



IOC/INF-1302  
Paris, 28 May 2013  
English only

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION  
(of UNESCO)**

**INFORMATION DOCUMENT**

**IOC'S CONTRIBUTION TO UNITED NATIONS INTER-AGENCY ACTIVITIES**

Summary: This document provides a summary of the IOC contribution to various ocean-related UN inter-agency activities. These are: UN-Oceans, GESAMP, activities on Rio+20 follow-up and Sustainable Development Goal process, the Secretary-General Oceans Compact, and the World Bank's Global Partnership for Oceans, the Global Framework for Climate Services, and the ITU-IOC-WMO Joint Task Force on submarine cables.



## Introduction

IOC will continue to play its role as the focal point within the UN system for ocean sciences, observations, services, data and information exchange and capacity development. As such, it will contribute to a number of UN processes, respond to the needs expressed by the UN General Assembly, and play an active role in UN inter-agency mechanisms and activities.

## UN-Oceans

UN-Oceans has given substantial attention to ocean activities within the UN system since last IOC Assembly in 2011. IOC is leading the Task Force on Ocean Outreach and in this context, IOC organized a UN-Oceans side event on Ocean Acidification at the 17th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (UNFCCC/COP17; Durban, South Africa, 3 December 2011), diverse material publicizing UN-Oceans was printed and distributed to the UN-Oceans agencies, and the UN-Oceans website was updated and linked to the UN-Atlas of the Ocean. In addition, IOC assisted the UN-Oceans chair (UNDP) in different matters related to organization of other events (e.g. Oceans day at Rio+20) and activities such as press conferences in New York. IOC also has played a lead role in major interagency policy papers on the ocean as inputs to Rio+20 (e.g. A Blueprint for Ocean and Coastal Sustainability —IOC/UNESCO, UNDP, FAO, IMO).

In parallel, UN-Oceans has been the subject of enhanced attention in the UN General Assembly through UNGA Resolution A/66/231 of December 2011 which requested UN-Oceans to prepare and submit new draft Terms of reference (ToRs) to be considered by the UN General Assembly at its 67<sup>th</sup> session, with a view to review its mandate and enhance transparency and reporting of its activities to Member States. This Resolution also called for the conduct of an independent review by the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). The objective of this evaluation was to examine the UN-Oceans interagency mechanism and propose tangible recommendations for the improvement of its efficiency and effectiveness. Concretely, the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the JIU final report (entitled *Evaluation of UN-Oceans with a View to Creating a Reformed Mechanism for Strengthening UN Coherence and Coordination on Oceans*) were aimed to feed into the revision of the UN-Oceans Terms of Reference.

Through a collegial process using a virtual platform, UN-Oceans members completed the preparation of the new draft TORs in September which were then submitted to the High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) as well as shared with UN Member States via the DOALOS web site. The JIU review was completed in August and was formally transmitted to the UN Secretary-General and the UN General Assembly via DOALOS web site. GA discussions on both the JIU evaluation and the new UN Oceans ToRs took place at the 67<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly (Agenda item 75 (a), Oceans and the law of the sea). Unfortunately, due to lack of time, Member States were not able to complete their review of the draft ToRs and therefore decided to postpone their approval to the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly (September–December 2013). Paragraph 267 of the UNGA Resolution A/RES/67/78 on Oceans and Law of the Sea, reflects the above:

*Para 267: Notes the review of UN-Oceans made by the Joint Inspection Unit, decides that the draft terms of reference for its work submitted by UN-Oceans to the General Assembly will be considered by the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session with a view to reviewing the mandate of UN-Oceans and approving the terms of reference, taking into account the need to strengthen the central role of the Division and the need to enhance transparency and reporting of the activities of UN-Oceans to Member States, requests the Secretary-General, to that end, to bring the comments submitted by Member States to the attention of UN-Oceans, and requests UN-Oceans to draft revised draft terms of reference for its work for the consideration and approval by the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.*

In order to facilitate the review and approval of new UN-Oceans Terms of Reference by the General Assembly, a dialogue has been established between UN-Oceans and UN Member States. Two consultation meetings have taken place in April and May 2013 and others are planned during the meeting of the UN Informal Consultative Process (ICP) on Oceans (17-21 June 2013), and later in the summer.

The most salient points of the discussion refer to the following issues:

1. The core mandate of UN Oceans, which should be on enhancing UN system coordination and coherence on UN's work on ocean and coastal areas, towards eliminating gaps and overlaps and promoting synergies and complementarities;
2. The work of UN Oceans, which needs to be within the existing mandates of organizations, relevant GA resolutions and outcomes of relevant conferences such as the WSSD and Rio+20;
3. The need for UN Oceans to be fully transparent and accountable in reporting on its activities and work programs and to report through ICP, HLCP and through the SG's annual report on oceans and the law of the sea;
4. UN Oceans' capacity to establish time bound task forces on specific issues in support of its mandate;
5. The need for UN Oceans to develop operational guidelines for its decision-making, membership, task forces and reporting;
6. The flexibility for UN Oceans to appoint itself a dedicated Secretariat to be hosted by one of its members;
7. UN Oceans' capacity to elect a chair that will represent the UN-Oceans mechanism at various events and report to HLCP and ICP;
8. The need to coordinate across with other inter-agency mechanisms such as UN-Water and UN-Energy.

It is anticipated that a consensus will be reached amongst Member States and with UN-Oceans, after which the formal review of the UN-Oceans ToRs will take place in the fall 2013, leading to their adoption by the UN General Assembly as part of the annual ocean omnibus resolution.

### **GESAMP**

The Joint Group of Experts on Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) is an inter-Agency body of the United Nations. It was created in 1968 to provide a number of UN Agencies, having marine and maritime interests and responsibilities, with access to authoritative and independent scientific advice on a wide range of issues. GESAMP is managed through an Executive Committee consisting of a representative of each Sponsoring Organization (i.e. Technical Secretary) and the Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons of GESAMP. In most instances GESAMP responds to requests from the Agencies on specific topics. This may lead to the setting up of a Task Team or Working Group to which leading experts are invited to contribute on a *pro bono* basis. GESAMP currently has six working groups.

In light of the successful GESAMP Workshop on “Plastic Particles as a Vector in Transporting Persistent, Bio-accumulating and Toxic Substances (PBTs) in the Oceans”, held at UNESCO-IOC Headquarters in 2010, GESAMP at its 38<sup>th</sup> session (9–13 May 2011) decided to create the Working Group 40 entitled ‘Sources, fate and effects of micro-plastics in the environment – a global assessment’, under the leadership of IOC-UNESCO and UNEP with co-sponsorship from UNIDO, IMO, IAEA and PlasticsEurope. The inception meeting of the new GESAMP WG-40 was held at IOC-UNESCO Headquarters in March 2012 and a second meeting is planned by next 22–26 July at IMO HQ in London. The WG-40 will prepare a first stage assessment during the second half of 2013.

UNESCO-IOC is the lead Agency for the Open Ocean and Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) components of the Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme (TWAP). GESAMP is contributing to both components, acting through IOC. For the Open Ocean component, GESAMP has set up a Task Team to carry out a revision of the 2009 GESAMP report on open ocean pollution (Reports & Studies 79). This was carried out for the Assessment of Assessments for the Regular Process (now called the World Ocean Assessment) and the new Task Team is comprised of most of the original contributors. The re-assessment will focus on atmospheric inputs of chemicals, including carbon, but it is hoped to include some of the topic areas, such as noise, that were highlighted in the 2009 report as needing further attention. In addition, available information on the ocean distribution of plastic will be gathered and assessed, in part through the work of the GESAMP WG-40 on micro-plastics. The GESAMP contribution to the LME component will be limited to the collation of existing information on the distribution of persistent, bio-accumulating and toxic compounds measured in plastic resin pellets, collected from shorelines. This will be achieved in close cooperation with the International Pellet Watch Programme, based in Japan.

Regarding the World Ocean Assessment, no specific activities have been identified for GESAMP input, and any such requests would need to be considered in the light of available resources. However, it is anticipated that the revised open ocean pollution assessment, carried out under the TWAP, could make a useful contribution to the WOA.

The 40<sup>th</sup> Session of GESAMP will be held on 9–13 September 2013, at the offices of UNIDO in Vienna, Austria.

### **Follow up to Rio+20 / Sustainable Development Goals**

Building on the excellent collaboration with UNDP, IMO and FAO in preparing (under IOC leadership) the UN publication, 'A Blueprint for Ocean and Coastal Sustainability' in the context of UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), IOC is continuing its collaboration with these agencies as well as the Division on Sustainable Development (UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs / DESA) in the follow up to Rio+20.

A concrete example was the active participation of the IOC Executive Secretary in the Expert Group Meeting on Oceans, Seas and Sustainable Development: Implementation and follow-up to Rio+20, convened by UN-DESA on 18–19 April 2013 in New York. The goals of the meeting were to:

- (i) Provide an opportunity to engage in discussions on how to implement and follow-up Rio+20 decisions with regard to oceans and seas, and identify possible new measures and/or highlight existing proven measures with regard to the implementation of Rio+20 decisions and other oceans-related topics;
- (ii) Present "best practices" supporting the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and their resources; and
- (iii) Elaborate on how to enhance multi-stakeholder and international cooperation.

The outcome of the Expert Group Meeting (report and presentations) will provide background information to ongoing discussions conducted by Member States and other stakeholders with regard to oceans and seas, and in particular to the SIDS Conference, which will be held in 2014 and where the topic of oceans and seas is expected to figure prominently.

IOC will also contribute to the preparation of an Ocean Policy Brief prepared by a UN Task Force in the context of the intergovernmental Open Working Group (OWG) tasked with the formulation of a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). A dedicated OWG meeting on ocean will be held in February 2014. The Open Working Group will submit a report, to the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly, containing a proposal for SDGs for consideration and appropriate action. Through UNESCO, IOC will also continue to raise awareness of UN Member States on the ocean

dimension of sustainable development with the hope that a healthy ocean will be considered as part of the proposed SDGs, and more generally in the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda.

Useful link: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (UN DESA)  
<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=232>

### **Secretary General Oceans Compact**

The UN Secretary-General launched his *Oceans Compact* in August 2012 (ref.: [IOC Circular Letter, 2448](#)), aimed at protecting the ocean and the people whose livelihoods depend on it. This initiative intends to increase coordination of efforts regarding ocean protection within the UN system. It will also provide a platform to help countries protect the ocean's natural resources, restore its full food production to help peoples whose livelihoods depend on the sea, and increase awareness and knowledge about the management of the oceans.

All relevant UN bodies have been involved in the formulation, including IOC/UNESCO. Most of the issues raised by IOC during the Rio+20 Conference and its preparatory process, are reflected in the 3 high level objectives of the Oceans Compact, which are:

1. Protecting people and improving the health of the oceans;
2. Protecting, recovering and sustaining the oceans' environment and natural resources and restoring their full food production and livelihoods services;
3. Strengthening ocean knowledge and the management of ocean.

The *Compact* will lead to a results-oriented Action Plan that will benefit from the guidance of a dedicated Ocean Advisory Group. It will be composed of 20 to 30 members, no two of whom shall be nationals of the same State, and will include approximately 10-15 government representatives, and approximately 10-15 high-level policy-makers, scientists, ocean experts of recognized standing, private sector representatives, and representatives of non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations.

On 20 March 2013, the Chair of the High Level Committee on Programme (United Nations), Mr Achim Steiner, on behalf of the UN Secretary-General, invited Member States of the United Nations and Specialized Agencies to submit names for possible nomination to the Oceans Compact Advisory Group (OCAG).

Through [IOC Circular Letter, 2480](#), IOC invited its and UNESCO's Member States to submit candidature to the OCAG. The members of the OCAG will be selected on the basis of equitable geographic representation from the five UN regional groups, competency, personal qualifications and experience particularly in ocean affairs, and gender balance.

A time-bound administrative support group comprised of IOC-UNESCO, UNDP and UNEP has been formed to provide secretarial assistance to the work of the Oceans Compact Advisory Group in the coming months. It is expected that two physical meetings of the OCAG will be organized, one of them being hosted by IOC/UNESCO before the end of the year. The Oceans Compact Action Plan will require financial resources and it is also expected a resource mobilization plan will also be developed, exploring synergies with the World Bank Global Partnership for Oceans.

It is expected that the OCAG will be announced in June 2013 by the Secretary General.

Useful link: DOALOS Web page on Ocean Compact  
[http://www.un.org/Depts/los/ocean\\_compact/oceans\\_compact.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/ocean_compact/oceans_compact.htm)

## **Global Partnership for Oceans**

The Global Partnership for Oceans (GPO) was launched by the World Bank at Rio+20 in June 2012. It is an alliance of more than 100 governments, international organizations, civil society groups, and private sector interests committed to addressing the threats to the health, productivity and resilience of the world's oceans.

It aims to tackle documented problems of overfishing, pollution, and habitat loss. Together these problems are contributing to the depletion of a natural resource bank that provides nutrition, livelihoods and vital ecosystem services. The objective of the GPO is to combine existing and new expertise and financial resources into time-bound investment packages to support healthier oceans. It will initially operate in up to 10 key ocean regions around the world, backstopped by a global knowledge portal and advocacy campaign.

Within these areas, the partners will work with States and stakeholders to develop and implement:

- sustainable fisheries and aquaculture,
- coastal and marine habitat conservation, and
- pollution reduction,

taking into consideration climate change and acidification.

These investment packages will include 'catalytic' financing from a new GPO fund, together with existing and new finance and expertise from partners, operating within the current global governance framework set by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The GPO works with Governments and partners to 'crowd in' resources towards achieving targets by:

- aligning existing resources towards a common objective,
- providing finance from a new GPO fund,
- collectively raising new funds from public and private sources in parallel,

all into one investment package in a given ocean area.

A governance structure representative of the Partnership members will make decisions on the GPO's activities and resource allocations.

IOC joined the GPO from its inception (May 2012) and participated in a number of preparatory meetings to define the type of activities the GPO should fund and to agree on the governance structure and functions of the GPO. The GPO will be launched in its operational phase at the Global Ocean Action Summit (9–13 September 2013, The Hague, The Netherlands).

Useful link: Global Partnership for Oceans website  
<http://www.globalpartnershipforoceans.org/>

## **Global Framework for Climate Services**

The idea for a Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) was established in 2009, through a high-level declaration at World Climate Conference-3 organized by World Meteorological Organization (WMO), other UN agencies including IOC and UNESCO, governments and partners to guide the development of climate services around the world. The vision of the GFCS is to enable society to better manage the risks and opportunities arising from climate variability and change, especially for those who are most vulnerable to such risks.

Following the ground-work laid by a High Level Taskforce on GFCS, an Extraordinary Session of the World Meteorological Congress in October 2012 adopted a governance structure for the

GFCS: an Intergovernmental Board for Climate Services as a constituent body of the WMO, whose first session will take place 1–5 July 2013. The Extraordinary Congress also adopted a draft Implementation Plan for the GFCS (which drew on input from IOC), and called for an immediate move to action with a particular focus on capacity development and user involvement during the initial period of implementation to support the establishment of climate services in countries and territories in which improvements in the provision of climate services are urgently required.

UNESCO has been invited to join an Inter-agency Coordination Group for Climate Services, along with FAO, UNDP, WFP, UN-ISDR, WB, and WHO. IOC within UNESCO leads coordination of programmes related to climate across all sectors, under the 36 C/5 through an Intersectoral Platform on Climate Change, and so would take the UNESCO lead in interacting with this Inter-agency Coordination Group.

The GFCS will build upon the following five components or pillars required to address the entire value chain for the production, management, delivery and application of climate information and services in support of decision-making, addressing initially four priority areas (agriculture and food security; water; health; and disaster risk reduction):

- *User Interface Platform*: a structured means for users, climate researchers and climate information providers to interact at all levels;
- *Climate Services Information System*: the mechanism through which information about climate (past, present and future) will be routinely collected, stored and processed to generate and deliver products and services that inform often complex decision-making across a wide range of climate-sensitive activities and enterprises;
- *Observations and Monitoring*: to ensure that climate observations and other data, including metadata, required to meet the needs of end users are collected, manage, disseminated and its utility assessed;
- *Research, Modelling and Prediction*: to foster research towards continually improving the scientific quality of climate information and services, providing an evidence base for the impacts of climate change and variability and for the value of using climate information;
- *Coordination and Capacity Development*: to address the mechanisms for coordination and networks across information providers and affected communities and capacity development, such as are needed to interpret, translate and use climate information to support decision making; to enable GFCS-related activities; and are identified in the other pillars;

IOC programmes in Observations and Monitoring and climate services information (GOOS, JCOMM, and IODE) and Research, Modelling and Prediction (including WCRP) have clear contributions to the GFCS that are identified in its Implementation Plan. IOC has been involved in workshops and consultations on aspects of the GFCS including regional implementation and data policy. Other IOC Programmes focused on management issues, including ICAM and LME projects, are potential users of climate services.

Useful link: Global Framework for Climate Services website  
<http://www.wmo.int/gfcs/>

### **Joint ITU-IOC-WMO Task Force on ocean observations from submarine cables**

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a UN specialized agency, convened a workshop on *Submarine Cables for Ocean/Climate Monitoring and Disaster Warning* (8-9 September 2011, Rome, Italy), with the participation of the IOC and WMO secretariats. The workshop explored the scientific, technological, business, and legal aspects of using submarine telecommunications cables for ocean observations. The potential contribution to deep pressure observations for tsunami early warning purposes was highlighted. The workshop closed with the adoption of a Call

to Action inviting ITU, IOC and WMO to establish and coordinate a Joint Task Force (JTF) composed of experts from science, engineering, business and law to further investigate the issue. Three reports were commissioned by ITU to further explore the different aspects of the potential of a submarine cables climate monitoring and disaster warning system, and were published in June 2012. The JTF has met virtually on a number of occasions since July 2012, and selected Chris Barnes (Canada) as its chair and David Meldrum (UK, JCOMM Observations Programme Area vice-chair) as its vice-chair. It has developed committees on scientific, engineering, business model, legal, and publicity/awareness/marketing issues, to work to develop a draft roadmap that could lead to enabling the availability of submarine repeaters equipped with scientific sensors for disaster warning system (tsunamis), and the monitoring of some Essential Climate Variables. The DOALOS secretariat is represented on the JTF and has participated in all workshops to date. A follow-up workshop was held in September 2012 (Paris) and one is planned for September 2013 (Madrid). The JTF presently has very limited financial support but does have the secretariat support of ITU. It is developing a pilot project to design, build and test a new repeater with a simple suite of sensors (pressure, temperature, acceleration), in partnership with industry. GOOS, JCOMM and Tsunami programmes from the IOC side have been involved in the work of this JTF.

Useful link: Joint Task Force website

<http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/climatechange/task-force-sc/Pages/default.aspx>

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