



IOC/INF-1408
Paris, 11 June 2021
English only

INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

**STATUS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE IOC COMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY REPORT**
(SINCE THE 29TH IOC ASSEMBLY, JUNE 2017)

Summary

This document provides a status report on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the IOC Communications Advisory Report 2016–2020 ([IOC/EC-XLIX/Inf.2](#)) on the development of corporate communications materials and activities. It also informs on the next steps planned by the IOC Secretariat to develop a communications strategy for the period 2021-2025.

Introduction

As a starting point to the development and implementation of an IOC-wide communications strategy, the Secretariat commissioned the production of a Communications Advisory Report and Action Plan (IOC/EC-XLIX/Inf.2) to assist the Secretariat and Member States in achieving IOC's overall organizational objectives, engaging effectively with relevant stakeholders, and demonstrating the impact of its work. The Advisory Report and Action Plan was released in June 2016 and communicated to the IOC Executive Council at its 49th session. Follow-up information documents (2017: [IOC/INF-1348](#); 2018: [IOC/EC-LI/2 Annex 1 Add.1](#); 2019: [IOC/INF-1382](#)) informing about the status of progress in the implementation were provided at the 29th IOC Assembly (21–29 June 2017, Paris, France), at the 51st session of the IOC Executive Council (3–6 July 2018, Paris, France), and at the 30th IOC Assembly (26 June - 4 July 2019, Paris, France)

This information document will continue this follow-up exercise, providing a final status report on the implementation of the key recommendations emanating from the Communications Advisory Report since July 2018, and setting the grounds for the development of communications planning and strategy for the next period, 2021-2025.

Table 1 below summarizes the status of implementation of the 11 actions recommended by the Communications Advisory Report to the IOC Secretariat, from 2018 to today.

Recommendations	Implementation Status		
	June 2018	July 2019	June 2021
Production of Corporate Brochure	Completed	Completed	Completed
Production of corporate videos	Completed	Completed	Completed
Creation of brand guidelines	Completed	Completed	Completed
Launch of high profile campaign: UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030)	In Progress: Started Implementation	In Progress: Advanced	Completed
Redevelopment of IOC website and information tools	In Progress: Started Implementation	In Progress: Advanced	Completed
Establishment of a Communications Team	Completed	Completed	Completed
Organization of communications and media training for IOC staff	Completed	Completed	Completed
Development of IOC Media Plan	In Progress: design phase	In Progress: Started Implementation	Completed
Development of monthly IOC e-Newsletter	Completed	Completed	Completed
Development of IOC Policy Brief Series	In Progress: design phase	Completed	Completed
Set up of marketing database and annual survey	Completed	Completed	Completed

Table 1. Status of the implementation of the 11 recommendations.

As the table shows, implementation of the various recommendations moved forward consistently. All of the 11 recommendations presented in the Communications Advisory Report have now been completed. The following sections give specific information on the recommendations completed since the 30th Session of the IOC Assembly (2019).

All information about recommendations implemented before or by the 30th Session of the IOC Assembly can be found in the **Status Report on the Implementation of the IOC Communications Advisory Report (IOC/INF-1382)**.

High Profile Campaign – UN Decade of Ocean Science (In Progress)

Following the 5 December 2017 proclamation by the UN General Assembly of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030), IOC has successfully launched a digital campaign around the Decade preparatory process, including social media materials, several videos featuring key stakeholders, and two brochures. The brochures are available from <http://ioc.unesco.org>. As the Decade preparatory process and constituent elements take shape, the communication needs and targets will evolve. The IOC Secretariat is actively planning communications actions during the preparatory phase (2018–2020) and the actual Decade (2021–2030). A communication strategy for the Decade is currently being drafted by the IOC Secretariat in collaboration with external marketing consultants.

Launch Events

‘Brave New Ocean’ was a virtual event held on 3 February 2021 to launch the Ocean Decade. It brought together ocean experts and leaders from around the world to highlight the immense challenges and opportunities that ocean knowledge can offer humanity to build a better and stronger post-pandemic world. The event had more than 15,000 viewers on its first broadcast, and has also now more than 9,100 views in English and more than 1,550 in French on social media. **First International Ocean Decade Conference** took place virtually from Berlin on 1 June 2021. The event was implemented with support of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). **Regional Launch Events:** Egypt has offered to host a regional kick-off conference for Africa. Planning for this conference is underway with the involvement of colleagues from the IOC Sub-Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States. The conference will be a hybrid conference from 7 to 9 December 2021.

Communication, partnerships, and outreach activities

Communications Strategy: The latest version of the *Advisory Report on the Communications Strategy for the Decade* was finalized in March 2021 (ref. The Ocean Decade Series, 25). The Strategy is based on six global objectives focused on demonstrating the importance of ocean science on a global and regional stage, increasing engagement and involvement in the Decade, communicating clear value propositions to the key target audiences, increase cross-working and collaboration across regions, and building communications capacities at the local, regional and international level. The strategy presents a clear set of actions and messages that must be implemented through the next three years, across a range of different media, to achieve the global objectives.

Global Communications Campaign – Generation Ocean: The first key pillar of the Decade Communications Strategy, the campaign will be launched during the second half of 2021 and will be managed operationally through a service provider contracted by the IOC Secretariat via a full-fledged procurement process validated by the UNESCO Contracts Committee. All the campaign materials, strategy and website will be prepared in view of the launch.

Communications Advisory Group: The Ocean Decade Communications Advisory Group (CAG) is composed of 28 communication officers and experts from a wide range of institutional backgrounds, including philanthropies, scientific institutions, governments, civil society, the private sector and UN organizations, and by November 2020 constituted through a mix of open call for applications and direct nominations by UN organizations engaged in the Ocean Decade (members will serve for two years until June 2022.) The CAG is co-Chaired by an elected member — presently, Carlie Weiner (Schmidt Ocean Institute) — and by a representative from the Interim Ocean Decade Advisory Board—presently, Linwood Pendleton (REV Ocean). The CAG has met four times since

November 2020 and has made critical contributions to the Decade Communications by reviewing communication materials put together during the Preparatory Phase, and providing inputs to the 2021–2023 Ocean Decade Communications Strategy. The CAG has constituted four task groups, engaging members in specific projects, including improving language and regional accessibility of communications materials, outreach to Aquariums and Museums, and regional media outreach.

Communications Infrastructure & Assets: The official Decade website was launched in June 2019. Since its launch, <http://oceandecade.org> has been the main entry point for stakeholders worldwide seeking the latest developments and news about Decade preparations, upcoming events, and resources. Between December 2020 and March 2021 approximately 102,968 visitors (+53%) accessed the website resulting in 352,120 page views (+43%). This compares to 57,120 visitors and 245,644 page views in the same period in 2019/2020. 981 users are now registered on the website to receive updates on Decade progress. Conceived for the final two years of the preparatory phase (2019–2020), the website will be restructured to respond to specific needs of the Implementation Phase, including through the integration of online architecture to facilitate stakeholder engagement and monitoring of Decade progress via the Global Stakeholder Forum. A Request for Proposals was launched for this work in October 2020, a contractor was selected in March 2021, and work has commenced with a tentative delivery date of September 2021.

The IOC Secretariat finalised the **Ocean Decade Brand Guidelines** (ref. [The Ocean Decade Series, 18](#)), which orients partners and stakeholders on the appropriate processes required to use the Decade brand, including its logo, slogan, colour palette, typeface, icons and other graphic guidelines. Since June 2019, the IOC Secretariat also invested heavily — by itself and with partners—in the production of key videos and institutional publications to showcase the Decade and highlight its benefits to society. This includes a series of videos on the ten Ocean Decade Challenges which will be used in launch events throughout 2021. A full up-to-date list of publicly-available Decade videos can be found on the UNESCO YouTube Channel account, under a [dedicated playlist](#) and brochures, with an updated version of the official [Decade brochure](#).

Global, Regional and Partner Events: Communications and outreach activities supported global, regional and partner-led Decade events during the current period. For each event they typically included inputs to the event concept and agenda, framing of event messaging, design and production of event dissemination materials, event promotion via social media platforms, and post-event write up of news releases.

Media Coverage and Partnerships: The IOC Secretariat has been actively pursuing media partnerships to grow the organic coverage and overall media interest in the upcoming Decade. Conversations are underway to enlist more active participation in the Decade from major global media, including BBC and The Economist (through its World Ocean Initiative). The Decade has been particularly well covered by major regional and national media outlets in Brazil, India, Italy, New Zealand, and Portugal, showcasing the need for further media outreach at the national level, preferably via national partners and collaborators who are familiar with the media landscape and many times have direct contacts with members of the press. An editorial partnership has been signed with [Environment Coastal & Offshore \(ECO\) Magazine](#) ensuring a dedicated space for publishing editorials, analytical pieces, or Decade preparatory updates in every issue of ECO Magazine. A Special Issue dedicated entirely to the Ocean Decade will be published in May 2021, and promoted throughout the main communication channels. Additional partnerships are in the process of being set with other national, regional and global outlets.

Redevelop the IOC websites, Online Presence and Information Tools (Completed)

Website

The IOC took a major step in completely revamping its online presence, replacing two out-of-date corporate websites with a unique, centralized portal for all IOC corporate communications and

programmatic activities (<http://ioc.unesco.org>). The new integrated corporate portal combines the public outreach and IOC governance aspects of IOC's online presence, creating an easy-to-use, visually-appealing platform that includes both a public interface (news, events, publications, IOC governing body documentation, contact database) and a Secretariat intranet for internal communications. The new website was launched in September 2020.

The new website is the fruit of co-design across the IOC senior management, the Communications Team, and the IOC staff, highlighting the strengths and addressing the weaknesses of our prior website presence to build a new public face for the IOC. A virtual window into the work of IOC that reflects the modern, fast-paced, cross-disciplinary and delivery-focused organization IOC has grown to be as a result of a collective effort by Member States, the Secretariat and our many stakeholder communities.

On the eve of the Ocean Decade, the unveiling of our new digital home signalled the commitment of the IOC Secretariat to continuously reinvent itself to promote, enhance and transform ocean science into applications for sustainable ocean management.

Among the strengths of the new website:

- A Member States Portal where Circular Letters, Statutory Events and Statutory Documents are easily accessible
- Smooth integration of all IOC projects, programmes, publications and activities within the same website
- An architecture that highlights the cross-cutting, interdisciplinary nature of IOC's work, with a Topics List that allows users to quickly get information about IOC's work in specific fields of interest
- A dedicated and complete Partners section.

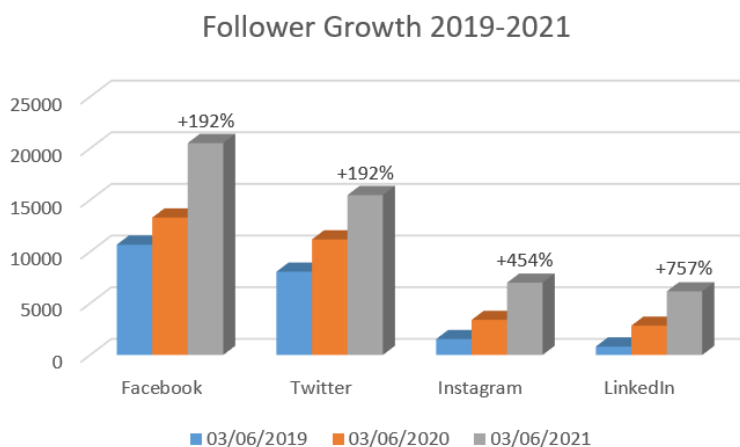
The new website will make it easier for Member States and other stakeholders to engage in the work of IOC, and help the organization move forward into the opportunities and challenges of the next Decade.

Social Media

Despite the covid-19 pandemic, and potentially as a related outcome of more only activity, IOC's social media presence continued to grow in fast rhythmic, as the data above illustrate ([Figure 1](#)). The figure shows the growth rate of IOC's followers on the different social media platforms in the two-year period 1 June 2019 to 1 June 2021. Much of this growth in social media visibility was driven by increased IOC mobilization around major scientific, policy and intergovernmental conferences and campaigns, i.e.:

- a. World Tsunami Awareness Day (5 November, worldwide) – last celebrated at UNESCO and various locations worldwide as well as through an online campaign between 13 October and 5 November 2020.
- b. IOC 60th Anniversary and launch of the 2020 Edition of the Global Ocean Science Report - celebrated jointly on 14 December 2020 in a much attended online event.
- c. Launch of the Ocean Decade and various related virtual events, including the Brave New Ocean (3 February 2021) and the Launch of the First International Ocean Decade Conference (1 June 2021)
- d. World Oceans Day (June, 8, worldwide) – celebrated with two virtual events organized by the UN Secretariat with inputs from UNESCO and IOC on June 2020 and 2021, and further

iterated online via social media and the IOC-managed official UN Portal for World Oceans Day (<http://unworldoceansday.org>)



**Reporting from TalkWalker Brand Monitoring Platform*

Evolution of total number of followers on IOC social media accounts

(Reporting Period: 03/06/2019 - 03/06/2021)

Facebook: +192% | Twitter: +192% | Instagram: +454% | LinkedIn: +757%

Finally, in terms of website development, the IOC Secretariat further developed its partnership with the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UN-DOALOS) and a not-for-profit NGO *Oceanic Global* around revamping the official UN website for World Oceans Day accessible via the following URL: www.unworldoceansday.org. Launched at the UN Ocean Conference (5–9 June 2017), the Portal has consistently gained visibility within the UN system, attracting a wide net of partners and active users—from UN Agencies to national governmental agencies, scientific institutions and NGOs. It now features dozens of Partners organized in a group of Friends of World Oceans Day.

IOC Media Plan (Completed)

The IOC Secretariat had begun by 2019 to systematically identify the best possible stories from IOC's programmatic activities to engage mainstream media. This had resulted in stories being placed on major news outlets, such as BBC (UK), Sky News (UK, Italy), Thomson Reuters (Global), VEJA Weekly (Brazil), El Universal Daily (Mexico), and several important French media outlets, including TV5 Monde, Le Monde, and AFP.

Between mid-2019 and mid-2021, the IOC Secretariat succeeded in channelling these ad hoc successes into a more systematic approach to media engagement and partnerships, working in close collaboration with the UNESCO Department of Public Information.

The following media partnerships have been set up, and with them specific editorial calendars/media plans for showcasing IOC programmatic content:

- *ECO Magazine* (quarterly articles on IOC and the Ocean Decade + a full dedicated issue to the Ocean Decade)
- *The Conversation* (series of thematic articles, e.g. Ocean Decade, gender and ocean science, early career ocean professionals, etc.)
- *EURONEWS* (quarterly inputs from IOC to the broadcaster editorial calendar)

- Revue Marine & Océans (quarterly articles on IOC and the Ocean Decade + a full dedicated issue to the Ocean Decade)

This is purely an illustrative list. Collaboration with other outlets is currently ongoing.

Outlook for 2021–2025

During the second half of 2021, the Secretariat will continue working to improve the effectiveness and reach of communication activities.

Strategy

Having completed the recommendations of the 2016 Communications Advisory Report, and looking to position IOC's programmatic activities and special contributions to the Ocean Decade, the IOC Secretariat will develop a new Communications Strategy and Action Plan for the period 2021-2025.

The new Communications Strategy will provide a key opportunity for IOC to review its communications portfolio of systems, assets and partners to ensure it is well placed to respond to the growing requests and responsibilities brought about by the Commission's exponentially-growing visibility in the Ocean Decade (within and beyond the UN family).

Major upcoming events

Major events: The 26th UNFCCC COP and the 2nd UN Ocean Conference (Lisbon 2022) will be major points for communicating IOC's core messages and the continuous, systematic value it provides to its partners, Member States, and the public at large. These three conferences will provide a coherent timeline for developing a broad package of communications materials and activities, including the development of animated videos, interactive exhibitions, and large public outreach events.

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
7, Place de Fontenoy
75 732 Paris 07 SP, France
Tel.: +33 1 45 68 03 18
<http://ioc.unesco.org>