

# Marine science in a global context and the Second International Indian Ocean Expedition

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IOC was created in 1960 as a body with functional autonomy within UNESCO to promote international cooperation and coordinate programmes in research, services and capacity building, in order to learn more about the nature and resources of the ocean and coastal areas; and to apply that knowledge for the improvement of management, sustainable development, the protection of the marine environment, and the decision-making processes of its Member States. This is important because there is a limit to what a group of enthusiastic well-meaning scientists can do internationally, without an intergovernmental organization to provide the operational, logistical and legal framework.

At around the same time that IOC was established, a major scientific expedition was taking place in the Indian Ocean. The 'International Indian Ocean Expedition', organized by the Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research (SCOR), involved more than forty (40) research vessels from 25 countries and generated a wealth of knowledge during its 6 years 1959 – 1965. The coordination of IIOE was handed over to IOC by SCOR at the end of 1962. The scientific information generated from the expedition has been published in 8 volumes of collected re-prints and at least 5 major atlases.

Next year 2015 marks the 50th Anniversary of the end of the IIOE. To mark this occasion, IOC and SCOR are planning the second International Indian Ocean Expedition.

The first expedition had a major impact on the development of marine sciences in the region, with a number of new institutions established, and existing ones strengthened. However the countries of Eastern Africa, some of which got their independence during this period, did not benefit as much from the training opportunities offered by the expedition, unlike their Asian counter-parts such as India and Pakistan, which were better prepared.

The second expedition comes at a time when major strides have been made in marine sciences, including emergence of new components of the ocean observing system such as remote sensing and Argo floats, as well as ocean modelling and forecasting. IIOE-2 provides an opportunity:

- (i) to enhance our understanding of the Indian Ocean and address knowledge gaps, especially in the Western Indian Ocean region;
- (ii) to address the issue of science to governance, knowledge transfer to government structure, and societal benefits of research results;
- (iii) for public awareness and public advocacy related to ocean issues;
- (iv) for capacity development at all levels.

Structured approach should be developed to ensure optimal use of these opportunities.

Experts/institutions in the region need to be actively involved in the cruises and other observation systems implemented in the region, including contributing to their planning. This will ensure better use of the opportunities provided by the expedition.