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Item 3.7 of the Provisional Agenda

**INTERIM REPORT OF THE IOC WORKING GROUP ON BIODIVERSITY
BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION (IOC/WG-BBNJ), 2026**

Summary

This document has been prepared in accordance with decision A-33/4.7 of the IOC Assembly, which established an ad hoc Working Group on Biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (IOC/WG-BBNJ) in June 2025 to provide scientific and technical advice on matters related to the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement within the framework of the IOC mandate, particularly regarding the BBNJ Clearing-House Mechanism, as well as other key areas of the Agreement, and to provide a progress report of its outcomes at the 59th Session of the IOC Executive Council and thereafter at the 34th session of the IOC Assembly.

This document provides a summary of the discussion and findings of the IOC/WG-BBNJ, including a set of recommended actions to be considered by the IOC Executive Council. Annexes to this document are available in English only.

The financial and administrative implications of the activities fall within the parameters of the regular budget of IOC.

The proposed decision is referenced as EC-59/Dec.4.2.3 in the Action Paper (document [IOC/EC-59/2 Prov.](#)).

Background

1. On 19 June 2023, the United Nations adopted the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the [Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction \(BBNJ\)](#), which entered into force on 17 January 2026. The United Nations General Assembly decided to establish a Preparatory Commission (PrepCom) to prepare for the entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement, and the convening of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement (COP1) scheduled to take place in January 2027.

2. IOC, as a competent international organization in relation to UNCLOS and the only UN body with a global mandate in ocean science, plays a crucial role in supporting the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement, particularly in areas related to marine scientific research, capacity building, and the sharing of ocean data and knowledge. The IOC has been engaged regularly since 2015 in the BBNJ process, sharing information on its mandate as it relates to BBNJ issues and on its potential contributions to the implementation of the Agreement, particularly in the areas of marine science coordination, ocean observation, data and information sharing, and capacity development and the transfer of marine technology. Recognizing the need to strengthen the engagement of the IOC community into the preparatory work on BBNJ, the IOC Assembly at its 33rd Session in June 2025 decided, by Decision A-33/4.7, to establish an ad hoc 'IOC Working Group on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (IOC/WG-BBNJ)'.

3. During the inter-sessional period, the Working Group has met three times, and established two Task Teams on the topics of (i) the Clearing-House Mechanism for BBNJ, and (ii) Capacity Building and Transfer of Marine Technology. The IOC/WG-BBNJ also focused on the preparation of IOC messages to the Third Preparatory Commission (PrepCom-3, 23 March–2 April 2026, New York) to prepare for the entry into force of the Agreement and for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as well as the review and implication of its outcomes for the work of IOC relevant to BBNJ. The IOC/WG-BBNJ is established to provide scientific and technical advice on matters related to the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement within the IOC mandate, and in particular:

- (i) Develop recommendations for IOC's potential role in the operationalization of BBNJ—e.g., for area-based management tools; environmental impact assessments; capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology; and marine genetic resources, including the fair and equitable sharing of benefits;
- (ii) Identify, in cooperation with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations (UN/DOALOS) acting as interim secretariat for the BBNJ Agreement, and promote IOC's role and contributions towards the establishment and operation of the future BBNJ Clearing-House Mechanism;
- (iii) Review and analyze scientific, technical, and capacity development aspects of the BBNJ Agreement relevant to the IOC;
- (iv) Identify needs and modalities to be delivered through IOC mechanisms to support Member States, particularly developing countries, in capacity development initiatives relevant to BBNJ implementation, in cooperation with the UN/DOALOS acting as interim secretariat for the BBNJ Agreement;
- (v) Propose strategies and mechanisms for enhancing data sharing and cooperation across national and regional institutions, including through IOC Regional Subsidiary Bodies; and
- (vi) Propose mechanisms for cooperation between IOC and the BBNJ Agreement.

Establishment of IOC/WG-BBNJ

4. IOC Member States were requested to nominate experts to the IOC/WG-BBNJ through IOC Circular Letter N° [3055](#) of 22 August 2025. The IOC Secretariat strongly encouraged Member States to nominate experts and professionals with experience and/or responsibilities relevant to BBNJ issues. Nominations are limited to one expert per Member State and coordination across national agencies was encouraged. Relevant IOC programmes and technical/scientific/regional bodies also

nominated representatives to the IOC/WG-BBNJ to ensure that these programmes/bodies identify potential contributions to the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement. The Working Group currently counts expert nominations from 26 Member States and 7 representatives of IOC Programmes/Bodies/joint Projects, as well as the participation of UN/DOALOS (as BBNJ Interim Secretariat). The membership of the IOC/WG-BBNJ is presented in [Annex 1](#) to this document.

Working modalities

5. The work of the IOC/WG-BBNJ is conducted online and by correspondence. Dr Hansan Park (Vice Chair, Group IV) appointed Chair of the IOC/WG-BBNJ. The BBNJ Agreement covers a range of diverse and technically complex topics, namely: Marine Genetic Resources; Area-Based Management Tools, including Marine Protected Areas; Environmental Impact Assessments; Capacity Building and the Transfer of Marine Technology; as well as cross-cutting issues. In light of this, the Working Group has established dedicated Task Teams to cover specific topics in greater depth. Two Task Teams have been established on the topic of (i) the Clearing-House Mechanism and (ii) Capacity Building/Transfer of Marine Technology. Four meetings of the Working Group are planned in 2026 and two in 2027, until its final report to the IOC Assembly.

Meetings of the Working Group and thematic Task Teams

6. The Working Group met three times during the inter-sessional period. Additionally, the Task Team on the topic of the Clearing-House Mechanism has met once and the Task Team on Capacity Building/Transfer of Marine Technology is expected to first meet in June 2026.

First IOC/WG-BBNJ meeting

7. Its first meeting was held on 15 December 2025 and included an introduction to the Working Group's tasks by the IOC Secretariat, an overview of the BBNJ process by the United Nations Office for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UN/DOALOS), as well as technical presentations on the IOC's capabilities in Ocean Data and Observation (GOOS and OBIS), Capacity Development, regional coordination (through its Sub-Commissions), and contributions to the Ocean Decade, and the IOC's potential contribution to the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM). Participants included IOC experts, UN/DOALOS representatives, regional bodies, and programme leads.

8. **The first Task Team Meeting on the Clearing-House Mechanism:** A specialised group of IOC/WG-BBNJ members met on 20 February 2026 to discuss the topic of the CHM within the framework of the BBNJ. The meetings included presentations by UN/DOALOS representatives and consultants regarding the recent study on the CHM commissioned by the PrepCom. Discussions focussed on the IOC's expertise and its possible contributions to the CHM. Presentations were made by UN/DOALOS on the issues to be discussed at the PrepCom and the IOC's potential contributions, as well as on the 'UN/DOALOS CHM Study' commissioned by the co-chairs of the BBNJ PrepCom. The IOC Secretariat provided an overview of the IOC's potential contributions, particularly regarding the CHM and key messages for the third meeting of the Preparatory Commission (PrepCom-3).

Second IOC/WG-BBNJ Meeting

9. The second Working Group meeting took place on 4 March 2026 and served to prepare PrepCom-3. Presentations by UN/DOALOS and consultants covered agenda items to be discussed at PrepCom-3 and IOC's possible contributions. The Working Group members then consulted on ideas to contribute to the PrepCom regarding assistance to prepare technical insights on the CHM and using its networks and existing infrastructure as examples and experience throughout the process. Presentations were given by UN/DOALOS on issues to be discussed at the PrepCom, including the Scientific and Technical Body, Capacity Building & Transfer of Marine Technology (CB&TMT), cooperation arrangements, the financial mechanism and the BBNJ Secretariat and potential IOC's contributions, as well as on the 'UN/DOALOS CHM Study'. The IOC Secretariat provided an overview of potential IOC contributions, particularly with regards to the CHM and key

messages for the PrepCom-3. Following the third meeting, the Working Group worked by correspondence to finalise the IOC Technical Brief on the CHM as presented in [Annex 2](#).

Third IOC/WG-BBNJ Meeting

10. The third meeting took place on 21 May 2026 and focussed on a report on **PrepCom-3 (New York, 23 March–2 April 2026)**, the progress on the process to develop a CHM prototype for BBNJ, and the procedure enabling the IOC to express its interest in acting as a technical partner in the development of this prototype. The meeting also addressed the scope and objectives of the CB & TMT Task Team, as well as the Working Group's report to the 59th session of the IOC Executive Council, including its recommendations. This document (IOC/EC-59/3.7.Doc(1)) and the Terms of Reference for the CB&TMT Task Team have been finalised by correspondence, along with the next steps for the Working Group and the scheduling of the first meeting of the CB&TMT Task Team for 23 June 2026. The Terms of Reference of the Task Team on CB & TMT are presented in [Annex 3](#).

IOC/WG-BBNJ review of PrepCom-3 outcomes

11. The IOC/WG-BBNJ took note of the PrepCom-3 outcomes and agreed on a package of documents to be forwarded to COP1 for consideration, including:

- draft rules of procedure for the COP (with certain provisions, including on decision-making procedures (still bracketed and requiring resolution at COP1);
- draft terms of reference and modalities for the subsidiary bodies established under the Agreement, including the Scientific and Technical Body (STB) and the Capacity-Building and Transfer of Marine Technology (CB/TMT) Committee;
- a draft decision on arrangements for the functioning of the BBNJ Secretariat, including the choice of its seat (with proposals received from Belgium, Chile and China; the final selection to be made by COP1);
- a draft decision on cooperation arrangements with relevant legal instruments, frameworks and bodies;
- draft financial rules and a draft Memorandum of Understanding with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council (with some provisions still bracketed); and
- an outcome document on the operationalization of the Clearing-House Mechanism.

12. The most directly relevant PrepCom-3 document concerning the CHM is the '[BBNJ PrepCom-3 informal on Clearing House Mechanism outcome document delivered to Plenary on 2 April 2026](#)' (co-facilitated by Palau and New Zealand). This document is to guide intersessional work toward COP1 and include recommendations to the co-chairs with regards to:

- **Prototype development mandate:** The PrepCom Co-Chairs, in consultation with the Bureau and the Secretariat, are entrusted with guiding development of an operational CHM prototype and reporting to COP1.
- **Expression of interest:** All those potentially interested—including but not limited to organizations referenced in Article 51 of the Agreement (which includes IOC)—are invited to express interest (individually or jointly) in providing technical support, with detailed workplans and costings. The best application will be selected in accordance with principles of cooperation, openness, transparency and non-discrimination, subject to availability of resources.
- **Technical parameters annex:** An annex sets out 10 detailed interim technical parameters for the prototype: metadata standards; confidentiality categories; user role taxonomy; traditional knowledge safeguards with free, prior and informed consent (FPIC); subscription-based alerts; interoperability with existing systems; node policy; language (six UN languages for the final version); cybersecurity baseline; and

accessibility requirements for developing States and SIDS. These parameters closely align with IOC's existing technical capabilities and the architecture IOC proposed at PrepCom-3.

- **Partner engagement and funding:** The 'outcome document' invites and encourages partners from relevant organizations to support both system development and capacity-building. It also invites voluntary contributions and exploration of GEF funding for prototype development and future nodes.

13. However, at the third meeting UN/DOLAOS clarified that the outcome document from the informal consultations on the operationalization of the Clearing-House Mechanism does not form part of the recommendations of the PrepCom to the COP. The decision of the PrepCom on this matter, as reflected in paragraph 60 of the [advance, unedited version of the report of the Prep Com](#), is *"to entrust the Co-Chairs with the undertaking of further intersessional work, to be carried out under the Co-Chairs' authority, in consultation with the Bureau and with the support of the DOALOS, taking into consideration that document, and to report thereon to the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties"*.

14. The substantive content of the CHM 'outcome document', even though informal, broadly reflects the technical architecture and governance framework proposed by IOC in its interventions at PrepCom-3. Article 51(4) of the Agreement explicitly recognizes the role of competent international organizations such as IOC, providing the legal basis for IOC's engagement as technical partner.

Areas of relevance to IOC's mandate as identified by IOC/WG-BBNJ

15. Beyond the CHM, several PrepCom-3 outcomes and upcoming COP1 agenda items engage multiple dimensions of IOC's mandate:

- **Cooperation arrangements:** The draft decision on cooperation with relevant bodies will frame the COP's approach to engagement with international organizations. IOC's mandate in marine science, its existing arrangements with UNCLOS institutions, and its role in key global ocean science processes position it as a natural and necessary partner for the Agreement.
- **Scientific and Technical Body (STB):** IOC scientific outputs—including 'State of the Ocean' reporting and the Ocean Decade—are directly relevant to the STB's scientific assessment and advisory functions, particularly with respect to environmental impact assessments (EIAs) and area-based management tools (ABMTs).
- **Capacity-building and transfer of marine technology (CB/TMT):** IOC's OceanTeacher network, the Ocean Connector under the Ocean Decade and regional training programmes are positioned to provide targeted CB/TMT support aligned with BBNJ requirements, including for CHM capacity-building and for the CB/TMT matchmaking function of the relevant Committee.

Proposed actions in the lead-up to COP1 and beyond

16. The following recommended actions were presented and reviewed by IOC/WG-BBNJ at its third meeting:

Actions for the IOC Secretariat (prior to and at COP1), based on the guidance provided by the 59th session of the IOC Executive Council:

- On the basis of the guidance provided by the IOC Executive Council at its 59th session, **submit a timely expression of interest** for the CHM prototype development—consistent with the 18-month, three-phase pilot committed to at PrepCom-3—including a detailed workplan and cost estimate to be financed through BBNJ mechanisms. A joint proposal with complementary UN bodies should be considered to strengthen the inclusiveness dimension of IOC's bid.

- Engage proactively with the PrepCom Co-Chairs and UN/DOALOS on the timeline for the expression-of-interest process, advocating for use of the UN-to-UN administrative mechanism as the procurement channel (the fastest available route consistent with UN rules).
- Begin preparatory technical work immediately: mapping of national MGR reporting workflows, interoperability testing with OBIS, development of a prototype consultation plan and user-testing framework.
- Proactively communicate IOC's inclusiveness credentials (153 Member States, national and regional centres in over 67 countries, global OBIS, IODE and OceanTeacher networks, SIDS/LDC engagement) to delegations in the lead-up to COP1.
- Formalize IOC's cooperation arrangements with the permanent BBNJ Secretariat once selected, including a framework defining roles, responsibilities and governance safeguards.

Actions for IOC Member States (at COP1 and in the intersessional period):

17. In national COP1 delegations, support IOC's role as technical partner for the CHM and advocate for robust, long-term cooperation arrangements between the COP and IOC consistent with Article 51(4) of the Agreement:

- Designate technical focal points and actively participate in CHM prototype user-testing and consultations, in case IOC is selected.
- In discussions on the STB and CB/TMT Committee, highlight the relevance of IOC scientific and technical programmes and encourage formal linkages with IOC outputs.

Actions through the IOC Working Group on BBNJ (mandated until the 34th IOC Assembly in June 2027):

- Provide oversight and strategic guidance on the preparation of IOC's CHM expression of interest, including review of the workplan and costing, as well as during its potential implementation.
- Monitor COP1 proceedings and provide timely guidance to the IOC Secretariat regarding the CHM, cooperation arrangements, and other relevant items of the BBNJ COP agenda.
- Advise on IOC's engagement with the BBNJ Secretariat and its interactions with subsidiary bodies, particularly the STB and the CB/TMT Committee.
- Prepare a comprehensive report and recommendations for the IOC Assembly (June 2027) on IOC's long-term institutional engagement with the BBNJ Agreement, including whether to renew or expand the IOC/WG-BBNJ Working Group's mandate and any post-COP1 arrangements.

Actions beyond COP1

18. Should IOC be confirmed as the CHM technical partner at or following COP1, the scope of work would extend to delivery of a fully operational, user-tested prototype by COP2 (anticipated 2028) and continued engagement with the permanent BBNJ Secretariat on system evolution. The IOC Assembly in June 2027 should consider the institutional framework for this long-term engagement and any formal governance arrangements with the BBNJ COP that may be appropriate. IOC should also remain engaged on the STB scientific agenda, the CB/TMT matchmaking function, and the broader COP work programme, ensuring that ocean science and IOC's technical and normative contributions remain visible and used in BBNJ implementation.

ANNEX 1 – Membership of the IOC/WG-BBNJ

The IOC/WG-BBNJ consists of experts nominated from 26 Member States, and 7 representatives from IOC programmes/bodies as well as UN/DOALOS (Interim BBNJ Secretariat)

IOC Member States

Argentina
Bangladesh
Brazil
Canada
Chile
China
Colombia
Djibouti
Germany
Indonesia
Ireland
Japan
Kuwait
Mauritania
Mexico
Morocco
Norway
Russian Federation
Senegal
Spain
Sri Lanka
Türkiye
Ukraine
United Kingdom
Viet Nam
Republic of Korea

IOC programmes/bodies

General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans
IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific
Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS)
International Oceanographic Data and Information
Exchange (IODE)
Marine Policy and Regional Coordination Section
Ocean Sciences Section and CD Coordination

Other UN organization

UN/DOALOS

ANNEX 2 – Technical Briefing on the CHM prepared for Prepcom-3

Designing and implementing the BBNJ Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM): Contribution from the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission – Technical Considerations and Operational Framework for the BBNJ Clearing-House Mechanism

**Information for the Preparatory Commission for the BBNJ Agreement,
Third Session (New York, 23 March–2 April 2026)**

1. EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

The BBNJ Agreement establishes a **Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM)** as its central information infrastructure to serve all four treaty pillars: marine genetic resources (MGR), area-based management tools (ABMTs), environmental impact assessments (EIAs), and capacity-building and transfer of marine technology (CB/TMT). Under Article 51, the **Secretariat is mandated to manage the CHM**, but may cooperate with relevant international organizations, including the IOC, ISA, IMO and FAO. The Agreement entered into force on 17 January 2026, making rapid CHM development urgent. The **Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO** is well-positioned to serve as a technical partner, building on six decades of operational ocean data infrastructure, global ocean science networks of national and regional bodies, and a focus on building technical and scientific capacities of nations.

2. DEFINING THE CHM: INFORMATION, NOT JUST DATA

A critical distinction for BBNJ Parties is that the CHM can be understood as an **information management system**, not a data management system.

- **What it is NOT:** A central repository replicating the function of existing global ocean data repositories, which would be redundant and costly.
- **What it IS:** A “system-of-systems” that manages **regulatory workflows**, notifications, roles and privileges, and access to information held in existing, high-quality global repositories and served through existing platforms. Specifically, it manages:
 - regulatory workflows (notifications, reviews and audit logs, version controls, approvals, and deadlines);
 - identifiers (issuing and resolving Standardized Batch Identifiers that trace MGR from collection to benefit-sharing);
 - access to information (a single entry point to discover and interlink information in federated systems); and
 - metadata and provenance (ensuring all information is findable, attributable and traceable).

It does not need to build a global ocean database but could connect to existing systems through standardised, interoperable access services.

3. DESIGNING THE BBNJ CHM

Based on IOC’s technical experience, a modular and phased approach would ensure the CHM is operational as soon as possible :

- **Component 1: Central Platform for Governance and Control.** This is a purpose-built “regulatory core” that could be built by IOC (or a subcontractor) managed by the BBNJ Secretariat (see following text on how the IOC suggests this working in practice). It would handle functions unique to the BBNJ Agreement, such as:
 - **MGR Notifications:** Processing pre-, post-collection and utilization notifications and issuing **Standardized Batch Identifiers (SBIs)** to report on the MGR lifecycle.

- **Workflow Management:** Facilitating submissions of ABMT proposals, EIA screening, and CB/TT "matchmaking" between needs and offers.
- **Component 2: Federated Interoperable Access Service** This layer connects the central platform to **existing data systems**, which would provide data required for e.g. ABMT proposals, or EIA reports. Such an approach would avoid duplication and deliver efficiency for users through linkage to already adopted platforms and mechanisms. It leverages access to a multitude of existing databases including:
 - **OBIS (Ocean Biodiversity Information System):** 170 million+ marine biodiversity records and global standard protocols for handling marine biodiversity data, managed and operated by IOC.
 - **ODIS (Ocean Data and Information System):** IOC's existing federated data discovery architecture currently used across Europe, Australia, USA, Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific.
 - **Scientific Databases:** Direct links to genetic sequence repositories (INSDC - International Nucleotide Sequence Database Collaboration) and expert rosters (e.g. ORCID – Open Research and Contributor ID – linked to IOC's OceanExpert).

4. IMPLEMENTING THE BBNJ CHM

- **Operational Readiness:** The CHM needs immediate operational readiness to fulfill its basic functions and the potential to be fine-tuned over time. In a phased approach, a first component would ensure meeting immediate needs, while the connections to a comprehensive network of existing databases can be developed over time. This requires linkages to existing data infrastructures and continuous access to scientific and technical know-how. The IOC can support this with experience in managing data and information products (such as IODE/OBIS), ocean observations (e.g. GOOS) and training platforms (e.g. OTGA) and with long-term scientific and technical advice through its networks across 152 Member States as well as through the IOC BBNJ Working Group.
- **SBI Development:** A standardized BBNJ Batch Identifier will need to be developed within a short timeframe to capture notifications in regards to activities related to MGRs of ABNJ and enable the operationalisation of equitable benefit-sharing. Input by the scientific community is crucial in the development of the SBI to put the treaty's objectives into practice. IOC can support with dedicated expertise needed to set up a Standardized Batch Identifier system, e.g. through a Digital Object Identifier (DOI)-based approach, where each batch of collected marine genetic resources receives a DOI assigning each MGR batch a globally unique DOI, the standard already used across scientific publishing and data repositories, ensuring each collection is permanently findable and traceable, which would provide persistence, machine-resolvability, and interoperability with research data infrastructure (DataCite, INSDC, GBIF – Global Biodiversity Information Facility, OBIS). Such an approach would be compatible with the CBD's IRCC system under the Nagoya Protocol, ensuring coherence across jurisdictional boundaries.
- **Global Network Reach:** The BBNJ CHM is global in nature: It serves States and stakeholders from across the world and is the entry point for BBNJ information, including MGR notifications, ABMT proposals, EIA reports, or CBTMT initiatives. At the same time it is regionally grounded through the need to connect to different regions and stakeholders for ABMT and EIA alerts, and CB/TMT matchmaking. IOC has valuable experience in connecting national and regional bodies with global initiatives such as through operating 115 centres across 67 countries, of which 62 National Oceanographic Data Centres, 36 OBIS nodes and 17 Regional Training Centres (annex C), and through its network of national focal points for Ocean Observing (part of the Global Ocean Observing System and Oceanographic Data Management (through the International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange Committee in nearly 90 countries. Nations could build upon and strengthen these national and regional centres to support the BBNJ implementation.

5. COOPERATING FOR A BBNJ CHM

Article 51(4) of the BBNJ Agreement refers to the IOC as a potential cooperation partner in the development of the BBNJ CHM. In the case IOC would be solicited to act as technical developer of the CHM, a cooperation mechanism would need to be designed to reflect the BBNJ Secretariat responsibilities in terms of management of the CHM and the role of IOC in terms of development and implementation of the CHM. Potential responsibilities could be defined as follows:

- **BBNJ Secretariat:** Enacts policy, oversees coordination of operations, and maintains authority over standards and procedures.
- **IOC:** Acts as a technical partner, developing, hosting and maintaining the infrastructure under a formal cooperation arrangement.
- **Parties:** Maintain **data sovereignty** through their national data infrastructures and/or regional nodes (for eg regional data that would be linked to the CHM, remaining the authoritative sources of truth for their data in the region).
- **COP:** Determines operational modalities (Art. 51(2)), provides strategic direction, and approves cooperation arrangements.

This model would follow a proven precedent: OBIS operates under IOC governance, with a centrally managed platform (data harvesting, quality control, unified API) while 36 nodes maintain data sovereignty within countries. "Manage" in a treaty context refers to governance, coordination and standard-setting, and not necessarily to centralised hosting of all technical infrastructure.

6. POSSIBLE CONSIDERATIONS FOR PREPCOM-3

Early development of the CHM is essential. We suggest that delegations consider:

1. **Formally recognizing IOC-UNESCO** as technical partner for CHM development.
2. **Mandating a CHM Prototype** during the preparatory period (pre-COP) to deliver a "Minimum Viable Product" focusing on the regulatory core (Component 1).
3. **Inviting a Technical Roadmap** from IOC, including cost estimates for a fully operational system, to be presented to the COP1.
4. **Supporting Development** through specific allocated financial resources (e.g. through the Special Fund or voluntary contributions - or other mechanisms upon PrepCom or COP decision - to ensure the CHM is ready to facilitate treaty implementation within a short time frame, no longer than 24 months after COP1.
5. **Requesting the interim Secretariat**, in cooperation with IOC, to begin technical design consultations on CHM architecture, standards, interoperability and budget requirements.

ANNEX 3: Terms of Reference for the Capacity Building and the Transfer of Marine Technology Task Team

The Strategic Context

The WG's overall mandate in capacity development relevant to the BBNJ Agreement and its implementation sits at the intersection of several PrepCom-3 outcomes. PrepCom-3 produced and elaborated on new institutional machinery (the CB&TMT Committee, the Special Fund Ad hoc Committee) and concrete mandates (CB&TMT components in the CHM, IFB cooperation arrangements) that give the WG clear and time-bound entry points. The challenge now is to convert these entry points into actionable deliverables before COP1 in January 2027 and to position IOC for the post-COP1 phase. Given that the WG will report to IOC EC59 (June 2026) and delivers its final output to IOC Assembly 34 (June 2027), the work naturally falls into two phases: a pre-COP1 phase focused assessing gaps and strengths as well as foundational products, and a post-COP1 phase focused on implementation and operationalization.

Task Area 1: Mapping IOC's CB&TMT Offer Against BBNJ Needs

Grounding: PrepCom-3 identified reporting requirements where "developing countries may indicate data deficiencies or capacity gaps," and the CHM needs-matching function explicitly requires a catalogue of needs and providers. The WG ToR objectives (i), (iii) and (iv) align with this. PrepCom-3 repeatedly underscored SIDS-specific needs and the viability of regional nodes for CHM connectivity and localized support. The WG ToR objective (v) aligns with this.

The most foundational task the WG can undertake is a systematic mapping of existing IOC CB&TMT programs (e.g. The IOC Capacity Development and Ocean Literacy Programme, including the OceanTeacher Global Academy, its network of Regional and Specialist Training Centres and the IOC Group of Experts for Capacity Development; IOC's ocean observations and data programmes, including its technical subsidiary body IODE, and the co-sponsored GOOS; capacity development working groups that sit within IOC Regional Sub Commissions; and initiatives under the Ocean Decade including OceanConnector), against the specific CB&TMT needs arising from BBNJ Part V (Articles 40–45). This will involve developing more than a generic list and articulating, for each BBNJ function (marine scientific research in BBNJ areas, EIA methodologies, ABMT monitoring, MGR research and documentation), what IOC programs already exist, what gaps remain, and which IOC mechanisms (technical programs, subsidiary bodies, bilateral arrangements) are best placed to fill them. This mapping would serve as the evidence base for virtually every other task. Synergies with the work conducted by the IOC Expert Group on Capacity Development under Terms of Reference set by the IOC Assembly will be identified early on so as to build complementarity and avoid overlap.

IOC's Regional Sub Commissions IOCAFRICA, IOCARIBE, IOC/WESTPAC, IOCINDIO and OTGAs network of Regional and Specialist Training Centres are natural implementing agencies for BBNJ CB&TMT on the ground at the regional level. This is particularly the case for SIDS in the Pacific, Caribbean, and Indian Ocean, some of the most vocal voices identifying CB&TMT needs at PrepCom-3. The WG could task each IOC RSC with identifying BBNJ-specific CB&TMT priorities and in association existing programs being implemented at the regional level that can be adapted or scaled, and consolidate these into a regional CB&TMT strategy document. IOCARIBE and IOC/WESTPAC have established dedicated working groups on BBNJ aspects and these should be engaged early to identify synergies, build complementarity and avoid overlap.

This regional dimension is also directly relevant to the CHM architecture: PrepCom-3 debated whether the CHM should evolve toward regional and subregional nodes, and IOC's regional governing structures could form the backbone of such a node-based system — but only if the CB&TMT link is articulated clearly and early.

Deliverable:

1. A structured inventory document, organized by BBNJ CB&TMT function, identifying IOC programs, gaps, and priority regions suitable for submission to the CB&TMT Committee and the Special Fund ad hoc committee if invited to do so. This document will also inform relevant IOC programmes and initiatives and provide guidance for responding to needs identified through the development of specific activities.
2. Identification of regional differences and similarities across IOC regions regarding CB&TMT needs and priorities, mapping priority regions, existing programs, and gaps, with proposals for regional support activities.

Task Area 2: Integrating CB&TMT and Training Components into the Consultations for the development of a CHM

Grounding: PrepCom-3 CHM outcome document explicitly "requests that the Consultant integrate capacity-building and training components into the consultation process." IOC will aim to put forward a technical offer to develop the CHM prototype. The WG ToR objective (ii) aligns with this.

This is the WG's most immediate and concrete CB&TMT task. The CHM is mandated to support CB&TMT through several functions: matching needs of developing country Parties with available providers; facilitating access to training and technology; and disseminating scientific information. The WG could develop specific technical recommendations on how these functions could be designed, covering the needs/providers matching platform structure; the integration of CD related platforms developed by the IOC and as part of Ocean Decade efforts (e.g. OceanTeacher Global Academy and its Regional and Specialist Training Centres and Ocean Connector) as both identifiers of training needs and delivery mechanisms (building on BBNJ training already being delivered through OTGA); accessibility requirements for reduced digital infrastructure environments critical for SIDS and LDC participation; and data governance considerations for the traditional knowledge systems of Indigenous Peoples and local communities relevant to CB&TMT. Such technical guidance can be useful in the development of a CHM prototype.

Deliverables:

1. As relevant, Inputs outlining the technical specifications for the CB&TMT components of the CHM prototype.
2. Recommendations towards the development and design of specific BBNJ training packages (e.g. more in-depth modules on OceanTeacher or in-person trainings).

Task Area 3: Strengthening the IOC network of BBNJ experts

Grounding: The BBNJ subsidiary bodies may invite experts on an ad hoc basis, taking into account gender balance and geographical representation, to participate in their work or that of their ad hoc groups, working groups and subcommittees, as needed (ToR Subsidiary Bodies, PrepCom III). Moreover, a roster of experts under the Scientific and Technical Body is to provide advice and assistance for Parties with capacity constraints who request it, to conduct and evaluate screenings and EIAs for a planned activity under their jurisdiction or control. IOC has an extensive network of experts in all oceanic regions with relation to topics of the different BBNJ pillars.

The BBNJ subsidiary bodies shall seek to cooperate with other relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies (IFBs), such as the IOC, and take into account their work, avoiding duplication.

Developing country capacity to participate in environmental impact assessments in BBNJ areas and to contribute to ABMT proposals is a technically demanding CB&TMT need that sits within IOC's scientific mandate, noting the scientific disciplinary requirements required for evaluating the efficacy and relevance of approaches, and conducting the assessments required for both.

The TG should assess, using available information on current capacity (including infrastructure, frameworks and data) and access to the relevant expertise coordinated by IOC sections and Regional Sub-Commissions relevant to addressing country capacity gaps and propose specific IOC support actions. This could include proposing IOC's scientific networks as a resource for the STB's roster of experts, and potentially developing a training module on EIA methodologies in BBNJ areas using ocean observation data, and planning tools that can support ABMT such as MSP.

Deliverables:

1. An overview of the IOC networks of experts from the different regions and their BBNJ-relevant area of expertise, which can serve to be drawn upon for ad hoc requests, as well as for longer-term involvement as potential STB members.
2. Recommendations towards a CB&TMT framework and modalities for delivering EIA/ABMT capacity in BBNJ.

Members

The task Team is open-ended and members will be CB&TMT experts within the IOC BBNJ WG. Additional experts can be invited from the relevant IOC initiatives, including, but not limited to the IOC Capacity Development and Ocean Literacy Programme, including the OceanTeacher Global Academy, its network of Regional and Specialist Training Centres and the IOC Group of Experts for Capacity Development; IOC's ocean observations and data programmes, including its technical subsidiary body IODE, and the co-sponsored GOOS; capacity development working groups that sit within IOC Regional Sub Commissions; and initiatives under the Ocean Decade including OceanConnector.

The task Team will nominate a facilitator at its first meeting that can coordinate each of the task areas and associated deliverables.

Timeline / Sequencing / Reporting

Given the WG's reporting obligations and the trajectory of the BBNJ process, the work should be sequenced as follows:

By the 29th session of the IOC Executive Council (June 2026): Establish membership of Task Teams, appoint the facilitator, translate TG ToRs into a workplan for 2026–2027 (that accounts for deliverables needed by COP1 and finalization of tasks by the 34th Session of the IOC Assembly) and commence work on Task Area 1: the CB&TMT mapping/inventory).

To complete the tasks, the CB&TMT Task Team will agree on a schedule of regular meetings to be conducted online. The Task Team will report to the Working Group on a regular basis.