



2021 United Nations Decade
2030 of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development

Decade Advisory Board

Meeting No. 01/2026

14 January 2026

REPORT



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Intergovernmental
Oceanographic
Commission

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(IOC/2026/ODS/72)

DECADE ADVISORY MEETING NO. 01/2026

14 January 2026

16h – 17h30 CET (online)

MEETING REPORT

1. Welcome, Opening Remarks and Self-Introductions

The meeting opened with remarks from the Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, who stressed that the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 ('Ocean Decade') has reached a critical midpoint and that the next two years will be decisive for implementation. The [Mid-Term Evaluation](#) (MTE) was highlighted as a key guide for identifying priorities, gaps, and expected outcomes toward 2030, with a strong focus on delivery and impact. The [2027 Ocean Decade Conference](#) was identified as a major milestone, with the Decade Advisory Board (DAB) expected to play a central role, and the importance of the upcoming in-person Board meeting to advance preparations and collaboration was highlighted. The session concluded with the introduction of the newly appointed co-chairs Dr Michelle Heupel and Dr Donovan Campbell. This was followed by brief introductions from all new and returning DAB members.

2. Introduction to the Ocean Decade

The Decade Coordination Unit (DCU) presented an overview of the Ocean Decade, covering its governance, coordination structure, current status, and key milestones. The role and core functions of the DCU were outlined, including communications, stakeholder engagement, endorsement management, capacity development, and administrative and financial coordination. The broader coordination framework was also described, involving regional IOC entities, [Decade Coordination Offices \(DCOs\)](#) and [Decade Collaborative Centres \(DCCs\)](#), which support expertise and capacity development, while some gaps remain.

The Decade framework was explained, highlighting how endorsed Decade Actions contribute to the [ten Decade Challenges](#) and address global ocean priorities. The Board's strategic role, including guidance on Programme endorsement, was reaffirmed, along with the importance of linking global objectives to national and regional implementation through [National Decade Committees \(NDCs\)](#) and other coordination mechanisms.

Key milestones were reviewed, and the MTE was highlighted as a tool to strengthen implementation and impact, supported by a management response and [Action Plan](#). Finally, the DCU presented an overview of the planning for the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference, which will adopt a policy- and society-focused approach, supported by global workshops and

the development of thematic and regional roadmaps, under the strategic guidance of the Board.

3. Role and Working Methods of the Decade Advisory Board

The DCU presented the revised Terms of Reference of the Decade Advisory Board, developed following the MTE and endorsed by the IOC Assembly in June 2025, which strengthen the Board's strategic role for the remainder of the Decade. The updated framework emphasizes greater inclusivity, particularly through enhanced participation of UN entities, and focuses the Board's work on providing strategic advice on priority gaps, partnerships, science-policy impact pathways, resource mobilization, outreach, stakeholder engagement, and the implementation of the MTE Action Plan. The presentation also highlighted the intention to deepen interaction with decentralized coordination structures, maintain Programme endorsement reviews through online modalities, and dedicate in-person meetings to strategic discussions.

4. Discussion and Q&A

Board members acknowledged the DCU's overview and highlighted the strong global visibility of the Ocean Decade, including its growing outreach impact, while noting that further discussion would take place during the upcoming in-person meeting on 10-12 February in Rome, Italy. Questions from the DAB related to the process that was implemented for the MTE. The DCU clarified that the evaluation was conducted independently under UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service, with external consultants, and that the management response and Action Plan were developed by the Secretariat in response to the evaluation's findings, taking into account feasibility and resource constraints.

Board members also reflected on the added value of the DAB to date, emphasizing its contributions to validating strategic processes, shaping initiatives such as [Vision 2030](#), guiding inclusivity, and supporting links between science, policy, and national-level action. At the same time, they identified areas for stronger future impact, including private sector engagement, sustained momentum between meetings, and more systematic use of individual members' expertise through working groups and thematic or regional engagement. There was broad agreement that in-person meetings, concrete tasks, and clearer focus on strategic priorities enhance effectiveness, and that the coming term offers significant opportunities to strengthen science-policy linkages.

5. Arrangements for In-Person Meeting and AOB

The DCU outlined the objectives, structure, and expected outcomes of the upcoming three-day in-person DAB meeting in Rome in mid-February, emphasizing early group cohesion, strategic alignment, and effective collaboration. The agenda will be detailed and include objectives, expected outcomes, and guiding questions, alongside time allocated for

networking, informal dialogue, and a working dinner. The meeting will focus on clarifying the Board's role and translating the revised Terms of Reference into practical ways of working over the next two years, supported by targeted presentations from the DCU, former Board members, and UN agency representatives, and framed by the MTE.

The DCU identified four strategic priority areas for discussion: defining priority focus areas leading to the 2027 Conference and the final phase of the Decade; enhancing the uptake of ocean science and knowledge across different user groups; strengthening the global case for investment in ocean science; and improving meaningful engagement of underrepresented stakeholders, including industry and Indigenous and local knowledge holders. Background materials will include the MTE Action Plan, the [Barcelona Statement](#), the Rio Conference concept note, and a discussion paper to be shared shortly before the meeting. Board members welcomed the ambitious but focused agenda, highlighted the importance of clear roles, realistic expectations, and effective working methods, and expressed confidence that the collective expertise of the Board provides a strong foundation to advance the Decade's strategic objectives.

Annex A: Meeting Agenda

16.00 – 16.05	Welcome and Introduction of Co-Chairs for 2026 – 2027 Decade Advisory Board	IOC Executive Secretary
16.05 – 16.10	Opening Remarks	Co-Chairs
16.10 – 16.40	Self-Introduction of DAB Members	Expert Members & UN Agency Members
16.40 – 17.00	Introduction to Ocean Decade Role and Working Methods of DAB	DCU
17.00 – 17.15	Discussion and Q&A	Co-Chairs
17.15 – 17.30	Arrangements for In-Person Meeting and AOB	DCU

Annex B: List of Participating Board Members

Expert Members

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

Robert Blasiak, Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University (Sweden)

Camilla Brekke, Norwegian Polar Institute (Norway)

Ronaldo Christofolletti, Instituto do Mar - Universidade Federal de São Paulo (Brazil)

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

Katherine Garret-Cox, Gulf International Bank (UK)

Alfredo Girón, World Economic Forum (Switzerland)

Michelle Heupel, Australia's Integrated Marine Observing system (Australia)

Viktor Komorin, Ukrainian Scientific Center of Ecology of the Sea (Ukraine)

Davies M. Makilla, State Department for the Blue Economy and Fisheries (Kenya)

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

Prof. Hiroaki Saito, Atmosphere and Ocean Research Institute (AORI), The University of Tokyo (Japan)

Aminath Shauna, Soneva Conservation & Sustainability Maldives (Maldives)

UN Agency Representatives

Adnan Awad, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Madhushree Chatterjee, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

Lorant Czaran, United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)

Jana Friedrich, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Dimitry Gonchar, United Nations Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UN DOALOS)

Julien Marie François Million, World Bank (USA)

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.

