Concept Note and Draft Programme

WESTPAC Regional Strategic Workshop - Shaping Priorities for 2030–2037

1. Background and rationale

Responding to the request of the 33rd Session of the IOC Assembly, the IOC Secretariat is coordinating the IOC and the Future of the Ocean (FOO) consultation process to inform the development of its next Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2030–2037. The process aims to identify how changing ocean conditions, emerging challenges and opportunities, and evolving ocean governance will shape the future needs of IOC Member States and the strategic directions of the Commission.

The WESTPAC region faces a rapidly evolving ocean landscape, characterised by increasing pressures on marine ecosystems, climate change, growing demand for ocean resources and services, technological developments and changes in regional and global ocean governance. These trends create both challenges and opportunities for regional cooperation in ocean science, observations, services and capacity development.

Building on regional consultations undertaken through the first two phases of the FOO process, this workshop will provide WESTPAC Member States with an opportunity to reflect collectively in a more tangible way on the future of the region and identify strategic priorities for WESTPAC during the 2030–2037 period that will directly inform the development of the next IOC Medium Term Strategy (MTS 2030-2037). It will also allow reflection on the ways in which the legacy of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development can inform strategic priority setting for the post-2030 period in WESTPAC.

2. Workshop objectives

The overall objective is to generate regional inputs to the development of the IOC Medium-Term Strategy for 2030–2037.

Specifically, the workshop will:

1. Explore how ocean conditions, threats, governance arrangements and thus Member States' needs in the WESTPAC region may evolve throughout the period of the next MTS (2030 – 2037) .
2. Identify the strategic priorities and areas of work that WESTPAC should maintain, strengthen, transform or initiate during 2030–2037.
3. Identify the partnerships, institutional capacities, resources and other enabling conditions that should be developed in the short-term (2028–2029) and longer term (post-2030) to support these future directions.
4. Consolidate key regional messages to inform the IOC and FOO process and future WESTPAC strategic planning.

3. Workshop methodology

The workshop will combine short introductory presentations with two successive rounds of facilitated small-group discussion.

The first group discussion will adopt a forward-looking perspective, examining how the regional ocean environment, threats, opportunities and governance context may evolve throughout the period of the next MTS (2030-2037).

The second discussion will translate this analysis into strategic directions for WESTPAC, using the current thematic areas of work and the five High-Level Objectives of the IOC Medium-Term Strategy

(2022-2029) as a starting point. Participants will consider which areas should be continued, expanded, transformed, discontinued or newly developed, while allowing space for emerging priorities.

The final discussion will work backwards from these future priorities to identify what WESTPAC should begin putting in place during 2028–2029.

Participants will work in small groups. Each group will address all three questions, allowing for an integrated discussion across thematic areas.

The workshop will conclude with brief group reports and a facilitated synthesis of common priorities, areas of convergence and issues requiring further consideration.

4. Expected outputs

The workshop is expected to produce:

- A shared understanding of major changes, risks and opportunities likely to shape the needs of Member States in the WESTPAC region throughout the period of the next MTS (2030-2037).
- A consolidated set of priority strategic directions for WESTPAC during 2030–2037.
- Identification of key preparatory actions and enabling conditions to consider for implementation in 2028–2029.
- Regional recommendations to inform the development of the next IOC Medium-Term Strategy (2030-2037).

5. Draft programme

Time	Session	Format / Lead
09:00–09:10	Introduction to workshop objectives and methodology	IOC Secretariat / Facilitator
09:10–09:25	IOC and the Future of the Ocean: Overview of the initiative and key messages emerging so far for the WESTPAC region	IOC Secretariat
09:25–09:35	Q/A on the workshop methodology and guiding questions, and guidance for group discussions	IOC Secretariat/ Facilitator
09:40–10:25	Groupwork 1: What will the Western Pacific look like in 2030 and 2037 in terms of ocean health, threats and governance?	Facilitated small groups
10:25-10:45	COFFEE BREAK	
10:45–11:30	Groupwork 2: Given these changes, what strategic directions should WESTPAC Member States pursue by 2030 and 2037 and what needs to be put in place now to achieve that?	Facilitated small groups
11:30 – 12 :15	Report back from each group: 1. Three most important influences on Member States' needs and WESTPAC's regional role in next MTS period. 2. Top three strategic directions for WESTPAC in the next MTS period taking into account these influences. 3. Top three conditions to put in place now for the success of the expected strategic directions of the next MTS. N.B Each group will also document its discussions in a Word document that will be made available by the Secretariat so that all important elements of the discussion can be captured.	3-minute report back from each group
12:15–12:30	Wrap-up and conclusions: Group reports, synthesis of common priorities and next steps	Rapporteurs / IOC Secretariat

6. Guiding questions for group discussions

The following questions can form the basis of two groupwork discussions:

Groupwork 1 — Looking ahead: WESTPAC from 2030 to 2037

What major changes should WESTPAC anticipate in the coming decade including consideration of:

- Changing ocean conditions, ecosystem health, climate impacts and emerging threats.
- Changes in ocean uses, socioeconomic needs, technologies and opportunities.
- Evolution of global, regional, national ocean governance, policy frameworks and institutional arrangements.
- Implications for Member States' ocean science needs and WESTPAC's regional role.

Output: Three to five major changes or trends likely to influence WESTPAC priorities and ability to deliver during 2030–2037.

Groupwork 2 — Defining WESTPAC's strategic directions & preparing for the future

In light of the anticipated changes and considering the current programme of work around the current HLOs, how should WESTPAC's strategic priorities evolve taking into consideration:

- What should WESTPAC aim to achieve by the end of the next MTS? What would success look like in 2037?
- Which existing areas of work should be maintained, expanded, transformed or phased out?
- What new areas of cooperation or services should WESTPAC develop?
- Where can WESTPAC add the greatest value through regional cooperation?

Output 2.1: Three to five priority strategic directions for 2030–2037.

What must WESTPAC begin doing in the next biennium and in the longer term to prepare for its longer-term priorities including consideration of:

- Essential institutional, technical and human capacity requirements.
- Partnerships and regional cooperation mechanisms that should be established or strengthened.
- Resource mobilisation and investment needs.
- Priority preparatory actions that could be initiated during 2028–2029.

Output 2.2: Three to five concrete enabling actions or conditions for 2028–2029, linked to the longer-term strategic directions.

7. Use of workshop results

The outcomes will be consolidated by the IOC Secretariat and WESTPAC. The draft report will be circulated to all WESTPAC Member States for comment prior to its finalization and will then be used to inform regional contributions to the IOC and FOO process and the preparation of the 2030–2037 Medium-Term Strategy. They will also provide a longer-term strategic perspective for subsequent WESTPAC planning and implementation.