



INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

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Item 3.1 of the Provisional Agenda

**STATEMENT FROM THE IOC CHAIRPERSON ON THE OCCASION
OF THE 33RD SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY, 25 JUNE–3 JULY 2025**

INFORMATION

This statement was delivered by Professor Yutaka MICHIDA, at the opening of the Assembly under item 3.1 pursuant to IOC Rule of Procedure 45.1(a).

Dear distinguished delegates of IOC Member States,
representatives from partner organisations,
invited experts,
colleagues and friends.

It is my great pleasure and honour to stand here as the Chair of the Commission and to address recent developments in the work of the Commission and perspectives for the coming years, in accordance with the IOC Rules of Procedure 45.1(a).

First of all, I would like to extend my warm and heartfelt welcome to Liberia in joining the IOC family on May 14 this year. This brings the number of IOC Member States on board to 151.

We have now reached at the halfway point of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030). I am pleased to note the leading roles of our Commission from the planning stage to the on-going implementation process of the UN Ocean

Decade, as its coordinating body, bringing together diverse stakeholders. The *Barcelona Statement* and the Vision 2030 process, both outcomes from the UN Ocean Decade Conference kindly hosted by the Government of Spain in Barcelona in April 2024, identify the future priorities for ocean knowledge and science generation within the framework of the Ocean Decade. One of the agenda items of this Assembly is the “Report of the UN Ocean Decade Implementation Plan and Results of the Mid-Term Evaluation.” I invite you all to consider how we can further strengthen our efforts towards 2030, ensuring the ocean remains central to global sustainability.

Looking back on the past two-year intersessional period, the ocean has received increasing global attention due to growing recognition of its vital role in tackling climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainable development. The UN Ocean Decade continues to amplify this awareness, reinforcing the ocean’s significance in shaping a resilient and sustainable future. The 20th anniversary of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami commemorated last year served as a powerful reminder of the progress we have made in tsunami readiness including effective early warning systems, and the work that remains to build truly resilient societies.

The ocean continues to feature prominently on the international agenda, including at the 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP28) and the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP16) held in Cali in 2024. Our Commission was actively represented at both conferences, as well as at 25th meeting of the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, held last week in New York, which focused on capacity building and the transfer of marine technology. Scientific evidence and rising environmental risks have prompted stronger political action, such as the adoption of the BBNJ Agreement in 2023 and the following process. Our commitments to ocean-based solutions for sustainable development include contributions to the Third World Ocean Assessment (WOA-III), support for the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) as well as support for sustainable ocean planning and management.

The scientific knowledge and data provided by IOC remain fundamental to advancing our understanding of the ocean and strengthening the science-policy interface. As Chair of the Commission, I fortunately have attended several major international conferences during this intersessional period. It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge the growing recognition of and expectations on our Commission. This reflects the increasing recognition of ocean science and services as essential drivers of sustainable development.

Just two weeks ago, the third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) was successfully held in Nice co-hosted by the Governments of France and Costa Rica. The conference comprised 10 Ocean Action Panels, covering its overarching theme “Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean.” The Conference produced a wide-ranging Political Declaration “*Our ocean, our future: united for urgent action.*” I am confident that our Commission will continue to “*Support a strong science-policy interface to provide timely, credible and salient scientific and socioeconomic information to inform policies and actions.*” We will also “*Commit to strengthening coordinated international, regional, sub-regional and national scientific observation and data collection efforts, including, as appropriate,*

through the development of integrated information management, tools such as digital representation of the ocean, infrastructure and systems that provide access to reliable, timely and high-quality marine data” as described in the UNOC3 Political Declaration.

As the IOC Chair, I had the privilege of participating in UNOC3, where I witnessed our Commission's leadership in advancing ocean science and knowledge to inform action towards achieving SDG 14 and the 2030 Agenda, in line with the IOC's mandate and strategic priorities. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the attentive engagement of the IOC Secretariat led by our Executive Secretary, Mr Vidar Helgesen, my fellow Officers, and Member States as well as the co-hosts, the previously mentioned Governments of France and Costa Rica.

As recorded in the meeting documents of this Assembly, our Commission played essential roles in five main areas at UNOC3: (i) fulfilling the critical knowledge priorities through the Ocean Decade as identified in *The Barcelona Statement*; (ii) increasing sustained investment in ocean science activities and infrastructure for observations and data; (iii) accelerating science-based sustainable ocean plans; (iv) increasing the generation of data, knowledge and capacity to support the implementation of commitments under BBNJ and GBF; (v) as well delivering collaborative actions for disaster risk reduction and preparedness in the face of ocean hazards. Discussion and review of our programmes at this Assembly will further enhance our engagement and contribution to these five areas.

In my opening statement at the 57th IOC Executive Council last year, I quoted our former Chair, Captain Ariel Troisi, at the 32nd Assembly in 2023, highlighting that our Commission has a crucial role to play in global efforts. He said that, as a platform for international collaboration and cooperation, we have the unique opportunity to harness the collective wisdom, expertise, and resources of our Member States to find innovative solutions, develop effective policies, and implement concrete actions to address the complex issues our ocean has been facing.

There is growing uncertainty around the globe. We have to make concerted efforts to navigate these difficult and challenging times. We need to carefully consider several scenarios and every possibility at this Assembly, especially financial aspects. I would urge you all to contribute to these discussions not only at the plenary but also at the sessional Financial Committee.

I would like to remind you that our Commission was established as a body with functional autonomy within UNESCO. Active participation and engagement of each of you are pivotal in realizing “the Future of IOC and the Ocean we want.” I encourage you to share your insights, expertise, and experience in our collective efforts to shape a more sustainable and healthier future—for both our Commission and the ocean.

Please allow me to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my fellow Officers for their remarkable professionalism, dedication, and willingness to take on numerous responsibilities. Their commitment has been truly instrumental in the progress we have made together. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our former Chair, Captain Ariel Troisi of Argentina, for his valuable advice and ongoing guidance. My deepest appreciation goes to all members of the IOC Secretariat, both at Headquarters in Paris and in our regional offices around the world, for their tireless efforts and unwavering support under the outstanding leadership of our Executive Secretary, Mr Vidar Helgesen.

Let me conclude my statement with a sense of expectation for what we can truly accomplish together over the next six and a half days. I would like to reiterate that your dedication and engagement are the driving forces for our Commission. Let us move forward with a shared purpose in the spirit of our Commission—One Planet, One Ocean, One Team.