



**INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION**  
(of UNESCO)

**Thirty-third Session of the Assembly**  
UNESCO, 25 June–3 July 2025

Item 4.8 of the Provisional Agenda

**UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN DECADE OF OCEAN SCIENCE  
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Summary

Pursuant to Resolution EC-55/1, this document provides information on the key outcomes of Ocean Decade implementation across the four main pillars of activity: (i) Decade Actions; (ii) Governance and coordination structures and informal working groups; (iii) Resource mobilization; and (iv) Stakeholder engagement and outreach over the period from July 2023 to May 2025, including the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference. It identifies remaining challenges and opportunities across the pillars and concludes with a vision and outlook for future years of the Decade. An addendum to this document provides more detailed information.

Financial and administrative implications: paragraph 20.

The proposed decision: The Assembly is invited to consider the draft resolution referenced as A-33/[4.8] in the Provisional Action Paper IOC/A-33/AP Prov.



## Introduction

1. In December 2017, building on the efforts of IOC Member States and the IOC Secretariat, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030 (hereafter, the Ocean Decade). The Ocean Decade is a once in a life-time opportunity to deliver a step-change in the generation and use of ocean science. It will influence how countries invest in and participate in science and innovation to embrace societal goals and align research investment to contribute to common goals including the 2030 Agenda.
2. In accordance with Resolution A/RES/72/73 of the UN General Assembly, and IOC Resolution EC-LI.1, after the preparatory phase of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) reported upon in documents [IOC-XXX/2 Annex 3](#) (2019), [IOC/EC-53/4.1.Doc\(1\) Rev.](#) (2020), [IOC/A-31/3.7.Doc\(2\)](#) (2021), and [IOC/EC-55/4.1.Doc\(1\)](#) (2022), the period from July 2023 to May 2025 saw continued intense activity related to the implementation of the Ocean Decade.
3. Building on past efforts, significant achievements were realized in terms of engagement and visibility, continued growth of a strong and diverse portfolio of Decade Actions, and strengthening of the governance and coordination of the Decade. The 2024 Ocean Decade Conference (Barcelona, April 2024) was a highlight of the period.
4. 2025 marks the mid-term of implementation of the Ocean Decade. As foreseen in the Implementation Plan, a mid-term evaluation of the Ocean Decade has been carried out focusing on measures to improve the delivery and impact of the Decade. A summary of the evaluation and the management response to the evaluation findings are contained in IOC/A-33/4.8.Doc(2).

## Decade Actions

5. Four additional Calls for Decade Actions were launched during this period. Call for Decade Actions No. 06/2023 was launched in October 2023 and closed on 31 January 2024 focusing on engagement of partners in Africa and Caribbean. Call for Decade Actions No. 07/2024 was launched in April 2024 focusing on the solicitation of contributions of in-kind and financial resources to reinforce existing Decade Actions and coordination structures, and to identify initiatives to be included as part of the Ocean Decade Capacity Development Facility. Calls for Decade Actions No. 08/2024 and No. 09/2025 that launched on 15 October 2024 and 15 April 2025 respectively had a focus on new Decade programmes to contribute to priorities identified in the [Barcelona Statement](#). All Calls for Decade Actions also solicited projects to attach to already endorsed Decade Programmes.
6. As of May 2025, the Calls for Decade Actions have resulted in the endorsement of 59 programmes, 535 projects and 109 contributions. The portfolio of Decade Actions covers all ocean basins and all 10 Decade Challenges, albeit with a lower proportion of Decade Actions related to sustainable blue food (Challenge 3), coastal resilience (Challenge 6), and ocean data sharing and infrastructure (Challenge 8).
7. During this period, two iterations of the Ocean Decade Monitoring and Evaluation Framework were launched. At the time of preparation of this working document, only data for July 2023 to June 2024 monitoring and evaluation exercise was available and is reported below. Additional reporting for the period July 2024 to June 2025 will be provided in an addendum to this document.
8. In terms of the geography of implementation of Decade Actions, developed countries remain predominant. The United States, France, Canada, United Kingdom and Spain are the countries where the most Decade Actions reported implementing activities over the 2023–2024 period. Between 15 and 20% of Decade Actions reported that they had implemented activities in Africa and SIDS respectively in the 2023–2024 period. However, leadership of Decade Actions in Africa and SIDS remains persistently low at 6% and 2.6% respectively.

9. Concerted and targeted efforts are continuing to increase engagement in SIDS and Africa including through the support and mentoring of partners to co-design Decade Actions. Supported by the Africa Decade Coordination Office housed within the IOC Sub-Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States (IOCAFRICA) Secretariat, the Africa Ocean Decade Taskforce has continued to oversee implementation of the Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap and has led development of a new Ocean Decade programme focusing on sustainable ocean management in Africa. A mentoring course for new Decade Actions commenced in April 2025. Under the leadership of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE), a Tropical Americas and Caribbean Taskforce has been established and oversaw preparation of a regional roadmap that was launched in December 2024. The Pacific Islands Decade Collaborative Centre was launched in September 2023, housed within the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science and a Pacific Islands Regional Roadmap was launched at the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference. The Capacity Development Facility has been reinvigorated with additional human resources and will provide real-time matchmaking services to meet capacity development needs with a focus on SIDS, LDCs and Early Career Ocean Professionals.

10. Coverage across ocean basins is becoming more balanced with increases in activity in the Mediterranean Sea, the South Pacific and the South Atlantic ocean basins. A high proportion of Decade Actions are being implemented in ocean basins without decentralized coordination structures in place, including the Atlantic and Arctic ocean basins and Mediterranean Sea highlighting the need to continue to reinforce the network of decentralised coordination structures for the Decade.

11. In terms of leadership of Decade Actions, the majority are led by research institutes and NGOs. Lead institutions are based in 76 countries, although there remains a strong bias towards developed countries in terms of the home country of lead institutions and individuals engaged in Decade Actions. Over 23,000 individuals were involved in Decade Actions in the 2023–2024 period. Decade Actions reported that 43% of individuals participating in Decade Actions were women, while 47% were men during this period. Early Career Ocean Professionals accounted for 32% of individuals engaged in Decade Actions.

12. Decade Actions reported generating approximately 10,000 knowledge products including scientific literature and a broad range of other types of knowledge products during the 2023–2024 period, with Challenge 6 – Coastal Resilience, Challenge 8 – Ocean Data, and Challenge 10 – Behaviour Change being the Ocean Decade Challenges where Actions identified the highest numbers of generation of knowledge products. 142 knowledge products predominantly based on indigenous and local knowledge were reported as being generated. Decade Actions reported 9,800 incidences of knowledge uptake either through citations in published or grey literature or uptake to policy, management, education or other uses. Challenge 8 – Ocean Data, Challenge 9 – Capacity Development, and Challenge 2 – Ecosystems were the most cited Challenges for knowledge uptake. Over 150,000 new datasets were reported as being created and deposited in recognised data repositories during the 2023–2024 period.

13. IOC is leading 24 Decade programmes and projects across a range of themes, including new programmes related to Sustainable Ocean Planning and an Africa-wide programme focusing on sustainable ocean management, and is substantively involved in several others. There is a significant potential for the IOC contribution to the Decade to reinforce IOC's core programmatic work, regional and thematic leadership, and human resources. However, additional resources are required to ensure full operationalisation of these initiatives. In addition to the IOC-led Decade Actions, six (6) Decade Actions are being led by other UN entities including FAO, UNESCAP and UNEP.

### **Governance and Coordination Structures and Informal Working Groups**

14. The Decade Advisory Board held two in-person meetings during this period in May 2024 and March 2025 and several online meetings. The Board discussed recommendations related to the

endorsement of Decade programmes from Calls for Decade Actions and discussed a range of strategic issues related to measuring progress of the Decade, resource mobilisation, the role of indigenous and local knowledge in the Decade, and the means of increasing engagement of Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries. The most recent annual in-person meeting focused on the results of the Ocean Decade mid-term evaluation, including discussion of proposed revisions to the Terms of Reference for the Board to increase its strategic focus and oversight. The draft revised Terms of Reference for the Decade Advisory Board are provided as IOC/33/4.8.Doc(3).

15. Eleven (11) decentralised coordination structures are operational (Decade Collaborative Centres (DCC) and Decade Coordination Offices (DCO)) and twenty Decade Implementing Partners. The DCOs and DCCs are playing an essential role in supporting the Decade Coordination Unit to coordinate Decade Actions, catalyse new initiatives, build stakeholder engagement, mobilise resources and communicate on the Decade. Planning for a new Decade Collaborative Centre for Challenge 4 – Sustainable Ocean Economy to be hosted by Barcelona City Council is well advanced.

16. Six DCOs are being hosted by IOC (Western Pacific Region – WESTPAC; Tropical Americas and Caribbean – IOCARIBE; Africa – IOCAFRICA; Ocean Literacy – IOC/OSS; Data Sharing – IODE; and Ocean Observations – GOOS). Additional resources are urgently required for the full operationalisation of the Tropical Americas and Caribbean, Africa, Ocean Observations DCOs. A lack of resources for these structures is creating substantial challenges for coordination within the Decade framework, and is also undermining the potential for IOC to leverage the Decade framework to strengthen and sustain its regional presence in Africa and the Tropical America and Caribbean region and its transformative work in ocean observations.

17. Forty (40) National Decade Committees have been created and are implementing diverse initiatives to catalyse national interest and resources for the Decade, as well as provide a platform for the discussion of national priorities aligned to the Decade. Notable gaps exist in the global coverage of NDCs, particularly in SIDS where Member States have reported that human resource constraints limit their ability to create National Decade Committees. A new model for individual Ocean Decade focal points is being trialed in Caribbean SIDS via IOC Circular Letter [3025](#) 'United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030): Caribbean SIDS Ocean Decade Liaisons and Ocean Decade Roadmap for Tropical Americas and Caribbean Region' dated 11 February 2025.

18. A Data Coordination Group was established in December 2021 to support development and operationalisation of the data, information and knowledge strategy for the Decade. A working group has been established to develop an implementation plan for the strategy (document IOC/2024/ODS/60). The Corporate Data Group has 10 private sector members that are developing actions to facilitate sharing of data between private sector and the scientific community including through advocacy on an enhanced policy framework to facilitate data sharing as reported in Agenda Item 3.4.3.

19. The Strategic Communications Group has been renewed and comprises 25 communications experts who provide advice to the Decade Coordination Unit and Decade Actions on communications tools and approaches. The Ocean Decade Expert Roster, which has over 250 members has been established to create a pool of experts to assist the IOC Secretariat with the identification of strategic targets for Ocean Decade Challenges, in the review of Decade programme submissions, and in regular review processes of the Decade.

## **Resource Mobilisation**

20. The following Member States/organizations have made specific financial or in-kind contributions to support Decade coordination activities during this period: Belgium (Government of Flanders), Canada, ENGIE, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, France, Fugro, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Research Council of Norway, Schmidt Ocean Institute, Sweden, and

REV-Ocean. Secondments and loans of staff from Japan and Fugro (a private sector partner) are providing invaluable support to the coordination of the Decade.

21. Mobilization of in-kind and financial resources remains a key challenge for the successful implementation of the Decade. Resources are urgently needed to support the Decade Coordination Unit and in IOC-led Decade Coordination Offices in IOCAFRICA, IOCARIBE and the Ocean Observations DCO. Without additional resources for these structures, coordination activities will need to be scaled back from early 2026 onwards which would significant adverse effects on the ability of the Decade to meet its objectives and vision in the second half of its implementation.

22. Decade Actions also require additional resources to achieve full operationalisation. Data from the Decade programmes that reported to the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, indicated that for the next 12-month period, approximately USD 37 million has been secured, while an additional USD 43 million is required for full implementation over the next 12 months representing a resourcing gap of 54%.

23. The Ocean Decade Alliance has grown during this period and now numbers 11 Patrons and 20 institutional members. Alliance members have been engaged in high-level events and in raising visibility of the Ocean Decade amongst their constituencies. Efforts continue to work with Alliance members to develop joint funding or support initiatives for the Decade. Alliance members are currently collaborating on a new initiative to accelerate efforts for seabed mapping. Co-branded Calls for Decade Actions have been developed with the Belmont Forum, the EC-led Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership, and the BNP Paribas Foundation.

24. There have been significant efforts to engage philanthropic Foundations during this period. Two in-person meetings of the Foundations Dialogue were held during this period in June 2023 hosted by the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and in September 2024 hosted by the Boticario Foundation. The Rio Action Statement, which emerged from the latest meeting highlights four areas of action including tools to generate new support for Decade Actions, collaboration on strategic communication activities, and development of guidance and tools to support decision making on investments in ocean science.

25. To maintain the current momentum and level of activity, additional financial or in-kind resources are urgently required to allow the sustained operation of the Decade Coordination Unit. Significant mobilisation of resources will also be required to support Decade Actions.

### **Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach**

26. There were intensive stakeholder engagement and outreach efforts during this period. Numerous events focusing on different aspects of the Ocean Decade were held at the SDG Summit (New York, September 2023), COP28 (Dubai, December 2023), the Fourth United Nations International SIDS Conference (Antigua & Barbuda, May 2024) and the Immersed in Change Conference (Costa Rica, June 2024) and Convention on Biological Diversity COP16 (Cali, November 2024). The 2024 Ocean Decade Conference, which is discussed below, was the focus of stakeholder engagement during this period.

27. The Ocean Decade website received 291,000 users in 2024 and generated 771,700 page views over this period with most users from the United States, France, Japan, China and Spain. The website incorporates the Ocean Decade Network, an online community platform for exchange and collaboration which has over 8,000 registered users and is the digital home to the different groups working as part of the Decade. The GenOcean communications has been redesigned and was relaunched in early 2025 to focus on youth engagement and citizen science initiatives.

28. Social media followers across all Ocean Decade platforms have grown to approximately 98,000, which represents a significant increase since the last period. Based on reporting to the first iteration of the Monitoring and Reporting Framework, the combined social media reach of Decade

Actions, DCCs, DCOs, Decade Implementing Partners and National Decade Committees is nearing 3 million followers.

### **Vision 2030 Process & 2024 Ocean Decade Conference**

29. The Vision 2030 process that commenced implementation in early 2023 was a significant focus of activity over the last period. Ten Vision 2030 Working Groups were established, each with the mandate of authoring a White Paper to define a strategic ambition for one of the ten Ocean Decade Challenges. Hosted by Spain and co-organised with UNESCO-IOC, the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference was the focal point of stakeholder engagement during this period and milestone moment to discuss the outcomes of the Vision 2030 process. Held as the culmination of Ocean Decade Week (8–12 April 2024), the three-day Conference from 10 to 12 April 2024 hosted over 2,600 participants from 124 countries and generated over 3,000 unique livestream views. The Conference was structured around four thematic sessions that combined plenary and parallel session discussions that provided a platform to discuss the outcomes of the Vision 2030 process and generate consensus on the science and knowledge priorities for the Ocean Decade, as well as the key enabling conditions that need to be created or reinforced.

30. The outcomes of the Conference were summarised in the [The Barcelona Statement](#) that captures the key recommendations of the Conference and synthesized a series of announcements and the Conference outcomes report ([IOC/2024/ODS/50](#)), which identifies the science and knowledge priorities for the future years of Decade implementation and will be used for the scoping of future Calls for Decade Actions to contribute to the identified priority needs for each Challenge, initiation of new processes and structures to contribute to fulfilment of the cross-cutting recommendations, and targeted discussions with resource providers to align resource mobilisation with the most pressing needs of the Ocean Decade.

### **Perspectives for the Next Period**

31. A key focus on the next period will be on the continued operationalisation of the recommendations of both the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference and the mid-term evaluation. A series of flagship initiatives have been commenced drawing on the recommendations of the Statement and Conference including a joint initiative with the International Hydrographic Organisation on strengthening the evidence base for sound decision-making in ocean science investment, work on youth engagement and gender equity in the Ocean Decade, and a new operational framework for meaningful engagement with indigenous and local knowledge holders. Following discussion at the Assembly, an action plan will be developed on the basis of the management response to the mid-term evaluation. The action plan will be discussed with the Decade Advisory Board prior to its finalisation.

32. Close cooperation has been established with France and Costa Rica as the co-hosts of the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference (Nice, June 2025) to ensure that the outcomes of the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference are used to underpin discussions in 2025 in relation to science and knowledge priorities and to catalyse action and partnerships. This includes strong engagement in the development of the One Ocean Science Congress and the Ocean Rise and Resilience Summits, two special events that will be held in the lead-up to the United Nations Ocean Conference.

33. As part of the triennial series of Ocean Decade Conferences, the next event will be held in 2027. A Call for Expressions of Interest for Member States to host the 2027 event was launched in November 2024 via Circular Letter [3013](#). Bids from shortlisted Member States were received in April 2024 and the host country will be announced during the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the IOC Assembly. The 2027 Ocean Decade Conference will be a crucial moment to take stock of achievements since the 2024 event, refine priorities for the remaining years of the Decade, and lay the foundations of the post-Decade legacy.