



INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

Fifty-third Session of the Executive Council
UNESCO, Paris, 3–9 February 2021 [Online session]

Item 4.1 of the 4th Revised Provisional Agenda

**REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE EXECUTIVE PLANNING GROUP ACTING
AS INTERIM DECADE ADVISORY BOARD (2021)**

UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030)

Summary

This document presents the revised terms of reference for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development Executive Planning Group (EPG), first established in 2018 through [Resolution EC-LI.1](#), to reflect the temporary extension of the EPG work so it can provide: (i) its expert support as an interim Decade Advisory Board to the Decade; and (ii) advice to the IOC Secretariat and governing bodies from the start of the Decade on 1st January 2021. The extended term of the EPG will end when the Decade Advisory Board foreseen in the Decade Implementation Plan is formally established and appointed in 2021. The Terms of Reference of the Decade Advisory Board will be presented to the IOC Assembly at its 31st session.

Financial implications are expected to be supported through extra-budgetary contributions (paragraph 4).

Proposed decision: The Executive Council is invited to approve the proposed terms of reference establishing the Executive Planning Group as the Interim Decade Advisory Board. A proposed Draft Resolution is referenced as EC-53/DR.[4.1] in the Second Revised Provisional Action Paper (document IOC/EC-53/AP Rev.2Add).

Introduction

1. In 2018, through Resolution EC-LI.1, the Executive Council approved the Terms of Reference of the Executive Planning Group (EPG) as an expert advisory body to the IOC governing bodies, to support the preparation of the Implementation Plan of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2031). The current EPG Terms of Reference are presented in [IOC/EC-LI/2 Annex 4](#) (Appendix 1). Throughout the preparation phase (2018–2020), the support of the Executive Planning Group was essential in advising on the preparation of the Implementation Plan, the engagement of stakeholders, the development of the 1st [Call for Action](#) and in supporting the development of a Decade communication strategy.

2. The Decade Implementation Plan foresees that a Decade Advisory Board will be established in 2021. The Decade Advisory Board (hereafter the Board) will be conceived as a strategic advisory body to the IOC governing bodies that does not exercise policy-making functions. The Board will provide strategic advice on Decade implementation, for example by commenting on the Decade monitoring and evaluation framework or data stewardship strategies. It will provide recommendations on the endorsement of programmes and Decade Collaborative Centres, and comment on the consolidated performance of Decade Actions throughout the review processes described in Section 3.3 of the Implementation Plan. Board members will also contribute to the assessment of resource requirements for Decade Actions and raise awareness about the Decade, including with potential resource providers. The Terms of Reference of the Decade Advisory Board will be presented to the IOC Assembly at its 31st session. It is expected that the Board will be appointed in September/October and hold its first meeting before the end of 2021.

3. In its coordinating functions of the Decade, the IOC will need scientific and technical guidance of an advisory body as early as at the start of the Decade, particularly with regards to the review of programme proposals received through the first Call for Action issued in October 2020. Pending the formal establishment of the Decade Advisory Board by the Assembly at its 31st session in June 2021 and the appointment of its members in September/October 2021, it is therefore proposed that the Decade Executive Planning Group established in 2018 to guide the development of the Implementation Plan, act as Interim Decade Advisory Board. Members of the EPG¹ have confirmed their willingness to play this role to support the Decade implementation through 2021. The Terms of Reference of the EPG have been revised to reflect this new role and are presented in this document to the IOC Executive Council for review and adoption. The revised Terms of Reference that will be adopted will supersede the current terms contained in Appendix 1 of document IOC/EC-LI/2 Annex 4.

Financial and Administrative Implications

4. Whilst the EPG will continue to work mainly through remote means (teleconferences, virtual meetings), a physical meeting is anticipated, only if and when the sanitary situation allows. In this event, the cost of a meeting in presential estimated at US\$30,000 would be funded through extra-budgetary resources already committed.

Proposed Decision

5. In light of the foregoing, the IOC Executive Council may wish to consider Draft Resolution EC-53/DR.[4.1] proposed in the addendum to the Action Paper (IOC/EC-53/AP Rev.2Add).

¹ See <https://www.oceandecade.org/about?tab=our-governance>

APPENDIX 1

Revised terms of reference of the Executive Planning Group (EPG) of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) acting as interim Decade Advisory Board (2021)

Purpose

The purpose of the EPG is to serve as an expert advisory body and act as an interim Decade Advisory Board to the IOC governing bodies to support the launch of the Decade, in accordance with the Implementation Plan of the Decade, and until the formal establishment of the Decade Advisory Board in 2021.

1. Functions of the Executive Planning Group

The EPG will meet its objectives through carrying out the following functions:

- (i) Provide inputs to the development of strategic documents related to structural and cross-cutting operational elements of the Decade Implementation Plan (e.g. Monitoring and Evaluation framework, Ocean Literacy Strategy, Decade Data, Information and Knowledge Management Strategy);
- (ii) Recommend strategies for resource mobilisation to support Decade implementation;
- (iii) Organise relevant Calls for Action under the Decade in the course of 2021;
- (iv) Engage and consult relevant communities regarding contributions to the objectives of the Decade, with priority given to engaging early career ocean professionals and disadvantaged groups and regions and to the science-policy interface, building on the outputs of preparation phase;
- (v) Review and recommend the endorsement of programmes under the Decade;
- (vi) Review and recommend the endorsement of Decade Collaborative Centres established under the Decade;
- (vii) Promote and raise awareness of the Decade and catalyse high-level interest and engagement in the Decade including contribution to the organisation of key Decade launch events;
- (viii) Provide information to the IOC Executive Secretary to enable his reporting to the IOC governing bodies, as well as facilitate the information required by the UN Secretary-General to report progress to the UN General Assembly²;
- (ix) Support communication, including around the Decade objectives, challenges and outcomes, to all stakeholders and gather feedback, as appropriate.

2. Composition of the Executive Planning Group

The EPG will maintain the same composition as when established in 2018 through Resolution EC-LI.1.

² This paragraph was amended by the IOC Executive Council at its 53rd session.

The Executive Secretary will coordinate the work of the EPG. The EPG members may appoint leaders to conduct specific tasks as appropriate.

In consultation with the EPG, the Executive Secretary may invite on an ad hoc basis other experts with a specific knowledge or experience that may be missing within the group to contribute to discussion of an agenda item of a given EPG meeting or specific task. EPG members serve in their **personal capacity** and do not represent their institutions. EPG members should be able to commit sufficient time to the work of the EPG and will take the responsibility to request the authorization of their employer to participate in this process.

3. Terms of appointment

All EPG members shall serve until the appointment of the Decade Advisory Board. In case of resignation, inactivity or other issues affecting the performance of the EPG, the process used to select members of the EPG will be used to consider replacements or additions. The appointment of the members will cease once the Decade Advisory Board is formally appointed.

4. Meetings

The EPG will meet in the course of 2021 through virtual meetings and possibly once physically if conditions allow it. The Executive Secretary, or in his absence a designated representative, will chair the EPG meetings.

Specific sub-groups may be established and mandated for conducting technical tasks as decided by the EPG. These technical working groups may meet as often as required by their members.

5. Decision-making process

The EPG strives for consensus on all issues in providing recommendations and advice to the IOC governing bodies. The IOC governing bodies will be informed if/when no consensus can be reached.

6. Secretariat

The IOC Secretariat will provide administrative, technical and editorial support to EPG as required.

7. Review and reporting

The output of the meetings will be checked against key strategic planning actions and timeframes. The summaries of the EPG meetings will be made available on the [Decade website](#). The EPG will submit a report of its activities to the IOC Assembly at its 31st session.