

IOC at a Glance

The [Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission](#) was established by resolution 2.31 of the 11th UNESCO General Conference (November-December 1960) – UNESCO's principal governing body – following a recommendation of the Intergovernmental Conference on Oceanic Research (Copenhagen, July 1960). It was created within UNESCO under a functional autonomy regime: IOC defines and implements its programmatic activity according to its stated purposes and functions, but operates under a budget ultimately adopted by the UNESCO General Conference.

IOC consists of three main organs. The **IOC Assembly** is the principal governing body, composed of IOC's 147 Member States. It is tasked with establishing general policy, determining main lines of work, approving the biennial budget for submission to the UNESCO General Conference, and electing the members of the IOC Executive Council.

The **Executive Council** consists of up to 40 Member States, including those represented by the Chairperson and five Vice-Chairpersons. It undertakes preparatory work for the IOC Assemblies through ad hoc committees and interacts very closely with IOC's Secretariat.

The **Secretariat** carries out the day-to-day work of the IOC, based policies, strategy and budget determined by the IOC Assembly and the Executive Council, and according to the purpose and functions set forth in the [IOC Statutes \(1999\)](#). Headed by the **Executive Secretary**, the Secretariat is composed of four **Sections** (Ocean Science, Ocean Observations, Tsunami Unit, Marine Policy and Regional Coordination) and a number of **regional subsidiary bodies** (i.e. IOC Sub-Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States) and **field offices** scattered around the globe.

IOC's **purpose** is to promote international cooperation and coordinate programmes in research, services and capacity-building, in order to increase knowledge of the ocean, including its resources and dynamics, and ultimately apply that knowledge toward improving the management and decision-making of its Member States for sustainable development and protection of the marine environment.

The IOC Statutes define IOC's **main functions**, including *inter alia*:

- Coordinate ocean and coastal area programmes in **research and observations** (i.e. tsunami early warning systems, the Global Ocean Observing System, *etc.*)
- Coordinate programmes in **ocean science education, training and capacity development** (i.e. ocean literacy activities, *OceanTeacher Global Academy, etc.*)
- Develop **standards and guidelines** (i.e. *IOC Criteria and Guidelines on Transfer of Marine Technology*)
- Provide assistance in fulfillment of requirements derived from relevant international instruments (i.e. UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, UN Conference on Environment and Development, *etc.*)

Working around this structure, IOC currently operates toward achievement of four **High Level Objectives** (HLOs) and other strategic priorities contained in the [IOC Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021](#).

For more information on IOC and its programmes, please visit our [homepage](#).