

IHO Discusses Ocean Mapping at IOC UNESCO Executive Council Meeting



As part of its mission to contribute proactively to global initiatives in favour of the ocean, the IHO participated in the 55th meeting of the IOC UNESCO Executive Council in Paris on 13–17 June 2022. Discussions focused on the state of the ocean and provided insight into how the IHO could contribute to key activities such as the UN Decade, as well as provide an update on joint projects including GEBCO.

The presentation on the pilot edition of the [State of the Ocean Report 2022](#) by Dr Vladimir Ryabinin highlighted the need for objective data that can be used as a benchmark to monitor changes in the marine environment. It states that although society is aware in principle of what is happening in the ocean and what should be done about it, the quantitative description of the ocean is incomplete and, as a result, current knowledge is insufficient to effectively inform solutions to the ocean issues that humanity is facing. To emphasize the pivotal role of data, Dr Ryabinin reminded participants of the popular saying: “One cannot manage what one cannot measure.” This is an area in particular where the IHO can support global initiatives to protect the ocean. The data on the physics and features of the ocean gathered by IHO Member States can be used to target actions and increase the impact of initiatives.

Sub-Committee on Education and Training

IHO director Luigi Sinapi provided an update on the [General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans](#) (GEBCO), a joint programme between the IHO and IOC UNESCO which aims to produce a high-definition map of all the world's oceans. In addition to increased mapping coverage, which has now reached about one fifth of the ocean, Director Sinapi informed the Executive Council of the creation of the Sub-Committee on Education and Training (SCET) and the GEBCO Governance review. The terms of reference for the creation of SCET and the Governance review were approved by the council members and the results will be delivered by the IOC Executive secretary to the IOC Assembly in 2023.

“The IHO reaffirms its strong commitment – alongside the IOC – to the GEBCO programme and its strategic and operational value at global level within the current decade dedicated to the ocean, for a better understanding of the marine environment and its internal dynamics,” said IHO director Luigi Sinapi.

The IHO also took the opportunity to participate in the discussion on the challenges of operating ocean observing systems within the Marine Science Research provisions of [UNCLOS](#), and shared its experience in promoting the Crowdsourced Bathymetry initiative. Participants also discussed the new Ocean Decade Progress report and considered opportunities for future collaboration and contributions.

“The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO is the ‘home’ of ocean science within the UN, and is uniquely positioned to initiate and coordinate a much-needed periodic publication to inform the world about the current state of the ocean, and to do so in a more dynamic way than was previously possible, said Dr Ryabinin, IOC Executive.



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