



IOC/GOOS-SC-1/3s
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INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

**First Meeting of the Global Ocean Observing System
Steering Committee (GOOS SC-1)**

<http://ioc-goos.org/goos-sc-1>

Paris, France
20-22 June 2011

Executive Summary Report

Background

IOC Resolution XXVI-8 '[Strengthening and Streamlining GOOS](#)' decided to recommit the IOC to a Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) that is a holistic system of global, regional and coastal observations and products, aligned with a [Framework for Ocean Observing](#)¹ oriented to an Essential Ocean Variable approach, promoting GOOS's role in informing key societal issues as expressed in UN conventions, and reinforcing global participation through capacity development. It reformed the governance structure of GOOS by confirming that the IOC governing bodies are directly responsible for the governance of GOOS. It dissolved the Intergovernmental Committee for GOOS (I-GOOS), the GOOS Scientific Steering Committee (GSSC), and its subsidiary panels. In addition, the Assembly in its report "asserted the importance of GOOS as a priority for the IOC; noted that geographically-balanced representation on the GSC should be assured; and emphasized the desirability of

¹ IOC/INF-1284, <http://www.oceanobs09.net/foo/>

representation in the GSC of other IOC programmes as well as of, inter alia, POGO, SCOR, GEOSS, JCOMM and IODE."

The resolution created the GOOS Steering Committee (GOOS SC) and defined its terms of reference, which in summary are to:

- identify the essential ocean variables to observe, and develop and update the scientific, technical and implementation plans and targets for GOOS,
- monitor and promote the development of GOOS based on these agreed plans,
- assess the performance of GOOS in providing users with fit-for-purpose data and information,
- encourage research and operational programmes to enhance and improve GOOS, and
- advise on developing the capacity of all Member States to participate in and benefit from GOOS.

The GOOS SC will develop a work plan, and have the authority to create and dissolve time-limited panels to focus on particular terms of reference.

Formation, initial discussions and leadership

The IOC Executive Secretary invited Member States and sponsors to submit nominations for the GOOS Steering Committee through IOC CL-2397 (31 August 2011). Five GOOS SC members were appointed by IOC regions, and an additional ten experts were appointed in January 2012 by the Executive Secretary in consultation with the sponsors WMO, UNEP, and ICSU. The list of members and meeting participants is attached.

The GOOS SC held a [virtual meeting](http://ioc-goos.org/vigsc)² by e-mail between March and May 2012, and the report of this meeting is available at the site mentioned.

In accordance with its terms of reference, the Steering Committee **selected John Gunn (Australia) and Eric Lindstrom (USA) as its co-chairs.**

Sustaining present observations

About half of the time of the meeting was spent on structured discussions around three themes, the first being 'sustaining present observations.' The Committee highlighted the strength of treating sustained research and operational observations together, with the two communities reinforcing one another. The Committee agreed also on the utility of the Framework for Ocean Observing and its focus on Essential Ocean Variables in articulating the multiple 'missions' or societal and scientific issues being addressed by a single observing system. It emphasized the importance of reaching out to users, and in particular to modeling users, in helping to evaluate observing system performance and identify requirements. The Committee decided to negotiate with GCOS and WCRP on the role of the present Ocean Observations Panel for Climate in addressing physical Essential Ocean Variables, including their requirements for real-time services and in the coastal ocean.

² <http://ioc-goos.org/vigsc>

Expanding to new variables and serving new requirements

Acknowledging the opportunities presented at the OceanObs'09 conference, but also the growing need for information about the ocean including its role in biogeochemical cycling and ecosystem services, the GOOS SC affirmed the importance of expanding GOOS into new variables. It decided to work with IOCCP as the nucleus of a panel for carbon and geochemical variables, recognizing that any expansion in mandate would require additional funding and personnel support.

After hearing about the activities of the GEO Biodiversity Observing Network marine working group and a proposed SCOR working group on ecosystem Essential Ocean Variables, the Committee decided that it would seek to develop a Biology/Ecosystems panel in cooperation with these and other activities.

It emphasized that the panels should work in an executive manner by developing specific activities to address scoped objectives. These panels would have a key role in building ocean observing community consensus in the few key new things that should be taken on as sustained observing elements in the coming years.

Identifying regional priorities, capacity and addressing gaps

The GOOS Steering Committee recognized the importance of the GOOS Regional Alliance (GRA) concept, as a way of engaging national action at a regional level that was often seen as most appropriate to the issues faced by Member States. It identified a large heterogeneity in the arrangements for and capacity of the present GRAs. Some GRAs were used for engagement of governmental support, and others were used for coordination of implementation between institutions. The Committee again emphasized the utility of a link with the GODAE OceanView Coastal and Shelf Seas Task Team, and the potential to generate projects that would develop useful information at a local level.

The Committee recognized the need to develop capacity as a key element for global participation in GOOS, and in particular the need to identify and develop approaches to potential funders.

Methods of work

The Committee agreed to create small sub-groups concentrated on developing different tasks (see below), working by e-mail and in teleconferences. In principle, and based on available resources, it agreed to meet again in February 2013, citing the importance of capturing the momentum and energy in this spin-up phase of the new GOOS.

Towards a work plan

After work on identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for GOOS, the Committee **agreed to an initial work plan** with members taking lead and participating in the development of different elements. The outline of this work plan is as follows, including long-term and initial actions.

1. Articulating 10 year goals for GOOS, to inform the two-year work plan;
2. Engaging with key conventions and assessments on their needs for ocean information,
 - a. starting with the Convention on Biological Diversity, which has called on IOC-UNESCO to help provide information for the definition of ecologically or biologically significant areas (EBSAs) and on understanding of the impacts of ocean acidification,
 - b. but also targeting the UN World Ocean Assessment (Regular Process) and other relevant assessment processes;
3. Improving outreach for GOOS,
 - a. publicizing the creation of the new GOOS SC and its use of the Framework for Ocean Observing as a basis of engaging with partners, the ocean observing community, and users of ocean information (communicating outwards and inwards),
 - b. engaging modeling users of ocean data, in particular GODAE OceanView and its coastal and shelf seas task team,
 - c. identifying the GOOS role in developing climate services, and
 - d. promoting the linking of coastal and open ocean areas in GOOS;
4. Engaging IOC Member States, with a focus on raising awareness and information exchange;
5. Identification and developing engagement with potential donors for GOOS;
6. Broadening the variables examined by GOOS and establishing three disciplinary panels for Physics, Carbon/Geochemistry, and Biology/Ecosystems,
 - a. based on the OOPC for physics,
 - b. based on IOCCP for carbon/geochemistry,
 - c. and using the expertise of the former PICO and in cooperation with SCOR and GEOBON for biology/ecosystems;
7. Improving GOOS Regional Alliance (or like) implementation, starting with a focus on collecting information on priorities and capacity from each GRA;
8. Capacity Development, by contributing to the IOC capacity development survey, and developing a statement of needs for GOOS as a precursor to developing a strategy for action; and
9. Analyzing the challenge of data interoperability, including why this has failed to produce results, cooperating with IODE, individual network panels, and the immediate user community; as a first step towards developing actions.

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