

DRAFT RESOLUTION IOC/A-33/DR. [3.3.1]

Submitted by: Kenya

Co-sponsors: Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Togo

STRENGTHENING THE IOCAFRICA SECRETARIAT: A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE FOR ADVANCING OCEAN SCIENCE AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA AND SMALL ISLAND STATES

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission,

Preamble

1. **Recognizing** the strategic importance of Africa's Ocean and coastal regions to the mandate of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), particularly in advancing ocean science, sustainable resource use, early warning systems, and climate resilience;
2. **Reaffirming** that Africa's and the Adjacent Island States marine and coastal zones are vital for global biodiversity, food security, livelihoods, and economic development, yet remain underrepresented in ocean research, data systems, and governance structures;
3. **Recalling** that UNESCO's designation of Africa as a Global Priority, and the continued commitment through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, provide a framework that aligns closely with IOC's goals for equitable and inclusive scientific cooperation;
4. **Emphasizing** the need for the IOC to strengthen programmatic support, institutional capacity, and representation for African and the Adjacent Island Member States, to ensure full and active participation in shaping global ocean policy and science agendas;
5. **Reaffirming** that the establishment of Priority Africa in 1989 marked UNESCO's institutional commitment to support Africa's development, and recalling that during the 40th session of the General Conference, Member States reiterated that "UNESCO should make Priority Africa a reality";
6. **Acknowledging** 40 C/Resolution 61, through which the General Conference requested the Director-General to ensure the consistency and complementarity of programmes developed for Africa in line with governing body decisions, and within the frameworks of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063;

7. **Affirming** that Africa is recognized as a Global Priority by UNESCO, and that this designation must be reflected in sustained programmatic support, institutional capacity, and decision-making influence across all levels of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission;
8. **Welcoming in particular:**
 - (i) the considerable increase of the regular budget allocated to IOCAFRICA activities, in line with UNESCO's Global Priority Africa, and taking into account the need to avail adequate resources for programme implementation under Revised Programme and Budget for 2024–2025 (42 C/5) following Member States' strategic guidance provided in IOC Resolution A-32/4;
9. **Recognizing** the urgent need to translate policy declarations into sustained and tangible programmatic support for Africa and the Adjacent Island States ocean science agenda;
10. **Recalling** that IOCAFRICA has become a cornerstone of Africa's and the Adjacent Island States implementation of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and has served as the primary mechanism for delivering IOC's mandate across the African continent and Adjacent Island States;
11. **Acknowledging** with appreciation the increasing volume of African and Adjacent Island States-led projects, regional partnerships, and international collaborations facilitated through IOCAFRICA, which demonstrate both the relevance and efficiency of its Secretariat;
12. **Underscoring** that an adequately resourced and strategically positioned IOCAFRICA Secretariat is indispensable to ensuring Africa and Adjacent Island States equitable participation and leadership in global ocean governance, scientific cooperation, and policy dialogue;

I. Reaffirming the Strategic Role of IOCAFRICA

13. **Recalling** Resolutions IOC-XXIX/2 and IOC-XXXI/2, which established IOCAFRICA as the regional subsidiary body responsible for coordinating marine science, services, and capacity development in Africa and the Adjacent Island States;
14. **Recognizing** IOCAFRICA's critical role in advancing the implementation of the IOC Medium-Term Strategy (2022–2029), the African Union's Blue Economy Strategy, Agenda 2063, and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030);
15. **Welcoming** the increased participation and demand from African Member States and the Adjacent Island States, development partners, and regional stakeholders, and **acknowledging** the Secretariat's expanding programme portfolio and delivery responsibilities;

16. **Noting** the increased responsibilities of IOCAFRICA in coordinating the implementation of the Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap, regional Early Warning Systems, ocean data and information infrastructure, and capacity development initiatives across more than 35 African coastal and Island States;
17. **Appreciating** the growing number of African-led projects, proposals, and partnerships facilitated by the IOCAFRICA Secretariat, and the critical need for stable and dedicated staffing to sustain and scale these efforts;

II. Addressing the Structural Underfunding of the IOCAFRICA Secretariat

18. **Recognizing** that the IOCAFRICA Secretariat concurrently serves as the UN Decade's Regional Coordination Office for Africa and the Adjacent Island States, thereby assuming dual responsibilities that extend well beyond capacity development to include strategic coordination, programme execution, technical backstopping, and continental stakeholder engagement;
19. **Further noting** that the need to maintain Africa as a budgetary priority within IOC programming has been emphasized by Member States during discussions at the IOCAFRICA Sessions, IFAG meeting, and the IOC Financial Committee, where similar concerns regarding under-resourcing of regional offices have been raised;
20. **While appreciating** that a second professional post will be operational from July, 2025 funded under the Regular Programme, **note** that no General Service (GS) or other critically needed positions are covered by regular budget allocations;
21. **Acknowledging** that administrative and operational support has been sustained through in-kind secondment by the Government of Kenya and shared arrangements with the IOCAFRICA Decade Coordination Office;
22. **Welcomes** the Secretariat's lean operational model and propose to allocate approximately 13% of the Regular program budget under 43/C5 to IOCAFRICA with minimum staff-related costs while maximising delivery, regional engagement, and partnerships;
23. **Noting** with great concern the temporary freeze of IOCAFRICA budget allocations and activities under UNESCO's current Responsible Management Actions, and **recognizing** the negative impact of such measures on programme continuity and regional support;
24. **Urging** UNESCO in view of Africa's designation as Global Priority to release the necessary funds to complete the implementation of IOCAFRICA's approved activities for the remainder

of 2024-2025 biennium, and to ensure that any further actions of this nature consider the special needs of IOCAFRICA and minimize adverse effects on its operations.

III. Institutional Strengthening and Strategic Staffing

25. **Proposing** staffing configuration as necessary to ensure effective delivery and coordination, consisting of:

- Senior level Head of IOCAFRICA Secretariat (strategic leadership, high-level representation);
- Programme Officer (technical implementation and donor reporting);
- Two Associate Programme Officers (activity planning and delivery);
- Two Programme Assistants (coordination and logistics support);
- Three Administrative Assistants (procurement, HR),
- Communications & Outreach Assistant (visibility and engagement),
- IT/Data Support Assistant (digital systems and data infrastructure);

26. **Emphasizing** that the above described proposed team reflects a lean and delivery-focused approach aligned with IOCAFRICA's expanding regional mandate and its growing role in global partnerships under the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

27. **Emphatically calls** for the elevation of the position of the Head of the IOCAFRICA Secretariat to align with the leadership status of regional heads within the UN system, and to ensure that IOCs and IOCAFRICA's voice is represented with credibility and influence in global ocean policy dialogues. This upgrade is essential not only for authoritative participation in high-level decision-making, but also for enabling IOCAFRICA to lead strategic coordination and effectively engage with international partners and funding mechanisms.

IV. Strategic Action and Call for Support

28. **Further requests** the IOC Executive Secretary, in consultation with IOCAFRICA Officers to consider the possibilities of ensuring a more stable funding base for IOCAFRICA, including the opportunities offered by Article 10.4 of the Statutes of the Commission—such as establishing special purpose financial mechanisms or cost-sharing arrangements with donor Member States—with a view of submitting a concrete and actionable proposal to the IOC Executive Council at its 59th Session;

29. **Affirms** the collective commitment to the concrete reinforcement of the IOCAFRICA Secretariat through the actions set out in this resolution—including budget stability, staff

augmentation, strengthened leadership, and formal structural recognition—as a key step in advancing IOC's contribution to Priority Africa.

30. **Further calls for** decisive safeguarding of IOCAFRICA's financial and institutional integrity, thereby enabling it to effectively fulfil its dual mandate as the IOC's regional coordination mechanism and the UN Decade's Regional Coordination Office for Africa and the Adjacent Island States.
31. **Requests the IOC Executive Secretary to:**
 - (i) Explore options for formal integration of General Service staff positions within the Regular Programme budget for IOCAFRICA;
 - (ii) Mobilize additional resources, including extra-budgetary funding and co-financing arrangements, as well as human resources partnerships to support essential staff positions;
 - (iii) Ensure protection and prioritization of IOCAFRICA's operational budget across all budget scenarios, in keeping with Africa's status as a UNESCO Global Priority
32. **Urges** IOC Member States, especially African and the Adjacent Island Member States to increase their voluntary and in-kind support to IOCAFRICA, including the secondment and loan of technical and administrative staff, and financial contributions earmarked for Secretariat strengthening;
33. **Encourages** strengthened collaboration with strategic partners, regional economic communities, and development agencies to establish jointly funded technical and programmatic support positions.
34. **Encourages** the development of a dedicated IOCAFRICA Support Fund under the IOC Special Account, to receive voluntary contributions aimed at strengthening Secretariat operations and technical delivery, ensuring transparency and accountability in fund management, and inviting initial seed contributions from key Member States and partners to enable immediate mobilization;
35. **Calls upon** UNESCO Field Offices and Category 2 Centres in Africa to align their technical cooperation frameworks with the priorities and staffing needs of IOCAFRICA, enabling pooled technical assistance where feasible;
36. **Urges** UNESCO, in view of Africa's designation as a Global Priority, to release the necessary funds to complete the implementation of IOCAFRICA's approved activities for the remainder

of the 2024–2025 biennium, and to ensure that any future actions of this nature consider the special needs of IOCAFRICA and minimize adverse effects on its operations.