

**IOC Circular Letter No 3055**

(Available in English, French, Spanish, Russian)

IOC//VH/JB/ic

22 August 2025

To : Official National Coordinating Bodies for liaison with the IOC (IOC Member States)

C.c. : Permanent Delegations to UNESCO of IOC Member States  
National Commissions for UNESCO of IOC Member States  
IOC Officers  
Chair and Vice-Chairs of IOC Subsidiary Bodies (Scientific, Technical and Regional)

**Subject: IOC Working Group on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction  
(IOC/WG-BBNJ): Call for nominations for Members**

Following the adoption of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) in 2023, the United Nations General Assembly decided to establish a Preparatory Commission 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, at the conclusion of which the Commission will cease to exist.

The IOC has been engaged in the BBNJ process for over a decade, 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/information sharing, and capacity development and 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, through Decision A-33/4.7, to establish an ad hoc 'IOC Working Group on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (IOC/WG-BBNJ)', with the Terms of Reference annexed hereto. The group will provide scientific and technical advice and recommendations to support IOC's commitment, within the IOC mandate, particularly with regard to the BBNJ Clearing-House Mechanism, as well as other key areas of the Agreement. The IOC Chair has appointed Dr Hansan PARK (Vice Chair, Group IV) to chair the IOC/WG-BBNJ, which will provide a progress report on its findings at the 59th Session of the IOC Executive Council in 2026 and at the 34th session of the IOC Assembly in 2027.

**Expert nominations from Member States**

I therefore kindly requests Member States to nominate experts to the IOC/WG-BBNJ using the nomination form attached to this letter. The IOC Secretariat strongly encourages Member States to

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Qaitbay, Al-Anfوشي  
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solely nominate experts and professionals with experience and/or responsibilities relevant to BBNJ issues.

Nominations will be limited to one expert per Member State. Any additional nominations submitted by a Member State will not be considered, which is why coordination across national agencies is encouraged.

The work of the Working Group will be conducted on-line and by correspondence, and the working language will be English.

The Secretariat would appreciate receiving nominations before Friday 26 September 2025 by email to Ms Isabel Chavez ([i.chavez@unesco.org](mailto:i.chavez@unesco.org)), with copy to Mr Julian Barbière ([j.barbiere@unesco.org](mailto:j.barbiere@unesco.org)), Head of the Marine Policy and Regional Coordination Section.

### **Nominations from Major Subsidiary Bodies of the IOC programmes**

As specified in the Terms of Reference, relevant IOC programmes and technical/scientific/regional bodies may also nominate representatives to the IOC/WG-BBNJ to ensure that these programmes/bodies identify potential contributions to the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement.

I therefore invite Chairs of Major Subsidiary Bodies (Scientific, Technical and Regional) to appoint a representative to the IOC Working Group by communicating the name of the representative to Ms Chavez also by 26 September 2025.

Any questions can be addressed to [i.chavez@unesco.org](mailto:i.chavez@unesco.org) with copy to Mr Julian Barbière ([j.barbiere@unesco.org](mailto:j.barbiere@unesco.org)), Head of the Marine Policy and Regional Coordination Section.

With the assurances of my highest consideration, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

*[signature]*

Vidar Helgesen  
Executive Secretary

Enclosures: 1/ Terms of Reference of the IOC Working Group on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (IOC/WG-BBNJ) – Annex to Decision A-33/4.7 (IOC Contributions to UN Governance Processes).

2/ Nomination form for the IOC Working Group on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (IOC/WG-BBNJ).

Annex to Decision A-33/4.7

**IOC Working Group on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (IOC/WG-BBNJ)**

**1. Background and Context**

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) in 2023. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, as a competent international organisation in relation to UNCLOS and the only UN body with a global mandate in ocean science, should play 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.

**2. Objectives**

The IOC Working Group on 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; EIAs; 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 acting as 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 Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of legal Affairs of the United Nations acting as 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.
- (vi) Propose mechanisms for cooperation between IOC and BBNJ Agreement.

**3. Membership, Chairing and Methods of Work**

The Working Group shall be composed of experts nominated by IOC Member States, taking into account regional representation and relevant expertise (e.g., marine science, international law, capacity development, data management), as well as representatives from relevant IOC Programmes and Subsidiary Bodies. The Working Group will be chaired by an IOC Officers (Vice-Chair) to be identified by IOC Chairperson.

The Working Group shall conduct its work through virtual means and will work in English.

## **NOMINATION FORM**

Name:

Position:

Institution:

Country:

Tel:

Email:

Postal Address:

Relevant experience:

**Additional comments:**

Nomination submitted by:

Signature:

Position:

Government Department/Agency:

Date:

Please also include your most recent CV.