



INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

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Item 3.4.4 of the Provisional Agenda

AN IOC OCEAN BEST PRACTICES SYSTEM

Summary

The Ocean Best Practices System (OBPS), established as a GOOS-IODE Project through Decision IOC-XXX/7.2.1 in 2019, has been instrumental in supporting the development and accessibility of best practices across the ocean value chain.

To enhance its sustainability and maximize its impact, OBPS proposes expanding beyond GOOS and IODE, inviting all IOC programmes and sub-commissions to contribute to its governance and funding. This integration will provide IOC with a unified, structured system for best practices, strengthening interoperability, global visibility, and collaboration across ocean programmes. To this end, the proposal provides for the revision of the OBPS's objectives and the establishment of an IOC OBPS Steering Group with terms of reference annexed to the draft decision under this item.

Financial and administrative implications: paragraph 7.

The proposed decision is referenced A-33/Dec.3.4.4 in the Action Paper (document IOC/A-33/2 Prov.)

1. In 2019, the Ocean Best Practices System (OBPS) was approved as an IOC-UNESCO Project, supported by the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) and the International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE) through Decision IOC-XXX/7.2.1. This Decision defined the objectives of OBPS as: (i) increase efficiency, reproducibility and interoperability of the entire ocean observing value chain by providing the community with a unified, sustained and readily accessible knowledge-base of interdisciplinary best practices; and (ii) provide coordinated and sustained global access to best practices in ocean observing to foster innovation and excellence by developing a system and engaging ocean observing communities in a joint and coordinated effort in producing, reviewing and sustaining best practice documents.
2. Conscious of the request for best practices as an IOC-wide need, as referred to in the [IOC Medium-term Strategy 2022–2029](#), as well as to ensure its long-term sustainability, the OBPS Steering Group proposed in 2024, at its sixth annual meeting ([see report](#)), to expand OBPS beyond IODE and GOOS. This strategic evolution will provide all IOC programmes and sub-commissions with an integrated and structured system and repository for best practices, strengthening coordination, interoperability, and knowledge-sharing across IOC and its communities.
3. Today, the OBPS stands as a dynamic and growing resource, continuously improving its repository and engagement with ocean stakeholders. The repository has experienced significant growth, now containing 2,247 documents and 20 endorsed best practices, with some of these attracting between 5,000 and 6,000 visits. User engagement remains robust, with more than 80,000 registered users submitting and downloading documents. Ongoing technical upgrades, including software updates and improved metadata filters, are aimed at enhancing document discoverability. Capacity development initiatives include a self-paced Ocean Teacher Global Academy training course on how to submit, share, and search for best practices.
4. The future development of OBPS, through joint “ownership” by IOC programmes and sub-commissions, will expand its reach by strengthening connections across the IOC, including the Ocean Data and Information System (ODIS), and integrating with diverse data ecosystems, including the UN Ocean Decade communities. By leveraging OBPS, the IOC and the ocean community will enhance global and interdisciplinary access to key methodologies while promoting the endorsement of best practices. Furthermore, improvements in search functionality, multilingual translation of best practices, and sustained repository curation will further strengthen OBPS, benefiting both the IOC and the broader ocean science community.
5. With proposed new terms of reference for OBPS, the aim is to evolve from a GOOS-IODE project-based activity to a cross-cutting activity of the whole IOC programme, in the form of a universal and accessible platform for best practices and standards relevant to IOC and ocean-matters, which is sustainable over time within a growing network of ocean communities. By broadening its scope to cover the entire ocean value chain, OBPS will engage a wider range of stakeholders, thereby amplifying its impact, strengthening its stability and consolidating its role as an invaluable resource for IOC and the wider ocean community.
6. In this proposal, OBPS will be steered by an IOC Steering Group whose terms of reference are proposed in the annex to the proposed decision A-33/Dec.3.4.4.

Financial and administrative implications

7. Any financial or administrative implications of the activities fall within the parameters of the IOC Programme and Budget (42 C/5).