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IOC/SC-IOCARIBE-XVII/5.4 Rev

Cartagena, June 2023

Original: English



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**INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(Of UNESCO)**

Seventeenth Intergovernmental Session of the UNESCO-IOC Sub- commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions IOCARIBE (May 8 – 11, 2023)

TROPICAL AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN REGION OCEAN DECADE TASK FORCE

Terms of Reference

United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development
The IOC of UNESCO Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE)

The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, also known as "The Ocean Decade" (2021-2030), recognises the ocean as a key component of sustainable development. Its vision of "The Science We Need For The Ocean We Want" provides a global framework to address societal problems and challenges related to sustainable development by promoting ocean-based solutions.

The geographic scope for the Ocean Decade used by the IOC of UNESCO Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE) includes the Western Tropical Atlantic and the Eastern Tropical Pacific, thus the region known as the Tropical Americas and the Caribbean (TAC) Region¹.

As part of the Decade Preparatory and Consultation Process a virtual meeting for the Western Tropical Atlantic (WTA-Ocean Decade) was held on April 28-29, 2020. This meeting was coordinated by IOCARIBE Secretariat in close cooperation with the Government of Mexico, UNAM University and UNEP. Over 600 scientists, policymakers, programme managers, and government officials, UN, international and regional organisations, representatives from

¹ Countries, Associated States and Territories of the Tropical Americas and the Caribbean Region (IOCARIBE Member States): Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curacao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, France, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, The Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Maarten, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, United States of America, Venezuela.

Anguilla (United Kingdom), Bermuda (United Kingdom), British Virgin Islands (United Kingdom), Cayman Islands (United Kingdom), French Guiana (France), Guadeloupe (France), Montserrat (United Kingdom), Martinique (France), Bonaire, Saint Eustatius, Saba (Special Municipalities of the Netherlands), Saint Barthelemy (France), Saint Martin (France), Turks and Caicos (United Kingdom), United States Virgin Islands (United States of America).

tourism and maritime sectors, private enterprises, non-governmental organizations, and communicators engaged before and during the meeting. Regional priorities were established and new and expanded stakeholders and partnerships were identified.

A WTA Regional Planning Group (RPG) was established in October 2020 to advance and coordinate strategic partnerships and actions for the engagement in the Ocean Decade. The term of the RPG was two years or until the regional UN Decade of Ocean Science coordination mechanism is established.

The RPG established seven Working Groups to promote multi-disciplinary, inclusive co-design and implementation partnerships to achieve each of the six initial Societal Outcomes and one specific for Capacity Development, recognizing the efforts of the Working Groups and strategy for advancing the Ocean Decade in the Tropical Americas and the Caribbean Region. The seventh societal outcome, an Inspiring and Engaging Ocean, has been addressed as a cross cutting theme.

Seven online workshops were organized around the corresponding WTA Working Groups (conducted July – October 2021). The workshops aimed to review knowledge gaps, barriers, identify priority areas and needs in capacity development, and catalyse a co-design process to find transformative ocean science solutions and develop potential Regional Ocean Decade Actions (programmes / projects / activities / contributions) as part of the global collective effort under the Ocean Decade.

IOCARIBE acknowledged the importance of working at the national level to build connectivity between national and regional ocean science and management networks and underscored the value of creating national committees for the co-design and implementation of the Decade. Presently, only 4 countries (Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and the USA) out of 32 have established National Decade Committees in the Region.

A Kick-off TAC Regional Conference (16-17 December 2021), with the auspices of the Government of Colombia and Barbados, marked the launch of the UN Ocean Decade in the Tropical Americas and the Caribbean, and represents the beginning of the region-wide efforts in a substantive development and implementation of Decade Actions. As well, the Kick-off Conference highlighted emerging regional engagement in co-designing partnerships for Regional Ocean Decade Actions and mobilized contributions and expressions of interest by UN and regional agencies, governments, industry and private sectors, and other stakeholder groups. In the Kick-off Conference Regional Call of Action Member States, partners and stakeholders called for engaging and inspiring stakeholders to develop and enhance partnerships for co-design and co-delivery of transformative solutions for the critical decadal sustainable development challenges, leaving no one behind in the design, implementation and access to benefits, and to strengthen the governance and coordination in the Region the Conference called to support the creation of National Committees for the Ocean Decade to mobilize local and national collaboration for co-designing and coordinating local, national and regional actions.

In 2022, As a follow-up of the TAC Regional Ocean Decade Kick-Off Conference, the TAC Working Groups lead by the TAC RPG and supported by IOCARIBE, drafted Regional Ocean Decade Actions aiming to address TAC region priorities as resulted from the Co-design and Working Groups' Workshops, and help the region to overcome the identified challenges,

including strengthening marine scientific cooperation and enhancing ocean capacity development. Partners and stakeholders reviewed the proposed transformative ocean science solutions and assessed the value, feasibility, and priority of the potential Regional Ocean Decade Actions.

The following actions were submitted to the Ocean Decade call for Action 02/2021 and endorsed by the Ocean Decade Coordination Unit:

1. Project No. 133.2 – Gain knowledge to respond to multiple stressors
2. Project No. 134.2 - TAC Pollutants Observatory
3. Project No. 135.2 - TAC Ocean Observing and Forecasting System
4. Project No 136.2. Enhancing capacity development in the TAC Region
5. Project No. 137.2 Ocean Literacy in the TAC Region
6. Project No 138.2. Integrating Coastal Hazard Warning Systems for TAC
7. Project No 140.2. MACHC-IOCARIBE Seabed 2030 Project

In order to build on the above achievements and strengthen the mandate and membership of the RPG, it is now proposed to transform this group into a regional Task Force to provide strategic advice on implementation of the Ocean Decade in the TAC region. The Terms of Reference for the Task Force are presented below.

1. The Role of the Tropical Americas and Caribbean Region (TAC) Ocean Decade Task Force

The Decade TAC Task Force is established as a technical advisory body that will provide strategic advice to the Secretariat and Governing Bodies of IOC of UNESCO Subcommission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE).

Specifically, and in accordance with the Ocean Decade Implementation Plan and the Region priorities as defined by the TAC Regional Ocean Decade Kick-Off Conference, TAC Regional Planning Group and the Working Groups and IOCARIBE Member States, the TAC Task Force will:

- (i) Advise IOCARIBE on the engagement and outreach strategy of the Decade in order to help catalyse high-level interest and engagement in the TAC Region among key stakeholders, including leaders from Member States, UN Agencies, business, civil society and academia to ensure that the scientific outputs of the Decade support the successful achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
- (ii) Provide a strategic vision, direction, and coordination of specific actions to IOCARIBE and to the TAC Working Groups for identifying and fulfilling priorities and needs, with special attention to SIDS, into co-designed Decade Actions including support to the strengthening of the key elements of a robust enabling environment from resource mobilization, development of new partnerships, coordination, to research and policy initiatives;
- (iii) Facilitate and provide support to the development of co-designed programmes, projects and initiatives for submission in response to Calls for Decade Actions;
- (iv) Support socialization / communication on the Ocean Decade in the TAC Region with existing networks, public and private institutions and organisations, and stakeholders;

- (v) Identify multisector / multistakeholder engagement and outreach activities to engage further regional stakeholders outside the TAC Task Force and raise awareness of the Decade. This will include specific mechanisms to engage priority groups, including Indigenous and local knowledge holders, representatives of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Early Career Ocean Professionals, ports authorities and maritime services, business and industry or philanthropy;
- (vi) Identify opportunities, jointly with TAC Working Groups, for integrated regional programmes, projects, and activities as well as for engagement and support at the global, regional and national scales to advance the Decade Challenges seven societal outcomes and the cross-cutting issues identified in the Implementation Plan and in the TAC Regional Workshops;
- (vii) Provide guidance and support on the mobilization of financial and in-kind resources to support TAC Ocean Actions implementation including creating connections to potential providers of in-kind and financial support to the Ocean Decade; and
- (viii) Establish specific / thematic working groups as deemed necessary.

2. Composition and selection process

The TAC Decade Task Force will comprise up to 15 expert members serving in their individual capacity drawn from government, private sector, philanthropy, civil society, and the scientific community, as well as six members representing regional organizations (UN agencies, regional intergovernmental organization and NGOs) to be identified through consultations with the IOCARIBE Officers.

Proposals for nominations can be either self-nominations or nominations made by IOC-UNESCO and United Nations Member States or United Nations entities, as well as intergovernmental organizations.

Expert members will be selected with due consideration to expertise, geographic, generational, and gender balance and will serve on a voluntary, non-remunerated basis in their personal capacities. Expert members of the TAC Decade Task Force do not represent their institutions or countries. They should be able to commit sufficient time to the work of the Regional TAC Decade Task Force and will take the responsibility to request the authorization of their employer to participate in this process.

Membership on the TAC Decade Task Force will be for a two-year term, renewable for a second mandate. Members' terms will be staggered to ensure there is information exchange and mentoring between current and new TAC Decade Task Force members.

A Selection Panel convened by the IOC Executive Secretary and composed of the IOCARIBE Secretariat and the Decade Coordination Unit, will be tasked with selecting the members of the TAC Decade Taskforce. The final selection list will be discussed with the IOCARIBE Officers before final decision by the IOC Executive Secretary.

The Selection Panel will ensure that the proposed members have sufficient skills, knowledge, influence and impartiality regarding the vision and objectives of the Decade and are able to undertake the work outlined in the terms of reference. Their skills and expertise should cover at least one of the following areas:

- (i) Intergovernmental processes and coordination;
- (ii) The ocean aspects of sustainable development;
- (iii) Ocean science (Natural / social dimensions);
- (iv) Science-policy / decision / end-user interface and engagement;
- (v) Ocean Economy / finance/ partnerships;
- (vi) Innovation / technology/ infrastructure development;
- (vii) Capacity development, training and transfer or marine technology, education, communications and outreach; and/or
- (viii) Resource mobilization and development of large-scale multi/inter-disciplinary international programmes / projects.

3. Governance

The Executive Secretary of IOC/UNESCO will appoint two Co-Chairs amongst the members of the Task Force for a period of one year (12 months) taking into consideration gender and geographical balance in this selection. IOCARIBE will act as the Secretariat, while the TAC Decade Coordination Office is established, and will provide administrative, technical and editorial support to the TAC Decade Task Force.

4. Meetings of the TAC Decade Task Force

The TAC Decade Task Force shall meet four (4) times per year, with at least one (1) *in-person* meeting annually when possible. Additional *in-person* or virtual meetings will be held as necessary. The Co-chairs of the will be primarily responsible for the development of the TAC Decade Task Force Meeting Agenda and directing the TAC Decade Task Force meetings. All TAC Decade Task Force Members can recommend agenda items. The TAC Decade Task Force may invite the Working Group Leads and external experts as needed to address specific issues or tasks. The decision to invite these external experts would be a decision of the TAC Decade Task Force.

International and regional intergovernmental organisations and funding partners will be invited to act as observers at meetings of the TAC Regional Task Force.

Minutes of the TAC Decade Task Force meetings will be developed and distributed by the Secretariat for the TAC Decade Task Force members.

The Task Force will report annually to the IOCARIBE Officers and to the biennial sessions of the IOC of UNESCO Subcommission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions, as well as to the of IOC of UNESCO Governing Bodies.

5. Decision-making process and organization of work

The TAC Decade Task Force shall operate by consensus. English will be the primary working language with accommodations for Spanish and French when staffing / financing permit.

