



INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
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МЕЖПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННАЯ ОКЕАНОГРАФИЧЕСКАЯ КОМИССИЯ

اللجنة الدولية الحكومية لعلوم المحيطات

政府间海洋学委员会

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IOC Circular Letter No 2843

(Also available in French, Spanish and Russian)

IOC/VR/SA/ss

15 April 2021

To : Official National Coordinating Bodies for Liaison with the IOC

cc. : Permanent Delegates/Observers Missions to UNESCO and
National Commissions for UNESCO of IOC Member States
Chair and Vice-Chairpersons of IOC
Officers of Major Subsidiary Bodies of IOC (Scientific, Technical and Regional)

**Subject : Consultation on the proposal of an 'IOC State of the Ocean Report'
(StOR)**

At its 53rd session last February, the IOC Executive Council (EC-53) reflected on the proposal by the IOC Executive Secretary to consider preparing a periodic 'IOC State of the Ocean Report' (StOR).

The rationale for such a proposal lies in the following:

- the Commission regularly contributes data, information and related visuals to a number of processes and reports (the World Ocean Assessment, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPBES, the WMO Statement on the State of the Global Climate) and has a long record of communicating on the status and trends of ocean processes;
- the time-span of various existing high-level assessments (the WOA, IPCC Assessment Reports) – once in several years – leaves room for the provision of relevant information on the state of the ocean at shorter intervals in order to update the wider community of ocean stakeholders on the current state of the ocean and progress in the application of scientific findings in its management;
- as reflected in its current Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and draft MTS for 2022–2029, IOC is very well placed to act as an authoritative source of such relevant updated information;
- a number of IOC programmes taken individually are already delivering important yet partial information on the state of the ocean; these would benefit from being presented in an integrated and consistent manner throughout periodic reports; and
- the information in the report can provide a basis for the monitoring and evaluation framework of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

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During EC-53, Member States commented on existing processes and infrastructures (the multiple expert groups and networks supporting the IOC programmes and activities) and further efforts needed to provide the bulk of information necessary to describe the current state of the ocean, as well as on the length and periodicity of such a report.

Through the present Circular Letter, the IOC Secretariat solicit the views of Member States on the proposed StOR. We are also planning an informal pre-scoping expert meeting with a balanced geographic, thematic and gender representation on this subject before the Assembly takes place next June. The input received in response to this Circular Letter as well as the deliberations at the pre-scoping meeting will be reported upon at the Assembly to inform further discussions on the proposed StOR. A revised concept proposal will be presented to the Assembly at its 31st session as document IOC/INF-1393 Rev.

In providing their views on StOR, Member States may wish to consider the following guiding questions:

- What would you see as optimal scope and content of the report?
- What would be the optimal periodicity (annual/biannual), geographic scale, and presentation (visuals vs narrative) to ensure that the scientific findings on the state of the ocean best fits the needs of policymakers?
- How best can an IOC StOR stay science-driven and not policy prescriptive while also supporting the World Ocean Assessment and responding to the challenges of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development?
- To which extent should StOR provide a platform for integrating relevant findings of other UN Organizations on the state of and trends in the world ocean?
- Based on your need, would you rather opt for a short, punchy, summary type of report or a fully-fledged assessment?

Please kindly send your responses to Dr Salvatore Aricò, Head, IOC Ocean Science Section (s.arico@unesco.org) by 30 April 2021.

Yours sincerely,

[signed]

Vladimir Ryabinin
Executive Secretary