to be presented to 58th Session of the IOC Executive Council in 2026.
- (iii) Phase 3: June 2026–June 2027: IOC and the Future of the Ocean with results to be presented to the 34th Session of the IOC Assembly in 2027.

Resolution EC-57/2 further states that the consultation exercise will be carried out in consultation with IOC programs, Regional Subsidiary Bodies, Member States (including through the IOC Intersessional Financial Advisory Group and IOC Working Group on Sustainable Ocean Planning and Management), and other relevant stakeholders.

Format

The purpose of the FGDs is to solicit, in respect of each IOC region and the SOPM Working Group, perspectives on the following questions:

1. Which aspects of ocean science (up to a maximum of six aspects) does the group feel represent the greatest unmet needs in their region (see list in Annex)?
2. What are the negative impacts of failing to meet these needs for sustainable ocean planning, contributing to UN frameworks and sustainable ocean economy?
3. What efforts are being made to mitigate these negative consequences including support provided by other agencies, multilateral development banks, private sector or others?
4. How do FGD participants recommend that IOC prioritizes addressing unmet needs?

Each FGD is expected to include an average of 8 participants and to last 90 minutes. The discussion will be led by a member of IOC staff, Alison Clausen. Participant contributions will be synthesised and individual contributions anonymized. The results of FGD discussions will be combined with the results of an online survey and interviews and reported to the Assembly in June 2025.

For further information please contact: Alison Clausen (aclausen@ioc.org).

Annex: Indicative List of Elements of Ocean Science Value Chain relevant to IOC MS

Availability and Accessibility of Ocean Observations and Data Infrastructure	
<i>Ocean data and observations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ocean Observation Infrastructure and Systems • Remote Sensing and Satellite Systems • Ocean Data Collection Systems • Ocean Prediction and Forecasting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ocean Data Management • Ocean Data Repositories and Platforms • Marine Data Dissemination • Data Reporting and Standardization • Marine Scientific Research Support
Availability and accessibility of data, scientific research and knowledge	
Marine Ecosystem Functions and Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Biodiversity • Marine Genetic Resources • Marine Ecosystem Functioning and Connectivity • Biogeochemical Processes • Chemical Oceanography • Physical Oceanography • Biological Oceanography • Nutrient Cycles • Marine Ecosystem Functions and Trophic Dynamics and Structure • Primary Production • Sedimentation Processes Carbon Sequestration Marine Geology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Geology and Geophysics • Hydrothermal Vent Systems • Tectonic Movements and Seabed Dynamics • Marine Seismology Economic Values of Marine Resource Utilization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Fisheries and Mariculture • Marine Bioresources, Pharmaceuticals & Cosmetics • Marine Renewable Energy and Energy Solutions • Deep-Sea Mining • Economic Values of Marine Resource Ocean Drilling (Oil and Gas) 	Ocean Climate Interactions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ocean Warming • Ocean Acidification • Ocean Deoxygenation • Sea-Level Rise • Other Ocean-Climate Interactions • Ocean Stratification Changes • Ocean Circulation Dynamics • Air-Sea Interactions Ocean health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat Loss and Ecosystem Alteration • Marine Pollution (Plastic, Noise, Light or other Pollutants) • Eutrophication and Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) • Alien and Invasive Species Marine Geohazards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tsunamis • Hurricanes and Extreme Coastal Weather Events • Coastal Flooding and Storm Surge Human health and well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Security and Nutrition Values of Marine Environments • Human Health and Well-Being –Cultural Values of Marine Environments • Indigenous and local knowledge systems
Availability and Accessibility of Applications, Products and Tools for Policy and Decision making	
Ocean health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Area Based Management Tools • Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) • National Climate Policy Support • National Biodiversity Policy Support • Other National Policy Support • Other Spatial or Temporal Visualisation Tools • Knowledge Synthesis and Assessment Products • Ocean Hazard Prediction and Preparedness • Climate Projections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerability and Resilience Analyses and Adaptation Planning • Other Projections, Modelling and Forecasting • Early Warning Systems and Disaster Risk Preparedness and Reduction Ocean Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Engineering • Marine Innovation and Technology Development • Ocean Exploration Technologies • Marine Geoengineering
Availability and Accessibility of Cross-cutting support elements (cross-cutting)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Strengthening • Capacity Development for Individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ocean Literacy for Societal Actors