|  |
| --- |
| Summary  Pursuant to Rule of Procedure 12 of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), and in accordance with the established practice of the Assembly and the Executive Council, this document sets out guidelines for the establishment and functioning of sessional working groups during the Eighth Session of IOCAFRICA. These guidelines are aimed at facilitating the structured and effective participation of Member States in discussions related to the development of the IOCAFRICA Work Plan for 2026–2027 under Agenda Item 5.2.  The proposed decision is referenced as IOCAFRICA-VIII/Dec.2.3 in the Action Paper for the session (document IOCAFRICA-VIII/AP Prov.) |

### Introduction

1. In line with *Rule 12* of the *IOC Rules of Procedure*, which allows for the establishment of subsidiary bodies to facilitate focused discussion and provide advice on specific agenda items, the Chairperson of the Sub-Commission may propose, and the Sub-Commission may establish, sessional working groups to address specific items on the agenda.
2. During the opening of the session (*Agenda Item 2.3*), the Chair invited Member States to form four sessional working groups to conduct detailed deliberations on the following programmatic themes:  
   *(i) Ocean Observations and Monitoring*  
   *(ii) Ocean Sciences, Biodiversity and Assessments*  
   *(iii) Ocean Data and Information Management*  
   *(iv) Capacity Development, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization*
3. These working groups will operate concurrently during designated periods of the session, as per the adopted timetable, and their outcomes will inform the development of the IOCAFRICA Work Plan for the 2026–2027 biennium.

**Mandate and Scope**  
4. Each sessional working group is mandated to:  
 a. Conduct an in-depth review of the assigned thematic area;  
 b. Examine relevant strategic and programmatic documents and national reports;  
 c. Identify priority actions for inclusion in the 2026–2027 Work Plan;  
 d. Draft proposals, decisions and recommendations for consideration by the plenary.

1. The working groups may consider cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, youth engagement, regional collaboration, and support for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

**Composition and Participation**  
 6. The sessional working groups are open to all IOCAFRICA Member States. Participation is voluntary, and Member States were invited to express their interest in advance of the session.

1. The lists of participating Member States in each working group will be published in the *Summary Report* of the session. In establishing the composition of the working groups, efforts should be made to ensure a balanced representation of geographic regions, thematic expertise, and institutional diversity.

**Working Modalities**

1. Each working group will be chaired by a designated facilitator, nominated by the Chairperson of the Sub-Commission, taking into account the principles of geographic distribution and relevant thematic expertise. The facilitators will be supported by the IOCAFRICA Secretariat.
2. In addition, each working group shall designate a liaison representative to coordinate with the liaisons of the other sessional working groups. These liaisons will meet periodically during the session to identify synergies, address overlaps, and ensure coherence across the thematic discussions and outputs. This mechanism aims to support integrated planning and strengthen cross-thematic alignment, particularly where topics intersect.
3. The working groups shall operate in English and French, the working language of the session.
4. Each group shall appoint a rapporteur responsible for recording the discussions and presenting the group’s outcomes to the plenary.
5. The groups shall follow the guidance and templates provided by the Secretariat for drafting their outputs.

**Reporting and Follow-up**

13. The sessional working groups shall report to the plenary under *Agenda Item 5.2*, in accordance with the timeline established in the session's agenda. The reports shall include:  
(a) Summary of discussions;  
(b) Identified priorities and proposed actions;  
(c) Draft elements for inclusion in the Work Plan;  
(d) Any draft decisions or recommendations proposed.

1. The outputs of the working groups will be consolidated into the final Work Plan and Budget for 2026–2027, and reflected in the *Summary Report* of the session. Where appropriate, working group outputs may also inform intersessional activities or contribute to regional coordination mechanisms.
2. The sessional working groups will be dissolved upon completion of their mandate unless otherwise decided by the Sub-Commission.

**Annex: Template for Working Group Reports**

This template is intended to guide the sessional working groups in documenting their deliberations, outcomes, and contributions to the development of the IOCAFRICA Work Plan for 2026–2027. The structure aligns with the mandate to ensure clarity, consistency, and coherence across the thematic areas.

1. **Title of the Working Group**  
   (e.g., Ocean Data and Information Management)
2. **List of Participating Member States**  
   (Include all participating countries)
3. **Chair/Facilitator, Rapporteur, and Liaison**  
   (Full names, affiliations, and roles)
4. **Summary of Discussions**  
   (A concise overview of key discussion points, challenges raised, and consensus reached)
5. **Identified Priorities**  
   (List of thematic and cross-cutting priorities relevant to the group’s scope)
6. **Proposed Actions for 2026–2027**  
   (Detailed proposed activities, outputs, responsible parties, and timeframes)
7. **Draft Elements for Inclusion in the Work Plan**  
   (Structured contributions for the IOCAFRICA 2026–2027 Work Plan, including budget implications if known)
8. **Recommendations/Decisions Proposed to the Plenary**  
   (Clear language suitable for adoption, including possible draft resolution elements)

Draft Decisions

**The IOCAFRICA Sub-Commission,**

**Recalling** Rule of Procedure 12 of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), which provides for the establishment of subsidiary and sessional working groups to facilitate the work of the Commission and its Subsidiary Bodies;

**Recognizing** the need for a consistent and transparent framework to guide the establishment, composition, roles, and reporting mechanisms of sessional working groups of the IOCAFRICA Sub-Commission;

**Noting** the importance of sessional working groups in enabling more detailed discussion and technical input on specific themes under the IOCAFRICA programme of work, and enhancing the effectiveness and relevance of Sub-Commission outcomes;

**Having examined** the document IOCAFRICA-VIII/2.3.Doc(1), “Draft Guidelines for the Establishment and Functioning of Sessional Working Groups”;

**Decides to:**

1. **Endorse** the Draft Guidelines for the Establishment and Functioning of Sessional Working Groups, as contained in document IOCAFRICA-VIII/2.3.Doc(1);
2. **Invite** Member States to make use of the Guidelines in proposing and organizing sessional working groups during sessions of the Sub-Commission, and in reporting back to plenary on their outcomes;
3. **Request** the Secretariat to make the Guidelines available as a standing reference document for all future sessions of IOCAFRICA and to support their consistent implementation;
4. **Encourage** the Chairs of Sessional Working Groups to ensure that outputs are aligned with the objectives of the IOCAFRICA Strategic Plan and contribute to the formulation of actionable recommendations and decisions.