

IOC Circular Letter No 3077
 (Available in English only)

IOC/VH/WZ/JB
 15 June 2026

To : Member States of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC)

C.c. : IOC National Coordinating Bodies for Liaison with the IOC
 National Commissions for UNESCO
 Permanent Delegations to UNESCO of IOC Member States
 Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of IOC
 Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of WESTPAC
 Directors of UNESCO Offices in Beijing, Bangkok, Jakarta

**Subject: Invitation to the Sixteenth Intergovernmental Session of the IOC
 Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC-XVI),
 Hangzhou, China, 10–12 November 2026**

I have the pleasure of inviting you to participate in the Sixteenth Session of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC-XVI), which will be hosted by the Government of China, through the Ministry of Natural Resources and its Second Institute of Oceanography, from 10 to 12 November 2026 in Hangzhou, China.

As you are aware, this Session was originally scheduled to take place in April 2027, two years after the Fifteenth Session in March 2025 in Tokyo, Japan. However, following the adoption of IOC Resolution A-33/3, on 'Governance, Programming and Budgeting Matters of the Commission', which welcomes better alignment of the meeting schedules of the IOC intergovernmental subsidiary bodies with the programming and budgeting cycle, WESTPAC-XVI has been rescheduled to November 2026, thereby ensuring that regional priorities and resource requirements can be better reflected in the preparation of the IOC biennial Programme and Budget for 2028–2029.

As a statutory intergovernmental meeting, WESTPAC-XVI will bring together national competent governmental agencies for ocean, marine scientific communities, and other relevant ocean stakeholders in the region, to further strengthen ocean science-policy interface, advance ocean science development and cooperation, enhance technical and institutional capacities, promote the transfer of ocean technology, and jointly develop ocean science solutions to sustainable development in the Western Pacific and its adjacent areas.

During the Session, the Sub-Commission will briefly review its latest developments and be updated on major international ocean-related developments, including the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine

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Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement). In addition to deliberating on the Sub-Commission's engagement in and contribution to those relevant international instruments and frameworks, the Session will also review the preparatory status of the 12th WESTPAC International Marine Science Conference & 3rd UN Ocean Decade Regional Conference, which will take place on 20–23 April 2027, Manila, kindly hosted by the Government of the Philippines.

In addition, the Sub-Commission will formulate **its Programme and Budget for the period 2028–2029**, structuring regional priority activities around the IOC Results Framework adopted by the IOC Assembly in 2025) and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030).

The organization of **an informal workshop on the 'IOC and the Future of the Ocean' consultation** is envisaged as a side event, tentatively scheduled for 11 November, to allow for exchange on the Sub-Commission's activities and generate information to be used in the third phase of the consultation that will inform the development of the next IOC Medium Term Strategy (2030–2037). The workshop programme is under development and shall be shared with you as soon as it becomes available.

A copy of the Provisional Agenda is attached for your information as Annex 1. Given the extensive agenda session scheduled over three days, I would like to kindly request delegations to focus their interventions on providing the vision, guidance, and recommendations for practical actions. As you compose your delegation, please take fully into account the agenda, your commitments and the events that will be held, and the importance of gender equality, and the necessary engagement of early career ocean professionals in IOC meetings.

Following past practice, working and information documents, and logistical arrangements for participants, will be forwarded to you via electronic means and will be posted on the WESTPAC website (<http://ioc-westpac.org/>) in due course.

As customary, WESTPAC Member States will elect the Officers of the Sub-commission, i.e. one Chairperson and two or three Vice-Chairpersons for the next two-year intersessional period. Elected Officers may be re-elected for one additional term of office. Information about the election procedure and prescribed nomination forms are attached hereafter as Annex 2. Kindly note that nominations should be sent to me with a copy to Wenxi Zhu, Head of the WESTPAC Office & Decade Coordination Office for the region (w.zhu@unesco.org), no later than 11 October 2026 at 17:00 p.m. (Beijing time, UTC+08:00). As a reminder, the Chair Aileen Tan Shau Hwai (Malaysia) and three Vice-Chairs: Vyacheslav Lobanov from the Russian Federation, Sung Hyun Nam from Republic of Korea, and Aletta Yñiguez from the Philippines currently serve their first term since the 15th Session ([WESTPAC-XV](#), 11–13 March 2025, Tokyo, Japan).

Please take a moment to review the proposed arrangement. Should you have any questions or comments, please send them to us **by 30 August 2026**. I would also like you to provide the names, positions, and contact addresses of the members of your delegations to Ms Nachapa Saransuth (n.saransuth@unesco.org, or by fax: +66 2 143 9245), at your earliest convenience but **no later than 10 September 2026**, with a copy to iocwestpac@unesco.org.

With the assurances of my highest consideration, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

[signature]

Vidar Helgesen
Executive Secretary

Enclosures (2): Annex 1: Provisional Agenda
Annex 2: Election Procedures & Form

ANNEX 1

Sixteenth Intergovernmental Session of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC-XVI), Hangzhou, China, 10–12 November 2026

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. OPENING

- 1.1 WELCOMING REMARKS
- 1.2 KEYNOTES

2. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

- 2.1 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA
- 2.2 CONDUCT OF THE SESSION

3. STATUTORY REPORT

- 3.1 STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON, INCLUDING KEY GOVERNANCE, POLICY AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS
- 3.2 REPORT BY THE HEAD OF WESTPAC OFFICE ON INTERSESSIONAL PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION, INCLUDING RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND THE OPERATION OF THE WESTPAC OFFICE (ALSO THE DECADE COORDINATION OFFICE)
- 3.3 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN UNESCO, IOC, AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO WESTPAC
 - 3.3.1 IOC Executive Secretary's report**
 - 3.3.2 Review of IOC Governance and Management Processes**
 - 3.3.3 Consultation process about IOC and the Future of the Ocean, including the Phase II report and proposal for Phase III, and Vision for strengthening IOCAFRICA and other IOC Regional Subsidiary Bodies**
 - 3.3.4 IOC Draft Programme and Budget for 2028–2029 (44 C/5) – Preliminary Proposal from the IOC Secretariat**

4. STRATEGIC AND UN DECADE ACTION DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION

- 4.1 ROLE OF IOC IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BBNJ AGREEMENT
- 4.2 IOC IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS STRATEGY ON SUSTAINABLE OCEAN PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT (SOPM)
- 4.3 UN OCEAN DECADE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT
- 4.4 THE SUB-COMMISSION'S ENGAGEMENT AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE UN OCEAN DECADE
 - **An Overview of the WESTPAC efforts, including its hosted Decade Coordination Office**
 - **UN21: Accelerate Marine Spatial Planning in the Western Pacific and its Adjacent Areas, including the MSP Regional Action Framework (2025–2030)**
 - **UN22: Stem the Tide of Asia's Riverine Plastic Emission into the Ocean**

- **UN23: Accelerating Transformations in Capacity Development in the Western Pacific - Regional Network of Training and Research Centers (RTRCs) on Marine Science**
- **UN24: Explore the Strongest Ocean Current in the Western Pacific: the 2nd Cooperative Study of Kuroshio and Adjacent Regions (CSK-2)**
- **UN39: Ocean Solutions in the East Asian Seas**
- **UN42: 12th WESTPAC International Marine Science Conference & 3rd UN Ocean Decade Regional Conference (20-23 April 2027, Manila, the Philippines)**
- **UN46: Collaborations for NWP Marine Ecosystem Prediction (COSMEC)**

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS TAKEN AT THE LAST SESSION (WESTPAC-XV, 11–13 MARCH 2025, TOKYO, JAPAN)

- **New Programme: Prediction of Marine Ecosystem Changes in the Northwest Pacific Ocean (2025–2030) (transformed as UN46)**
- **New Project: Methane Fluxes and their Impacts on Climate and Ecosystem in the Indo-Pacific Region (2025–2029).**
- **Working Group on Blue Carbon Ecosystem Restoration with an initial focus on Mangroves (2025–2028)**
- **Working Group on Seagrass Research, Monitoring, and Conservation (2025–2028)**
- **Task Force on BBNJ (2025–2027)**
- **Task Force on Ocean Literacy (2025–2027)**

6. REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF THE LATEST DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL PROGRAMMES, PROJECTS AND WORKING GROUPS ALIGNED WITH THE IOC HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVES.

*Note: Due to the time constraints, reporting will be consolidated and conducted according to the IOC High Level Objectives (HLOs), with a focus on **strategic importance, tangible outputs, and impacts**. Each programme, project and working groups will prepare a brief progress report in written form, which will be uploaded to the event webpage. Posters of programmes, projects, and working groups are encouraged to be displayed at the meeting venue.*

IOC High Level Objectives (HLOs)	Regional Priority Programme Areas (RPAs)	
HLO 1. Healthy Ocean and sustained ocean ecosystem services	RPA 2. Marine Biodiversity Conservation, Ocean Ecosystems and Human Health, and Blue Economy	Cross-cutting: Ocean Literacy and Capacity Development
HLO 2. Effective warning systems and preparedness for tsunamis and other ocean-related hazards	RPA 3. Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness	
HLO 3. Resilience to climate change and contribution to its mitigation	RPA 1. Ocean-Based Solutions to Climate Change (Mitigation, Adaptation, and Resilience)	
HLO 4. Scientifically founded services for the sustainable ocean economy	Included in the RPA 2.	
HLO 5. Foresight on emerging ocean science issues	RPA 4. Knowledge for Emerging Issues	

- 7. RECOMMENDATION OF THE WESTPAC ADVISORY GROUP ON THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**
- 8. ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW PROGRAMME/PROJECT/WORKING GROUP, IF ANY**
- 9. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM REGIONAL PARTNERS AND OBSERVERS**
- 10. WESTPAC PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR THE PERIOD 2028–2029**
- 11. PRESENTATION OF KEY CONCLUSIONS TO INFORM PHASE 3 CONSULTATION PROCESS FOR 'IOC AND THE FUTURE OF THE OCEAN'**
- 12. ELECTIONS OF THE OFFICERS OF THE SUB-COMMISSION**
- 13. DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION**
- 14. OTHER MATTERS**
- 15. ADOPTION OF ACTION POINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**
- 16. CLOSURE**

ANNEX 2

Election Procedures and Forms

As customary, at its sixteenth Intergovernmental Session, the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC-XVI), Hangzhou, 10–12 November 2026, shall elect one Chairperson and two or three Vice-Chairpersons, for the term November 2026–November 2028.

The Chairperson shall preside over the sessions of the Sub-Commission and carry out the duties which are entrusted to him/her. The Vice-Chairpersons assist the Chairperson in his/her functions and substitute him/her where necessary. The Vice-chairpersons will be entrusted with specific responsibilities.

The Chairperson and the Vice-Chairpersons of an IOC Subsidiary Body shall not remain in his/her mandate for more than two successive terms, according to the IOC Manual.

Nominations

Nominations of individuals to either the post of Chairperson or the posts of Vice-Chairpersons shall be submitted by Member States through the officially designated Head of Delegation to the WESTPAC-XVI or through the IOC Focal Point in the Member State or the Permanent Delegation to UNESCO.

Nominations shall be submitted in writing to the Executive Secretary using **Form A** (Chairperson) or **Form B** (Vice-chairperson). They must reach the Executive Secretary or his representative by the specified deadline for nomination.

Each nomination shall contain a declaration from the candidate that he/she is prepared to stand for the post for which he/she has been nominated and is willing to take on the obligations that would devolve upon him/her, should he/she be elected. Each nomination shall also contain a CV with the profile of the candidate (**Form C**).

Each candidate must be seconded by two Member States of the Sub-Commission other than the nominating Member State.

Elections

The IOC general practice is working and deciding by consensus (Rule 19.2).

Should voting be necessary, decisions shall be made by a simple majority of the members present and voting (Rule 25.1), by secret ballot.

Current WESTPAC Chairperson and Vice-chairpersons

Chairperson: *Aileen Tan Shau Hwai (Malaysia, first term)*
Vice-chairpersons: *Vyacheslav Lobanov (Russian Federation, first term)*
Sung Hyun Nam (Republic of Korea, first term)
Aletta Yñiguez (Philippines, first term)

They were elected, by acclamation, at the 15th Intergovernmental Session (11–13 March 2025, Tokyo, Japan) for the term (April 2025–April 2027).

IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC)

Biennial Elections for Chairperson

Form A – Chairperson

Name of Member State:

Name of Nominee:

I declare that I am prepared to stand for election to the post of Chairperson of **the Sub-Commission** and, if elected, to take an active part in the work of it.

Signature of the Nominee:

Seconder 1

Seconder 2

Member State of the WESTPAC

Name in capitals

Position

Signature

Date sent to the IOC Secretariat

Date and time received by the IOC Secretariat

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IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC)

Biennial Elections for Vice-Chairperson

Form B – Vice-Chairperson

Name of Member State:

Name of Nominee:

I declare that I am prepared to stand for election to the post of Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Commission and, if elected, to take an active part in the work of it.

Signature of the Nominee:

Seconder 1

Seconder 2

Member State of the WESTPAC

Name in capitals

Position

Signature

Date sent to the IOC Secretariat

Date and time received by the IOC Secretariat

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IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC)

Biennial Elections for Chair and Vice-Chairpersons

Form C– CV of Nominee

[NAME]

Date of birth:

Languages:

Address:

Phone number:

Fax number:

Email:

CURRENT POSITION

[Please insert text]

EDUCATION

[Please insert text]

PREVIOUS PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

[Please insert text]