

Summary of the 31st Session of the IOC-UNESCO Assembly: 14th – 25th June 2021
By Prof Ed Hill (Head of UK Delegation) and Alan Evans (Alternate Head of Delegation)

Overview

The Assembly was held online for the first time in the IOC's 60 year history with a reduced agenda. To compensate [10 webinars](#) on IOC activities were delivered in the preceding weeks. [Full Assembly documents are available on the IOC Member States portal](#), highlights include:

Elections

The **UK will remain a member of the IOC Executive Council (EC)** until 2023 under Electoral Group 1, where Ms Marie-Alexandrine Sicre (France) was elected as the new Chair of Group 1 and Vice Chair of the IOC. Dr Elaine McDonagh (UK) based in Norway was re-elected as Electoral Group 1 member to serve a second 2 year term on the **Steering Committee of GOOS**. The IOC Chair, Mr Ariel H. Troisi (Argentina), was re-elected for a second term.

UN Ocean Decade

Resolution A-31/1 was adopted to: establish the Decade Advisory Board; support a number of registered and planned IOC-led Decade actions¹, and invite Member States (MS) to provide contributions (e.g. financial, in-kind, fund Actions and Offices, host international stakeholder events). **The UK co-sponsored this resolution (with 14 other MS) and in our intervention highlighted the G7 Ocean Decade Navigation Plan & spotlight activities under the UK G7 Presidency.**

IOC Regional Committee for the Central Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO)

The transfer of the IOCINDIO Regional Committee to a Sub-Commission was delayed in order to allow the Regional Committee to develop a work plan. IOC Decision A-31/3.5.6 includes the steps to be taken in order that a proposal for adoption of the transfer may be presented at the 32nd Assembly of the IOC in 2023. **The UK Delegation participated in the sessional working group meetings.**

IOC-WMO Joint Cooperative Board (JCB)

The strategy and RoP of the IOC-WMO JCB were adopted. The JCB replaces JCOMM, it has broader oversight but reduced powers to direct activities. Many of which now rest with GOOS. **The UK IOC Delegation worked with the UK WMO Delegation (Met Office) – the JCB strategy and RoP were adopted in parallel at the 73rd WMO EC.**

IOC Medium Strategy 2022 – 2029

The strategy ('One Planet, One Ocean') was endorsed, which contains five high level objectives² along with a focus on Global Priority Africa, Global Priority Gender Equality, SIDS, Early Career Ocean Professionals, and the value of the work of the IOC. **The UK Delegation contributed to the final version by way of feedback and as part of the Finance Advisory Group.**

Capacity Development (CD)

Following a review of the current IOC CD strategy a Decision was adopted to extend the current Strategy to 2023 to allow time for the Group of Experts on CD to draft an updated strategy, to be endorsed by the Assembly in 2023. **Alan Evans (NOC) currently co-Chairs the IOC Group of Experts on CD.**

Funding

Work is ongoing to make the case for an increased share of the UNESCO Regular Budget (IOC currently gets 2%). **The UK Delegation is working with the UK Perm Rep to UNESCO, where support of our endeavours by other UNESCO MS is increasing.**

Ocean Literacy (OL)

The IOC Ocean Literacy Plan of Action 2018 – 2021 was endorsed, including the formation of the IOC Group of Experts on OL. **The UK Delegation highlighted the results of the England/Wales OL survey and will look to identify a nomination for membership of the GoE.**

¹ ObsCoDe & Observing Together (GOOS); Decade Tsunami Programme; Ocean Literacy With All (OLWA); Ocean Practices for the Decade; Ocean Data and Information System (ODIS), Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS), OceanTeacher Global Academy (OTGA), World Ocean Database (WOD), and Pacific Islands Marine bio-invasions Alert Network (PacMAN) as Ocean Decade Actions

² Five high level objectives: (i) Healthy ocean and sustained ocean ecosystem services; (ii) Effective warning systems and preparedness for tsunamis and other ocean-related hazards; (iii) Resilience to climate change and contribution to its mitigation; (iv) Scientifically-founded services for the sustainable ocean economy;; (v) Foresight on emerging ocean science issues

Other

- The USA requested that the IOC look to develop a systematic approach and methodology to report in-kind contributions to the IOC. **The UK Delegation agreed with the idea but have concerns on how a homogenous approach can be achieved.**
- IOCAFRICA welcomed a new Chair to their Sub-Commission (Cote d'Ivoire).
- The concept of a State of the Ocean report was agreed, but the scope is still to be determined.
- A review of the IOC Rules of Procedure was agreed, motivated by the need to undertake activities in extreme events. Unlikely to be wholesale changes, other than to develop separate RoP for the EC and the Assembly.
- **The UK Delegations made interventions on the following agenda items:**
 - Item 3.2 - REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
 - Item 3.4.1 - WARNING AND MITIGATION SYSTEMS FOR OCEAN HAZARDS
 - Item 3.4.2 - INTERNATIONAL OCEANOGRAPHIC DATA AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE (IODE)
 - Item 3.4.3 - IPHAB-15
 - Item 3.5.3 – CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
 - Item 3.5.4 - OCEAN LITERACY PLAN AND STRATEGY
 - Item 3.5.5 - JOINT WMO-IOC COLLABORATIVE BOARD
 - Item 3.7 - DECADE IMPLEMENTATION