1 This agenda item was introduced by the Technical Secretary. He provided an overview of the financial situation of IODE during the biennium 2011-2012 and expected revenue for 2013.

UNESCO Regular Programme funding

2 He recalled that during the previous UNESCO biennium (2010-2011) IODE had received US$ 195,900 (including US$ 10,000 for OBIS). However, following the 36th Session of the General Conference (25 October – 10 November 2011) vote admitting Palestine as a Member State of UNESCO the United States of America and Israel have withheld their assessed contributions (22,38 % of UNESCO totals), resulting in Regular Programme budget deficit of US$ 72 million for 2011 and a projected budget shortfall of US$ 146 million for 2012–2013, with a resulting financing gap of US$ 167 million. To restore cash-flow stability and to eliminate the deficits for the period 2011-2013, UNESCO effected a budget reduction of US$ 188 million or 29 % of the approved budget, with all programme sectors reduced by 31 %. For the IOC this resulted in a cut of US$ 3.2 million for 2012–2013. Even with utilizing what little flexibility there was in staff allocation, the reduction translated into a 77 % cut to resources for activities. At this level of cut, the IOC risks losing its recognized leadership in ocean sciences, observations, data management, and services. Achieving our objectives will depend more and more on IOC Member States contributions.

3 US law also forced the withholding of US agency voluntary contributions to
UNESCO and to IOC. This situation differs from that of 1984–2002, when the USA voluntary withdrew from UNESCO while remaining a member of IOC, and thus was able to support the IOC through voluntary contributions. In the current situation, the USA remains a member of IOC and of UNESCO.

For IODE this meant a reduction of the budget obtained from UNESCO Regular Programme to US$ 30,000 for 2012 and the same for 2013. It was decided that 50% of this should be allocated to OBIS, at least for 2012-2013.

Extra-budgetary funding: Government of Flanders

In terms of extra-budgetary income the situation was more positive as the Government of Flanders decided to renew the support for the IOC Project Office for IODE. The MoU between UNESCO/IOC and the Government of Flanders was signed on 30 March 2012 and expiring on 31 December 2016. Under the agreement Flanders will continue providing the Offices, costs of utilities, and maintenance costs, and provide not less than €250,000/year (to be used as a contribution towards the operational expenses and programme activities of the Project Office) as well as not less than three FTE staff (Administrative assistant, IT system administrator and Training coordinator).

In addition IODE continued to benefit from the Flanders-UNESCO Trust Fund for Science through the financing of the ODINAFRICA-IV, OceanTeacher Academy and Caribbean Marine Atlas projects. Regarding the ODINAFRICA-IV project it was noted that the management and budget of this project were transferred to the Nairobi field office, together with Mr Mika Odido (March 2012). Regarding the OceanTeacher Academy project it was noted that this project funds the P-2 IT developer position held by Mr Aditya Naik Kakodkar (funds available until September 2013). Due to increased travel and per diem costs the number of courses that can be organized in 2013 from the OceanTeacher Academy project budget will be limited to two. It was noted also that the current FUST projects will all terminate on 31 December 2013.

A proposal has been submitted to the Government of Flanders through FUST (July 2012) requesting US$ 100,000 to bridge the 2013 budget shortfall of OceanTeacher and the salary shortfall of Mr Kakodkar. At the time this working document was prepared no reply was received from the Government of Flanders in this regard.

Extra-budgetary funding: other sources

During the past biennium, no financial support was received from Member States, except for the contribution from the Government of Flanders. The Technical Secretary expressed concern about the limited number of donors contributing to IODE. It was noted that many Governments are going through a period of austerity and budget cuts following the recent financial crisis. As he had predicted during IODE-XXI this has had a serious negative impact on supporting international organizations and their activities, including IODE. This period of austerity may well continue throughout the next inter-sessional period 2013-2014 and beyond. The impact of national austerity measures has also been to affect the participation of national experts in IODE meetings such as Groups of Experts, Steering Groups and even the IODE Committee Session. Increasingly member states call on IODE to support participation in such events.

Support to IODE/OBIS

IODE was invited to participate, through OBIS, in the i-Marine EU FP7 project. I-Marine started in November 2011 and will end in April 2014 (30 months). This income has enabled us to hire a P-3 coordinator for OBIS. Because the funding from i-Marine only arrived in February and due to the notice period Ward Appeltans started working at IODE on 2 May 2012. The IOC Assembly in June 2009, adopted OBIS within its IODE Programme (Resolution XXXV-4), and would deliver a P-4/5 head of the OBIS project office, and the host institute would provide a data manager and IT specialist. To this end IOC established a
multi-source account for the support of OBIS, within the IOC Special Account. In 2010, contributions were kindly provided by Australia, Brazil and Canada. This budget enabled us to set up a contract with Edward Vanden Berghe through Rutgers University to ensure a continuation of the OBIS operations. Because Rutgers was financially not in a position to establish the IOC project office for OBIS, it was decided to move the OBIS secretariat to the IODE project office and to set up the work into a P-3 OBIS manager (Ward Appeltans) and to set up a contract with Rutgers to provide technical support to OBIS. However, due to the departure of Edward, Rutgers requested to terminate this contract by 31 August 2012. Because both a coordinator and a data manager position are critical for the central OBIS secretariat, we decided to hire a P-1 data manager for OBIS at the IODE PO (to start November 2012). However, the current budget situation will not allow us to continue in this way until the end of 2013. On 21 May 2102, we issued a Circular Letter (CL 2441) requesting IOC member states for extra-budgetary funding for OBIS. This unfortunately has not resulted in any contribution to OBIS.

Revision of the IODE-XXI work plan and budget by the IODE Officers

Faced with the dramatic cuts in UNESCO funding the IODE Officers, during their 2012 Session, had no choice but to completely revise the work plan and budget adopted by IODE-XXI and approved by the IOC Assembly (June/July 2011). It is noted that in order to maintain the core global strategic projects the Officers had no choice but to cut regional activities across the board. Subsequent to the Officers meeting all Project managers and ODIN regional coordinators were informed of the revised work plan and budget and to plan accordingly.

Cooperation with European Commission: FP projects

Unfortunately it was still not possible to resolve the administrative issues between UNESCO and the European Commission. This caused the inability of IODE to be a full partner in SeaDataNet-2 and ODIP projects. Instead IODE was only able to be a sub-contractor in these projects (with a very limited budget). For similar reasons IODE could also not be a partner in two EMODNET project proposals.