

Paper for consideration by Council

IHO Contribution to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

Submitted by:	IHO Secretariat
Executive Summary:	<i>The paper provides an overview of the contributions made to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable development (That the IHO Secretariat is aware of), in the period since C7.</i>
Related Documents:	C8-5.2.2B – Participation in 3 rd UN Oceans Conference C8-5.2.2C – Proposal for inclusion of Depth as and EOY Bulletin Report – UN Ocean Decade Conference 2024
Related Projects:	Nippon Foundation – GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project Empowering Women in Hydrography Project

Introduction / Background

1. This paper provides an update on IHO activities relating to or directly contributing to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (UN Ocean Decade). In addition, insights are offered on the connection of this work to the IHO Strategic Plan, potential future related activities and the difficulties of measuring individual Member State activities.

Analysis/Discussion

2. **Link to Strategic Plan.** Contributions to the UN Ocean Decade fall primarily under IHO Strategic Plan Goal 3, *“Participating actively in international initiatives related to the knowledge and the sustainable use of the Ocean”*, however such activity undoubtedly supports the tenants of Goal 2, *“Increasing the use of hydrographic data for the benefit of society”*. Having said this, the only SPI that is directly measures a contribution to the UN Ocean Decade is 3.2.3 *“Percentage of total sea area that is Seabed 2030 compliant for incorporation into the GEBCO dataset and services”*, given that the Nippon Foundation – GEBCO Seabed 200 Project (SB2030) is an accredited UN Ocean Decade Programme.
3. **Principal Activities.** The main areas of active engagement and contribution to the UN Ocean Decade are:
 - a. **GEBCO and SB2030.** GEBCO principally contributes to the UN Ocean Decade through its partnership with the Nippon Foundation in delivering SB2030. In 2024, the percentage coverage of the GEBCO Grid was increased from 24.9% to 26.1%, an increase of 1.2% or 4.34 million km² – equivalent to an area the size of the European Union. SB2030 reports annually to the GEBCO Guiding Committee (GGC) and further detail on SB2030 activities can be found on the GGC Webpage.
 - b. **Empowering Women in Hydrography Project.** The Empowering Women in Hydrography (EWH) Project is an accredited UN Ocean Decade Project. In March 2023 the IHO signed a Letter of Intent with the IMO-WMU to provide a framework for active liaison and cooperation to contribute to the UN Ocean Decade aiming to develop synergies in their actions to empower women and promote gender equality. A dedicated update on EWH Project is provided in document C8-5.2.1.
 - c. **Participation in Ocean Decade Conference 2024.** In April 2024, UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) held the 2024 UN Ocean

Decade Conference. Co-organized and hosted by Spain, the conference formed the centre piece of an intense week of events dedicated to discussing progress made towards the aims and objectives of the UN Ocean Decade, and an opportunity to set out a vision for future activity via a series of White Papers (collectively referred to as Vision 2030). Secretary General Mathias Jonas, Assistant Director Sam Harper, and Public Relations and Communication Officer Sarah Jones Couture attended the Conference and led two official satellite-events: one in partnership with the OECD on ocean mapping (entitled: *The seabed data we need for the ocean we want*) and the second co-hosted with IMO's World Maritime University on achieving gender equality in ocean sciences (Entitled: *Empowering Women for the Ocean Decade: Achieving Gender Equality in Ocean Sciences and Policy Making*). Further information on the conference and associated activities can be found in the Bulletin Report – UN Ocean Decade Conference 2024.

- d. **CSB Initiative as a UN Decade Contribution.** The Crowdsourced Bathymetry Working Group (CSBWG) is currently exploring how to align itself formally with the UN Ocean Decade through the IHO Crowdsourced Bathymetry (CSB) Initiative. Part of this work has involved better defining the formal structure of the CSB Initiative which was submitted to and endorsed by IRCC16. It remains the intention of the parent organizations IHO and IOC to apply for Crowdsourced Bathymetry to become an UN Ocean Decade Action.
- e. **GEBCO Participation in ODIS.** Led by the IOC's International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE), and delivered as part of the UN Ocean Decade, the Ocean Data and Information System (ODIS) is a digital ecosystem in which a global community of organisations share and exchange their (meta)data to better understand and steward the Ocean. Established and emerging data systems are interlinked through the ODIS Architecture – a set of technical norms and conventions designed to promote digital interoperability across and beyond the ocean domain. IODE have requested that the GEBCO grid be included in ODIS and will submit a paper to the 41st Meeting of the GGC (November 2024) for consideration.
- f. **Depth as an EOVS.** The Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) defines the scope of the ocean parameters that they monitor through a series of Essential Ocean Variables (EOVs). Depth is not currently one of these variables (Ref. paper C8 5.2.2C – *Proposal for inclusion of Depth as an EOVS*). GOOS is a critical delivery lead of the UN Ocean Decade, and closer alignment of IHO's strategic targets with this community will present further opportunities to directly support Ocean Decade objectives.

g.

United Nations Operational Framework for Integrated Marine Geospatial Information (UN IGIF-Hydro). The IGIF-Hydro was produced by the UN GGIM Working Group on Marine Geospatial Information with strong participation from the IHO MSDI WG and IHO Member States. It is recognized as contribution to the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and aims to serve as a reference for the efficient use of geospatial information by all countries to facilitate decision-making in support of sustainable oceans and seas, coastal zones, deltas and tributaries, and inland water bodies and waterways.

- 4. **Other Member State Activities.** In addition to the specific activities listed in this paper, there are certainly activities that IHO MS are undertaking that contribute formally or informally to the UN Ocean Decade. To date, 39 Countries have formed National Decade Committees (NDCs), many of the IHO MS. To reflect the true extent of the IHO contribution to the UN Decade, it would be necessary to take stock of all such activities.

5. **Future Engagement.** To maintain the IHO's position as domain experts for seabed mapping and hydrography within the broader ocean science community, it will be necessary to sustain the momentum generated by the various activities reported in this paper. In 2025, the UN will hold its 3rd Ocean Conference in Nice, Co-hosted with the Governments of France and Costa Rica. This presents an ideal opportunity for continued engagement as referred to in paper C8 5.2.2B – *Participation in 3rd UN Oceans Conference*.

Conclusions

6. IHO continues to make significant contributions to the aims of the UN Ocean Decade as has been recognised through the activities discussed in this paper. However, it is ascertained that MS are undertaking individual activities that are not reflected in this update, meaning the true scale of the effort and impact cannot be fully measured by the Secretariat.
7. Similarly, only one SPI currently measures a UN Ocean Decade Contribution directly. Due consideration should be given to the development of specific SPIs in the evolution of the IHO Strategy.

Recommendations

8. The following recommendations are made to Council:
 - a. Consider developing a register of MS who are part of a national Ocean Decade Committee and individual MS activities/formal contributions.
 - b. Request the SPRWG consider the need for specific SPIs that measure contributions to the UN Ocean Decade.

Justification and Impacts

9. In terms of justification, the recommendation would improve the measurement of Goal 2 and 3.
10. In terms of impacts, no negative outcomes are foreseen.

Action Required of Council

The Council is invited to:

- a. note and discuss this paper,
- b. Take any action it deems necessary.