



2021 United Nations Decade
2030 of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development

Decade Advisory Board

Meeting No. 03/2025

23 September 2025

REPORT



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Intergovernmental
Oceanographic
Commission

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(IOC/2025/ODS/66)

DECADE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING NO. 03/2025

23 September 2025

13h – 16h CET (online)

MEETING REPORT

1. Welcome & Overview of Agenda

The Co-chairs welcomed participants and highlighted recent milestones in the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 ('Ocean Decade') including the [Foundations Dialogue meeting](#) that was held in Tokyo, Japan, and ongoing planning and discussions for the [2027 Ocean Decade Conference](#). The Co-chairs highlighted the importance of the meeting to discuss critical issues related to the implementation of the recommendations of the Mid-Term Evaluation.

2. Introductory remarks from IOC Executive Secretary

The Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO emphasized that the draft Action Plan, that will operationalize the recommendations of the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE), aims to be ambitious yet realistic, building on the achievements of the first five years of the Decade. He also highlighted that the period up to 2030 provides a strategic opportunity to use the findings of the Evaluation to strengthen the delivery framework for the Ocean Decade, with the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, serving as a key milestone for guiding priorities and outcomes. He noted that the Decade Advisory Board (DAB) would reconsider a submission for the endorsement of the International Platform for Ocean Sustainability (IPOS) to be endorsed as a Decade Collaborative Centre (DCC). Finally, he drew attention to the upcoming renewal of the Board for the 2026-2027 period ensuring both continuity and the inclusion of new expert members, setting the stage for a critical phase of the Decade.

3. Presentation and discussion of Action Plan for Mid-Term Evaluation

The Decade Coordination Unit (DCU) reminded the Board of the purpose of the Mid-Term Evaluation, i.e. to improve the delivery of the Decade to achieve sustained impact in its second half. The DCU indicated that the Evaluation Report and management response, that was discussed with the Board in March 2025 prior to its finalization, was presented to Member States at the 33rd Session of the IOC Assembly. The DCU noted that the Assembly requested the development of a detailed action plan in consultation with the Board, structured around the eight key recommendations of the MTE. The DCU presented the draft Action Plan to the Board, and the Co-Chairs facilitated a discussion on ways to improve or strengthen the proposed actions.

Recommendation 1: Streamline and strengthen the governance and coordination framework for the Ocean Decade to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation and support progress toward its intended outcomes in the second half.

Participants emphasized the need to identify strategic partners to convene stakeholders and drive collective action on key priorities based on a clear mandate and understanding of the expected outcomes of the process. Questions were raised about resource availability to achieve the actions under this recommendation and the means of maintaining effective information flow within existing coordination structures. The discussion stressed the need to build on prior processes, such as [Vision 2030](#) and the [Barcelona Statement](#), to address urgent policy needs and maximize impact, leveraging Board members' networks to support implementation.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen UN system-wide collaboration and alignment to support the achievement of the Decade's outcomes and reinforce its identity as a collective UN initiative, enhancing its global reach and impact.

The group supported establishing systematic communication between the DCU and UN agency heads, including sharing of the results of the Mid-Term Evaluation, and inviting agencies to engage through a dedicated Working Group exploring emerging policy issues. Clarifying the revised Terms of Reference for UN membership in the DAB was emphasized as important to enable more effective participation and linkages between UN and expert members. Comments highlighted the need to align engagement with agencies' mandates, manage capacity constraints, and ensure meaningful uptake beyond consistently involved agencies. The proposal was recognized as strategic for fostering integration, enhancing influence across UN agencies, and creating platforms for collaboration on emerging ocean-related policy priorities.

Recommendation 3: Put in place a comprehensive resource mobilization framework to ensure sustainable funding for the coordination of the Decade and to strengthen the enabling environment for funding and supporting Decade Actions.

The discussion emphasized focusing the DCU's resource mobilization on supporting priority areas and coordination efforts rather than fundraising for all actions. The Board expressed support for the proposed actions, which include developing targeted resource packages, continuing analytical work to inform global investment in ocean science, and optimizing the [Foundations Dialogue](#) and [Ocean Decade Alliance](#) through structured membership, renewed commitments, and increased diversity, particularly ahead of the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen national and regional engagement, with a focus on Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and other under-represented regions, to facilitate more equitable participation and alignment with local and regional priorities.

The Board expressed support for actions focused on strengthening national and regional engagement, particularly in LDCs, SIDS, and underrepresented regions. Key actions include enhancing connections between the DAB, collaborative and coordination structures, and National Decade Committees (NDCs) through joint meetings; supporting the establishment of new national committees where they do not exist; guiding committees to translate global priorities to national contexts; leveraging the [Capacity Development Facility](#) to increase

participation; and implementing processes to assess and improve outcomes and impact across decentralized structures, with emphasis on collaboration and targeted support.

Recommendation 5: Enhance the mainstreaming of inclusivity, diversity, and equity to ensure that all voices, particularly those of marginalized and under-represented groups, are meaningfully included and benefit from the Decade.

The Board supported the proposed actions including finalizing and publishing the Ocean Decade Gender Action Plan, developing a framework for Indigenous and local knowledge, and continuing targeted engagement with youth stakeholders, with emphasis on accountability and broad ownership of these initiatives.

Recommendation 6: Strengthen the strategic focus and impact of the UN Ocean Decade Actions to enhance alignment with global and national priorities, promote innovation, support knowledge use and ensure practical application for tangible benefits to Member States and the ecosystem.

The Board highlighted the central importance of this recommendation and the associated actions. The discussion focused on the means of consolidating and aligning Decade Actions with global and national priorities including by improving information flows through a new searchable Decade Action database, documenting and tracking programmes' pathways to impact, revising Calls for Decade Actions to strengthen policy relevance, and preparing for the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference. Additional efforts include leveraging new strategic communication expertise and targeted funding to support programmes' science-to-policy work and cleaning up inactive Decade programmes to ensure accurate representation of Decade initiatives.

Recommendation 7: Enhance the existing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to transform it into a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system.

The Board expressed support for key actions, which include improving self-reporting by Decade programmes on how science and knowledge inform policy and decision-making and integrating clearly defined metrics of success into the preparatory process for the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference to ensure accountability and effectiveness. The Board noted the resources that would be needed to effectively implement these actions.

Recommendation 8: Systematically leverage the Decade to shape UNESCO-IOC's post-2030 agenda and amplify the impact of its programmes.

The Board recognized the importance of actions to ensure that the Decade is leveraged to support the future impact of IOC. Actions include ensuring strong coordination between Decade priority areas and IOC strategies, integrating ongoing consultations and sustainable ocean planning efforts, and strengthening communication and collaboration to enhance visibility and impact.

4. Quick update of Decade implementation & review of IPOS DCC re-submission

4a. Update of Decade implementation

The DCU provided an update on the implementation of Decade Actions, highlighting key developments since March 2025, including outcomes from the 2025 UN Ocean Conference

and the IOC Assembly. Progress was noted in programme and project endorsements and new NDC members joining the Decade, notably Australia and Kenya. Engagement mechanisms, including the Ocean Decade Alliance and Foundations Dialogue, have continued to facilitate stakeholder collaboration, while recent Calls for Decade Actions generated significant project submissions, particularly from previously under-represented regions such as Africa. Strategic initiatives were emphasized, including the upcoming Island States Ocean Summit, the establishment of a Decade Collaborative Centre on Sustainable Ocean Economy in Barcelona, Spain, and capacity development platforms such as the Ocean Connector.

4b. Consideration of request for endorsement of IPOS as a Decade Collaborative Centre

The Board considered the resubmission from the Ocean Sustainability Foundation (OSF) requesting endorsement of IPOS as a DCC. The Board noted with thanks the additional information provided by the applicant addressing the issues raised during [Meeting No. 02/2025](#) and the information provided by the DCU regarding the consideration of IPOS during discussions at the 33rd Session of the IOC Assembly. The Board raised concerns about a lack of strong international support for IPOS beyond the 11 States that have formally expressed support, and raised questions about the demand for IPOS services from Member States, the process for ensuring the legitimacy of Member States requests for support, and the scope of the requests that were being received. The Board highlighted the lack of clarity in terms of how IPOS will concretely engage Decade programmes/projects as well as other Decade mechanisms, leading to the synthesis of policy relevant knowledge and tailoring of potential science-based solutions at national and international level. The Board also recognized that funding for the ‘minimum viable project’ as a DCC was not yet secured. The Board recognized the importance of strengthening the science-policy elements of the Ocean Decade but did not reach consensus that IPOS was the most appropriate vehicle to achieve this. Based on its discussions, the Board concluded that it did not support endorsement of IPOS as a DCC.

5. Preparing for the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference

The DCU provided an update on preparations for the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference, noting that a more detailed proposal will be presented at the next meeting. The Conference is scheduled for April 2027 in Rio de Janeiro, with a launch event planned on 6 October 2025 in Rio. It is foreseen as a five-day event, including potential pre-Conference activities such as a youth summit and an Indigenous-led symposium. Satellite events will be more limited and targeted than in Barcelona. Venues will include Marina Gloria, the Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Tomorrow, and surrounding cultural institutions, with an expected capacity of about 2,000 participants.

The Conference will aim both to showcase progress since Barcelona and focus on two timelines: the “final sprint” to 2030, identifying priority actions for the Decade’s remaining years, and the “marathon” toward a post-2030 legacy. Preparations will be structured around clusters of partners working on broad themes such as biodiversity, coastal resilience, sustainable ocean economy, and multiple ocean stresses, with the aim to identify policy entry points and catalyze collective commitments. International and regional convenings in 2026 will be used to advance dialogue, align initiatives, and secure commitments ahead of Rio.

The Board highlighted the need to consider policy entry points at multiple levels, including national, regional, and subnational. The Board also emphasized the importance of alignment with ongoing work streams, encouraged further refinement of themes and partnerships, and requested adequate time to review and provide feedback on the forthcoming concept note that will be shared ahead of the next meeting for further discussion.

6. Call for Nominations for the Decade Advisory Board 2026-2027

The DCU provided an update on the nomination process for the members of the 2026-2027 cohort of the Board. The DCU confirmed that members who have served two years are eligible to be reappointed for another term, with at least five expert members from the current Board expected to continue in order to maintain institutional memory. Interested members are invited to submit nominations or self-nominations through the online form by 15 October and are also encouraged to notify the DCU directly.

Following the closing of nominations, the DCU will compile proposals for discussion with the IOC Officers, with final appointments anticipated by late November or early December. In parallel, a call will be launched in November for UN Member States and UN organizations to express interest in joining the Board, in line with the revised Terms of Reference adopted at the IOC Assembly in June. The Board encouraged members to share the call for nominations widely within their networks to ensure broad representation. It was noted that around 80 nominations had been received so far, with further submissions expected before the deadline. The Circular Letter containing the revised Terms of Reference and nomination link is available in the shared documentation for reference and dissemination.

Annex A: Meeting Agenda

13.00 – 13.10	1. Welcome & Overview of Agenda
13.10 – 13.15	2. Introductory remarks from IOC Executive Secretary
13.15 – 14.15	3. Presentation and discussion of Action Plan for Mid-Term Evaluation
14.15 – 14.25	<i>Health Break</i>
14.25 – 14.45	4. Quick update of Decade implementation & review of IPOS DCC re-submission
14.45 – 15.30	5. Preparing for the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference
15.30 – 15.45	6. Call for Nominations for DAB 2026 – 2027
15.45 – 16.00	7. AOB & Date of Next Meeting

Annex B: List of Participating Board Members

Expert Members

Prof. Donovan Campbell, University of the West Indies (Jamaica)

Awa Bouso Dramé, University College London; CoastGIS Research Institute (Senegal)

Linda Faulkner, New Zealand's National Commission for UNESCO; New Zealand's Sustainable Seas National Science Challenge; Tūtaiao Ltd (New Zealand)

José Maria Figueres, Pristine Seas, ORRAA; Antarctica 2020; SICPA Latin America; Tojoy Shared Holding Group (Costa Rica)

Dr. Michelle Heupel, Integrated Marine Observing system (Australia)

Charlotte Hudson, Blue Convergence Fund (USA)

Adrian Lema, National Center for Climate Research, Danish Meteorological Institute (Denmark)

Angelique Pouponneau, AOSIS (Seychelles)

Dr. Julie Reimer, Senior Policy & Economic Advisor (Canada)

Marc Simon, SUEZ France, Scientific Council of H/OEHS Exposure Scenario Tool (IHEST) (France)

Dr. Katy Soapi, Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science, Pacific Community (SPC, New Caledonia)

Dr. Alexander Turra, Oceanographic Institute, University of São Paulo (Brazil)

UN Agency Representatives

Vera Agostini, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Fredrik Haag, International Maritime Organization (IMO)

Jasdeep Randhawa, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030)

Proclaimed in 2017 by the United Nations General Assembly, the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), provides a convening framework to develop the scientific knowledge and partnerships needed to catalyse transformative ocean science solutions for sustainable development, connecting people and our ocean. The Ocean Decade is coordinated by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO.

Established during the Preparatory Phase and to continue throughout implementation until 2030, the IOC's Ocean Decade Series will provide key documentation about this global initiative and aims to serve as a primary resource for stakeholders seeking to consult, monitor and assess progress towards the vision and mission of the Ocean Decade.

