INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

2010 Session of the IODE Officers Meeting
IOC Project Office for IODE, Oostende, Belgium, 8-11 March 2010

INTEGRATION OF OBIS INTO IODE
[The Secretariat]

Actions expected from the IODE Officers:

(i) approve the revised structural diagram of IOC, including a new IODE Group of Experts and new Steering Group;

(ii) approve the Terms of Reference of the IODE Group of Experts on OBIS;

(iii) approve the Terms of Reference of the Steering Group for the “OBIS DB Project”;

(iv) advise on the draft Memorandum of Understanding for the IOC Project Office for OBIS;

(v) to identify research organizations, marine research stations, networks and other stakeholders with which relations should be established or renewed within the new IOC/IODE framework;

(vi) consider the need for further revision of the Terms of Reference of IODE;

(vii) advise on the way to proceed with pro-active fund mobilization bearing in mind the concept papers prepared during the Workshop and the Circular Letter;

(viii) consider funding requirements for OBIS in 2010-March 2011 (under Agenda Item 11).
Introduction

It is recalled that the IOC Assembly, during its 25th Session (2009) adopted Resolution XXV-4 (THE OCEAN BIOGEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM (OBIS)). Through that Resolution (Attached as Annex I) the IOC Assembly decided:

- “to accept OBIS within the IODE Programme and start its integration on a schedule that will ensure a smooth transition of OBIS into IOC as its responsibilities and funding under the CoML are completed”
- “to request the OBIS Governing Board to continue oversight of OBIS until the completion of the CoML 2010 Synthesis, in an advisory capacity, in consultation with the IODE Officer”
- “to maintain the identity and visibility of OBIS within IOC, taking into account the interest and commitment built up within the ocean biodiversity research community over the last decade, including the ability to interact with other relevant intergovernmental and international bodies”

Through the same Resolution the Assembly requested the IOC Executive Secretary:

(i) to undertake the administrative arrangements necessary for OBIS activities to continue under the auspices of IOC and its IODE Programme;

(ii) to set up a multi-source fund within the IOC Trust Fund for the support of OBIS and to keep the IOC Member States fully informed of the commitments made and the adequacy of the resources available;

(iii) to investigate and establish cooperation with, and support from relevant research organizations, marine research stations, networks and other stakeholders;

(iv) to take the necessary actions for the creation of an extra-budgetary OBIS Programme Officer position, and the preparation of documentation to the Director-General and the UNESCO Executive Board requesting a regular programme post for the OBIS Programme at the earliest opportunity;

(v) to explore a formal agreement for the hosting of an IOC Programme Office for OBIS with the current host institution of the OBIS Secretariat at Rutgers University, NJ, USA;

(vi) to draft, in close consultation with the OBIS Governing Board, the Regional OBIS Node (RON) Management Group and IODE Officers, terms of reference for an OBIS Group of Experts, to be established under IODE;

(vii) to draft, in close consultation with the IODE Officers, revised terms of reference for the IODE Committee, taking into account the extended mandate of the Committee through the adoption of OBIS;

(viii) to report on progress and submit the necessary items for consideration and decision to the next Session of the IOC Executive Council in 2010

The purpose of this Document is provide a report on the status of implementation of these requests.
Status of Implementation of requests by the 25th Session of the IOC Assembly

(i) to undertake the administrative arrangements necessary for OBIS activities to continue under the auspices of IOC and its IODE Programme;

The "OBIS Strategy and Workplan Meeting" was held in Oostende, Belgium between 18-20 November 2009. The meeting agreed on a new governance structure for OBIS within IODE. The report of this meeting is available as IOC Workshop Report 226 (http://www.iode.org/wr226).

A diagram (see below) outlining the incorporation of OBIS in the IODE structure was developed during MC8 (8th Session of the OBIS Managers Committee), and revisited during the Strategy meeting; 'OBIS' bodies are included in red.

An 'IOC Project Office for OBIS' will be established, as well as the post of "Head of the IOC Project Office for OBIS", equivalent to the present position of OBIS Executive Director. The Head of the IOC Project Office for OBIS will be an IOC staff member.

Discussions have been held with Rutgers University and the US Department of State regarding the modalities of the hosting at Rutgers University's Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences. A Memorandum of Understanding will be established between UNESCO/IOC and the hosting institution (see below). The equivalent documents that were used to set up the IODE Project Office at Oostende will serve as a template.

The 'Steering Group for OBIS' Steering Group will replace the Regional OBIS Nodes Managers Committee. Terms of reference need to be developed, based on the present 'RON Roles and Responsibilities' document. The IODE Officers will be requested to advise on this matter. The resulting Terms of reference will then be transmitted to the OBIS Governing Board and Regional OBIS Node Management Committee by email for their approval, prior to their submission to the 2010 IOC Executive Council.
Note: During the Workshop there was some discussion over the name of the ‘OBIS DB Project’. It was pointed out that OBIS is a community of practice, with a data system as its most visible product, not just a database. Also, the term ‘Project’ might be interpreted as indicating a limited time span for this group; ‘OBIS Programme’ or ‘OBIS Programme Activity’ were offered as alternatives. IOC will need to investigate whether a ‘Steering Group’, which is normally associated with a ‘Project’ can be maintained under this name.

A “Group of Experts for OBIS” will be established (See (vi)). GE-OBIS will take over the roles of the Science Board and International Committee. The Chair of the Group of Experts will be an officer of IODE.

There is no formal role for the present OBIS Governing Board in the new structure. Members of the Governing Board will be consulted on various issues during the transition period. It is envisaged that the final meeting of the OBIS Governing Board will coincide with the Census Celebrations in London, in October 2010. This might be a good opportunity to formally hand over governance from the OBIS Governing Board to IOC/IODE. It was recommended to invite the IOC Executive Secretary and IODE Co-Chairs to this meeting (as well as the IODE and IODE/OBIS Secretariats).

(ii) to set up a multi-source fund within the IOC Trust Fund for the support of OBIS and to keep the IOC Member States fully informed of the commitments made and the adequacy of the resources available;

This was done in February 2010 through IOC Circular Letter 2333. (http://www.ioc.unesco.org/index.php?option=com_oe&task=viewDocumentRecord&docID=4888). This Document is attached as Annex III.

The IODE Officers will be requested to advise on (i) the way to proceed with pro-active fund mobilization bearing in mind the concept papers prepared during the Workshop (see WR 226) and (ii) how to follow-up the Circular Letter.

(iii) to investigate and establish cooperation with, and support from relevant research organizations, marine research stations, networks and other stakeholders;

This constitutes a continuation of existing relationships of OBIS but they may need to be re-established or formalized in the light of the new arrangements.

The IODE Officers and OBIS Executive Director are requested to identify research organizations, marine research stations, networks and other stakeholders with which relations should be established or renewed within the new IOC/IODE framework.

(iv) to take the necessary actions for the creation of an extra-budgetary OBIS Programme Officer position, and the preparation of documentation to the Director-General and the UNESCO Executive Board requesting a regular programme post for the OBIS Programme at the earliest opportunity;

Through the Circular Letter it is hoped and expected that IOC Member States will contribute the funds required to establish the extra-budgetary Professional Position of the Head of the IOC Project Office for OBIS. It is recalled that the Professional Position (at P-4) level will have a cost of approx. USD 140,000-180,000/year (the exact cost will depend on the individual family composition of the recruited staff person and applied post adjustment for New Brunswick).
(v) to explore a formal agreement for the hosting of an IOC Programme Office for OBIS with the current host institution of the OBIS Secretariat at Rutgers University, NJ, USA,

Preparatory discussions have been held between IOC and Rutgers University (15-18 February 2010) to establish the IOC Project Office for OBIS at Rutgers University. The Memorandum of Understanding will be finalized between the two parties and submitted to the 43rd Session of the IOC Executive Council (7-16 June 2010) for approval and subsequent signing. During the meeting at Rutgers University it was agreed that the first draft should be further elaborated by the IODE Officers and IOC Secretariat (with advice from UNESCO Legal Affairs as required) and then sent to Rutgers University where it will be subjected to a legal review and passed on to the Executive Vice-President for Academic Affairs. The draft will then be returned to the IOC Secretariat (and possible UNESCO LA) to prepare the final draft which will be submitted to the Executive Council in June 2010.

The IODE Officers are requested to comment on the draft MoU which has been made available to the Officers by individual email. This document should be considered confidential.

(vi) to draft, in close consultation with the OBIS Governing Board, the Regional OBIS Node (RON) Management Group and IODE Officers, terms of reference for an OBIS Group of Experts, to be established under IODE;

Draft terms of reference for an IODE Group of Experts on OBIS have been prepared and will be further reviewed by the IODE Officers under Agenda Item 4.1.4. They are attached as Annex II to this Document. Input will need to be requested from the OBIS Governing Board

(vii) to draft, in close consultation with the IODE Officers, revised terms of reference for the IODE Committee, taking into account the extended mandate of the Committee through the adoption of OBIS;

It is noted that the IODE objectives were updated during IODE-XVIII, through Recommendation IODE-XVIII.1 which revised them as follows:

(i) to facilitate and promote the exchange of all marine data and information including metadata, products and information in real-time, near real time and delayed mode;

(ii) to ensure the long term archival, management and services of all marine data and information;

(iii) to promote the use of international standards, and develop or help in the development of standards and methods for the global exchange of marine data and information, using the most appropriate information management and information technology;

(iv) to assist Member States to acquire the necessary capacity to manage marine data and information and become partners in the IODE network; and

(v) to support international scientific and operational marine programmes of IOC and WMO and their sponsor organisations with advice and data management services.

It is noted that under (i) data and information are referred to as “all marine data and information” hence this will include marine biogeographical data and information as
well. It is therefore suggested to the IODE Officers that no further modification of the ToRs is required unless the Officers would prefer to specifically refer to OBIS in view of Resolution XXV-4’s decision “to maintain the identity and visibility of OBIS within IOC...”.

(viii) to report on progress and submit the necessary items for consideration and decision to the next Session of the IOC Executive Council in 2010

This will take place during the 43rd Session of the IOC Executive Council in June 2010
ANNEX I

Resolution XXV-4: THE OCEAN BIOGEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM (OBIS)

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission,

1 Noting the great progress that has taken place under the Global Census of Marine Life (CoML) programme and that this ten-year initiative, to assess and explain the diversity, distribution, and abundance of marine life in the oceans, will conclude at the end of 2010,

2 Gratefully acknowledging the foresight shown and the support given to CoML by the Sloan Foundation,

3 Recalling the expression of support at the start of the CoML and its associated Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) from the 33rd Session of the Executive Council and the instruction to the IOC Secretariat to develop an appropriate mechanism for IOC involvement in the Census,

4 Further Recalling that subsequent IOC Executive Councils and Assemblies have welcomed the progress achieved and called for continued interaction with this activity, in particular IOC Resolution XXIII-3 that encouraged the integration of OBIS into IODE and the 39th Session of the IOC Executive Council that called for continued development of the interaction between the Commission and CoML,

5 Appreciating the Resolution of the UN General Assembly A/RES/63/111, that inter alia reiterates “…its serious concern over the current and projected adverse effects of climate change on the marine environment and marine biodiversity, and emphasizing the urgency of addressing this issue”, and “encourages States, individually or in collaboration with relevant international organizations and bodies, to enhance their scientific activity to better understand the effects of climate change on the marine environment and marine biodiversity and develop ways and means of adaptation”,

6 Recognizing that an OBIS Programme within the IOC will create a valuable source of information, inter alia, for DIVERSITAS, UNESCO/MAB Programme and UNESCO’s Strategy for Action on Climate Change, as well as for a wide range of other users within and outside the United Nations,

7 Recognizing also that OBIS has an important role to play in contributing to external intergovernmental and international organizations dealing with global fisheries, environmental and biodiversity issues including, but not restricted to, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, the Group on Earth Observations – Biodiversity Observations Network, the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and that this role should be continued and expanded in the future,

8 Recalling the request from the OBIS Governing Board and the decision of the IOC Executive Council at its 41st Session to consider possible scenarios for a future home for OBIS within the IOC, by concentrating on the possibility of the creation of an IOC/OBIS Programme and an IOC/OBIS Programme Office,

9 Acknowledging that CoML, and the research, information and data it has generated, provides an important tool for the international community to use in the development of policies for ocean and coastal management and to address the critical issues related to climate change,

10 Acknowledging also that the commitment of IOC and UNEP with regard to the UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/30 for an Assessment of Assessments, leading to a regular review of the state of the ocean environment, would not be feasible without access to the science, information and data on marine biodiversity, such as that accumulated under OBIS,

11 Noting with appreciation the agreement of the OBIS Governing Board, in April 2009, to the adoption of OBIS by IOC,
12 Decides:
(i) to accept OBIS within the IODE Programme and start its integration on a schedule that will ensure a smooth transition of OBIS into IOC as its responsibilities and funding under the CoML are completed;
(ii) to request the OBIS Governing Board to continue oversight of OBIS until the completion of the CoML 2010 Synthesis, in an advisory capacity, in consultation with the IODE Officers;
(iii) to maintain the identity and visibility of OBIS within IOC, taking into account the interest and commitment built up within the ocean biodiversity research community over the last decade, including the ability to interact with other relevant intergovernmental and international bodies;

13 Requests the IOC Executive Secretary:
(i) to undertake the administrative arrangements necessary for OBIS activities to continue under the auspices of IOC and its IODE Programme;
(ii) to set up a multi-source fund within the IOC Trust Fund for the support of OBIS and to keep the IOC Member States fully informed of the commitments made and the adequacy of the resources available;
(iii) to investigate and establish cooperation with, and support from relevant research organizations, marine research stations, networks and other stakeholders;
(iv) to take the necessary actions for the creation of an extra-budgetary OBIS Programme Officer position, and the preparation of documentation to the Director-General and the UNESCO Executive Board requesting a regular programme post for the OBIS Programme at the earliest opportunity;
(v) to explore a formal agreement for the hosting of an IOC Programme Office for OBIS with the current host institution of the OBIS Secretariat at Rutgers University, NJ, USA,
(vi) to draft, in close consultation with the OBIS Governing Board, the Regional OBIS Node (RON) Management Group and IODE Officers, terms of reference for an OBIS Group of Experts, to be established under IODE;
(vii) to draft, in close consultation with the IODE Officers, revised terms of reference for the IODE Committee, taking into account the extended mandate of the Committee through the adoption of OBIS;
(viii) to report on progress and submit the necessary items for consideration and decision to the next Session of the IOC Executive Council in 2010;

14 Urges Member States:
(i) to contribute to the OBIS multi-source fund within the IOC Trust Fund;
(ii) to consider other financial and/or in-kind support for OBIS to assist with its technical and research activities;
(iii) to facilitate the collaboration of RONs and other OBIS data providers in the intergovernmental framework of IOC and its IODE Programme
ANNEX II

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE IODE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON OBIS

The IOC Executive Council,

Noting the great progress that has been made under the Global Census of Marine Life (CoML) initiative, to assess and explain the diversity, distribution and abundance of marine life in the oceans,

Recalling the purpose of OBIS to make marine biogeographic data, from all over the world, freely available over the World Wide Web,

Recalling further the decision of the twenty-fifth Session of the IOC Assembly to accept OBIS within the IODE Programme

Recognizing the complementarity of the IODE Group of Experts on Biological and Chemical Data Management and Exchange Practices (GE-BICH) and the work of OBIS,

Decides to establish the IODE Group of Experts on the Biogeographic Information System (OBIS)

Further decides that the Terms of Reference be as follows:

(i) To contribute to the development of standards, controlled vocabularies, and recommended practices for the management, quality control, interoperability and exchange of biogeographical data and information, supporting the scientific and product requirements of its user communities;

(ii) To oversee the quality and scientific credibility of the OBIS database, activities and scientific products and services;

(iii) To encourage compilation of inventories of past and present biogeographical data holdings, and to making these available through OBIS;

(iv) To provide an international forum, raising awareness about new initiatives, best practices, and emerging standards for biogeographical data and information;

(v) To communicate the results from the Group to the IODE Group of Experts on Biological and Chemical Data Management and Exchange Practices (GE-BICH) and to the wider community of data managers, providers and users.

Encourages IOC Member States to nominate experts having expertise in biogeographic data management and exchange practices to the Group of Experts.

Membership

• the total number of Members of the Group should not exceed 8;

• the Group should be composed of not more than 4 long-term members; and not more than 4 short-term members;

• The long-term members will be selected by the Executive Secretary, based upon nominations from Member States and further based upon individual expertise as relevant to the Group. Long-term members can remain a member of the Group during not more than 4 inter-sessional periods;
• The short-term members shall be selected by the long-term members of the Group, based upon their specific expertise, documented in the OceanExpert system, related to specific tasks or projects and will remain a member during, preferably, not more than two inter-sessional periods;
To: IOC Action Addresses

To: Permanent Delegations to UNESCO

Cc: IODE National Coordinators for Oceanographic Data Management
    IODE National Coordinators for Marine Information Management
    Members of the OBIS Governing Board
    Members of the OBIS Managers Committee

Subject: ESTABLISHMENT OF A MULTISOURCE TRUST FUND FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE OCEAN BIOGEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM (OBIS)

For nearly a decade, through the Census of Marine Life (CoML), scientists have been collaborating to assess the diversity of marine life throughout the world’s oceans. The Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) is the data integration component of the CoML and has become the largest marine biodiversity database in the world. During the first ten years of its existence OBIS has been substantially supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, however this funding ends in 2010.

From the early years of the IOC fifty years ago, the IODE (International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange) Programme of the IOC has developed into a global network of National Oceanographic Data Centres (NODCs). Although the objective of IODE has been to encompass all marine data, most NODCs have focused more on physical and chemical data, and less on biological and biogeographical data. To address this issue IODE recommended the establishment of the “IODE Group of Experts on Biological and Chemical Data Management and Exchange Practices (GE-BICH)” (Recommendation IODE-XVI.4) in November 2000, which was subsequently approved by the twenty-first Session of the IOC Assembly (Resolution XXI-8). The terms of reference of the GE-BICH included cooperation with OBIS.

Bearing in mind the importance of OBIS and the risk of its termination due to lack of continued support, the IOC Executive Secretary made an offer to the OBIS Governing Board (at its meeting in Rome, 28–29 April 2008), to explore an institutional intergovernmental framework for the continuation of OBIS. The Board agreed and a proposal was brought before the IOC Executive Council at its 41st Session (24 June–2 July 2008), and subsequently the twenty-fifth Session of the IOC Assembly (2009) decided to adopt OBIS within the IODE Programme (Resolution XXV-4).

The adoption of OBIS by IOC/IODE is an important and symbolic milestone for the IOC arriving at the time of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Commission.
However, the addition of a substantive activity like OBIS brings with it considerable responsibility and cost. Taking into consideration that a replacement must be found for the annual funding of $500,000, previously received from the Sloan Foundation and that the budget from the UNESCO Regular Programme is not increasing and that it will be necessary to mobilize extra-budgetary funding for the continued operation of the OBIS programme Resolution XXV-4 requested the IOC Executive Secretary “to set up a multi-source fund within the IOC Trust Fund for the support of OBIS and to keep the IOC Member States fully informed of the commitments made and the adequacy of the resources available”. In addition the Assembly requested the IOC Executive Secretary “to take the necessary actions for the creation of an extra-budgetary OBIS Programme Officer position…” The resolution also recognized the importance of biodiversity data to related UNESCO programmes and to the Strategy for Action on Climate Change. In addition, the IOC will be taking responsibility over the established agreements between OBIS and its substantial contributions to Global Biodiversity Information Facility, the Convention on Biological Diversity and to other existing and potential partners. In this regard we also wish to refer to the outcome of the “OBIS (Ocean Biogeographic Information System) Strategy and Work plan Meeting” (IOC Workshop Report No. 226: http://www.iode.org/wr226) which clearly outlines the societal benefits of the OBIS database and its products (e.g. the shift in marine species diversity and distribution in response to global warming; invasive species; differentiating climate and fishing effects in ecosystem-based management; biodiversity data repatriation).

The purpose of this Letter is to inform you that the IOC Trust Fund, dedicated to OBIS, has now been established and to invite you to contribute to the Fund so as to enable the IOC to fulfil the commitment it made to the continuation and further development of OBIS.

Contributions to, and participation in, the IODE/OBIS programme will ensure the maintenance and growth of this young and hitherto underrepresented part of marine data and will facilitate the complex multidisciplinary studies necessary to understand ocean processes, their relation to global change and their interaction with human activities.

For the practical details regarding the Trust Fund we invite you to contact the Office of the IOC Executive Secretary.

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation,

Dr Wendy Watson-Wright
IOC Executive Secretary
Assistant Director-General of UNESCO