



INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

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Item 4.5.1 of the Provisional Agenda

PROPOSAL FOR A GLOBAL OCEAN OBSERVING SYSTEM (GOOS) REFORM

Summary

IOC [Decision A-32/4.8.1](#) (2023) requested the Executive Secretary to review progress with reform of GOOS governance to meet the needs of Member States, including any proposed actions or otherwise in response to the 9 recommendations of the 2021 [Neville Smith Report](#) (GOOS-290). The interim report ([IOC/EC-57/4.1.Doc\(1\)](#)) was considered by the Executive Council at its 57th session (EC-57) in 2024. Through [Decision EC-57/4.1](#), the Executive Council consequently invited its Executive Secretary to develop a proposal to evolve GOOS governance that considers the proposed actions provided in document IOC/EC-57/4.1.Doc(1) and present the proposal to this Assembly session.

This document provides the proposal and next steps to evolve GOOS governance.

Financial and administrative implications: paragraph 12.

The proposed decision is referenced A-33/Dec.4.5.1 in the Action Paper (document [IOC/A-33/2 Prov.](#))

Introduction

1. The eleventh strategic objective of the [GOOS 2030 Strategy](#) is to champion effective governance for global *in situ* and satellite ocean observing, together with partners and stakeholders. The proposal for GOOS governance reform outlined in this document was requested by the Executive Council [Decision EC-57/4.1](#) and responds to the proposed actions provided in document [IOC/EC-57/4.1.Doc\(1\)](#).

2. The proposal and the work moving forward will also take into account other relevant mandates, changes in the global environment in which GOOS operates, and recent recommendations, such as those provided by the Ocean Decade Vision 2030 process, in particular on [Challenge 7: Sustainably expand the Global Ocean Observing System](#).

Proposed approach

3. The evolution of GOOS will follow a double diamond approach.¹ The first diamond (phase 1) is underway and is planned to be completed in 2025. It includes desk-based reviews; consultations with sponsors, Member States, GOOS Steering Committee and key stakeholders; and a dedicated in-person workshop at the GOOS Steering Committee meeting that took place in February 2025. The anticipated deliverable from this process will be to define the mission and scope of GOOS moving forward—the WHY and the WHAT.

4. This deliverable will also propose a process by which the HOW—the approach taken to develop and deliver a reformed GOOS—can be undertaken. This latter activity will comprise the work of the second diamond (phase 2), for which work will take place from 2026 onwards. GOOS communications tools will also be evolved as part of this work.

5. **Phase I** (1st diamond) includes the following steps :

- (i) Mission and scoping review: review the viability and value of the central mission of GOOS and identify what is the unique value proposition of GOOS, i.e.,
 - a) assess the needs and requirements of Member States, ocean observing sponsors, stakeholders including primary and end users (such as ocean economy), and the ocean observing community;
 - b) assess the ability of GOOS to facilitate worldwide cooperation in a changing world, enabling, developing, operating, and sustaining a fit-for-purpose ocean observing system that has a clear scope and set of aims. Identify the role of GOOS in each of these aims;
 - c) With a view to GOOS' position within the global system and the UN, ensure alignment with the needs, priorities and deliverables for UN processes and national interests.
- (ii) Structure review: review the viability and ability to create value of the current organizational structure of GOOS, i.e.,
 - a. review of the current structure and all the constituent internal components of GOOS, and the terms of reference of such components, where available, to identify gaps, needs, overlaps and redundancies, building on previous work in this regard;
 - b. map out where GOOS sits both vertically (with and to Member States) and horizontally (along notional value chains to users) including with ongoing IOC processes.

¹ [The Double Diamond – Design Council](#)

- (iii) provide a detailed review of the mission, system and proposed structure of GOOS. Identify and propose needed changes, and an approach to deliver a reformed GOOS.
- (iv) Develop a communications toolkit that can be used by all members of the governance and support structure.

6. The approach to deliver a reformed GOOS (paragraph 5.iii above) will be presented to the GOOS Steering Committee in the first quarter of 2026 and subsequently to the Executive Committee in June 2026. The Communications toolkit (5.iv) will be available in the third quarter of 2025.

7. **Phase II** (2nd diamond) will implement the approach from phase I to deliver a reformed GOOS: revised mission, scope, structure, terms of reference, components, processes and delivery mechanisms to meet the needs of Member States. This will ultimately lead to a revised 'GOOS 2030+ Strategy' and implementation plan.

8. Dependent on the availability of adequate resources, phase 2 will also include: production of a 'GOOS User and Uptake Strategy' that can be used to effectively and routinely engage the broader community (including Member States, scientific community, corporate, blue tech and financial sectors) to help identify the level and nature of investments needed for a global ocean observing system; and development of a communication plan for GOOS.

Status of Phase I

9. A consultancy has been identified to support implementation of Phase I (paragraph 5.i-iii above) to draft an approach to deliver a reformed GOOS by end 2025.

10. A workshop on GOOS reform took place during the 14th meeting of the GOOS steering Committee ([SC-14](#)) in February 2025. The aim of this meeting was to have interactive open discussions about the future direction of GOOS (2030 and beyond) and identify key areas of change to accomplish this goal. Key questions were discussed in breakout group style to stimulate conversation and elucidate the concept/unique value proposition for the future GOOS that will answer the questions and needs of society (science/government/business) of tomorrow. A short summary is provided in section 4 of the [SC-14 report](#).

11. A communications consultancy is supporting the development of a GOOS communications toolkit, which will be available in the third quarter of 2025.

Financial and administrative implications

12. The financial and administrative immediate implications of GOOS, phase 1 of this proposal are considered within the parameters of the regular budget of IOC, specifically IOC Output 1 of the current Programme and Budget (42 C/5). The longer term financial and administrative implication of phase 2 will be considered under the Programme and Budget for 2026–2027 (43 C/5) as well as any additional potential resourcing opportunities.