Establishment of an IOC Project Office for the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS)

By E. Vanden Berghe

The Committee will be briefed on the discussions to establish an IOC Project Office for IODE/Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS).

The Committee will be invited to:

- Take note of the general discussions on the Adoption by IODE of the Ocean Biogeographic Information System
- Take note of the Business Plan describing the operation of OBIS within the context of IOC, and work plan as formulated by the OBIS Managers Committee and the Ad-Hoc session of the OBIS Steering Group
- Study the offer of Rutgers University Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences, New Brunswick, NJ, USA, and the draft Memorandum of Understanding provided by Rutgers University, and compare the terms as described in this MOU with those as spelled out in document IOC/INF-1193, on the establishment of decentralized offices
- Recommend to IOC that an IOC Project Office for the IODE/Ocean Biogeographic Information System will be established at Rutgers University
1. INTRODUCTION

The Census of Marine Life (CoML) was a 10-year scientific initiative to assess and explain the diversity, distribution, and abundance of life in the oceans. The Census delivered its final report in October 2010. Building on Resolution IOC XXIII-3 (Census of Marine Life), the Commission has strengthened its collaboration, mainly through GOOS, IODE and HAB, with two of the major programmatic elements of the Census: the Ocean Tracking Network (OTN), affiliated as a GOOS pilot project; and the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS), the information and data component of the Census.

With the termination of the CoML in 2010, it is important, for the benefit of the international community, to give continuity to some of its core projects, such as OBIS. The IOC Executive Secretary, at the first meeting of the OBIS Governing Board (Rome, 28–29 April 2008), offered to provide an institutional framework for the continuation of OBIS, either through the development of a partnership or a dedicated extrabudgetary project that would allow for the institutional hosting of OBIS.

The 41st Executive Council, held 24 June to 1 July 2008, recognized the importance and value of CoML, the particular value of the OBIS component as a global repository for marine biological data, and the potential of a second phase of OBIS to expand data in this vital repository and to improve the interface for global access and exchange of marine biological data. It requested the Executive Secretary and the IOC Data and Information Management Advisory Group to work together with the OBIS Secretariat to develop a document for submission to the 25th Session of the IOC Assembly in 2009. The Executive Council considered that the document should describe possible scenarios for collaboration between IOC and OBIS, concentrating on the possibility of the creation of an IOC-OBIS Programme and an IOC–OBIS Programme Office. It should, for different scenarios, investigate consequences for both IOC and OBIS, and should contain estimates of budgetary implications, and involve consultations, as appropriate, with potential donors and/or host organizations.

During a Workshop on Collaboration between the IOC and OBIS Toward the LongTerm Management, Archival and Accessibility of Ocean Biographic Data, held in Ostend, Belgium, 24 to 26 November 2008, participants examined the constitution of the two organizations and found no fundamental reason to prohibit a future closer arrangement between the two. The Statutes of the IOC and its accepted data management policy were consistent with the policies and objectives of OBIS. In addition the meeting was of a unanimous and strong opinion that a closer union between the two would be mutually beneficial. The management and protection of the marine environment and its living resources is dependent upon wise and learned decision-making capability. Whether those decisions relate to climate prediction, the mitigation of natural disasters, fisheries management, weather forecasting, ecological protection, pollution prevention, biodiversity or coastal area management, they all require accurate and timely knowledge and information to be successful. The Workshop agreed that a merging of the OBIS system into the IOC family, as a part of the ocean data network that already exists and that has been successfully dealing with
data management and exchange for nearly fifty years, represented a wonderful opportunity that should not be lost.

During the **20th Session of the IOC Committee on IODE**, held in Beijing, China from 4 to 8 May 2009, a **Sessional Working Group on collaboration with OBIS** was requested to consider the benefits of collaboration with OBIS, the creation of a joint IODE/OBIS group of Experts, increased collaboration between NODCs and the Regional OBIS Nodes (RONs), changes to the operation and management of GE-BICH, and possible collaboration in capacity building in marine biodiversity data management. The Committee stated that from an IODE perspective, having OBIS within IODE is an attractive option as described in the documents (IOC/IODE-XX/12.1 and 12.2). It recommended that OBIS should be adopted as an element of IODE for the following reasons:

- The 24th session of the IOC Assembly in 2007 approved the IOC Strategic Plan for Oceanographic Data and Information Management (2009-2011), which aims to build up a comprehensive system for the management of data from all IOC programmes, including data and information from Member States obtained through operational processes and scientific investigation. This, naturally, includes the biological ocean data that is under the management of OBIS;
- At present, IODE urgently needs to further develop biological data management and exchange. Adoption of OBIS will undoubtedly promote data management in this area;
- Establishment of a new joint IODE-OBIS Expert Group alongside GE-BICH would facilitate synergies and efficiencies in the allocation of resources (cash and in kind) in respect of the required IODE budget and human resources, avoid duplication of effort and enhance the exchange and management of ocean biological data.

A **Business Plan**, prepared by Dr Geoff Holland, IOC Consultant and former Past Chairman, was presented for consideration to the **IOC Assembly at its 25th Session held in Paris, from 16 to 25 June 2009**. In the Business Plan, various alternative solutions for the integration of OBIS within IOC were presented. These different options were discussed by the Assembly, and Resolution IOC XXV.4, reproduced in this document as Annex 1, was adopted.

Following the 25th Session of the IOC assembly, the following steps were undertaken to further the integration of OBIS within IOC/IODE:

- During the OBIS MC meeting 16-17 November 2009 and the OBIS Strategy and Work Plan meeting 18-20 November 2009, detailed discussions were held on how to integrate OBIS in the IODE structure;
- IOC Circular Letter 2333, issued 16 February 2010, informed Member States that an IOC Trust Fund dedicated to OBIS had been established, and invited Member States to contribute;
- During the IODE Officers Meeting, 8-11 March 2010, progress with the integration of OBIS within IODE was discussed, and possible scientific activities identified.
- The Ad-Hoc SG OBIS Meeting 18-19 November 2010 built on the preparatory work of the 2009 MC and Strategy and Work Plan meetings, to draft recommendations to be considered by this meeting.
In response to Circular Letter 2333, three Member States have contributed financially (Australia, Brazil, USA); at the time of writing of this working document, negotiations are under way with a fourth one (Canada). Several organizations have offered support in kind: most for assistance with data management and IT infrastructure development (INCOIS, MGEL, USB, VLIZ), also for help for organizing meetings (Flemish Government). Rutgers University, who hosted the international OBIS Secretariat since OBIS’ inception in 2000, offered to host the IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS.

The proposed revisions of the IODE structure to accommodate OBIS are discussed in Document IODE XXI.43, and will not be repeated here. The main changes are a proposed Group of Experts for OBIS, and the formation of an IODE Steering Group for OBIS. The meeting will be requested to consider recommendations as presented in Annexes to Document IODE XXI.43.

2. PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF A DECENTRALISED OFFICE FOR IODE/OBIS AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF MARINE AND COASTAL SCIENCES

The possible establishment of a Project Office for IODE/OBIS was discussed during the Ad-Hoc meeting of the IODE Steering group for OBIS, held in Oostende, 18-19 November 2010. As defined in Document IOC/INF-1193 an IOC Project Office shall be established to implement a particular IOC project (or multiple projects of the same nature). The main purpose of an IOC Project Office is to administratively and technically underpin projects that have specific objectives, clearly defined deliverables and a predetermined duration. The Project Office should be seen as a flexible mechanism to support the implementation of projects in the field.

The main purpose of an IOC Project Office shall be to (ref IOC/INF-1193):

- Implement IOC projects;
- Report on the progress of the implementation of project activities to the Chair of the parent IOC Subsidiary Body, the IOC Executive Secretary, the Programme Office of the Project’s Parent Programme (as available), and participating Member States, on a regular basis;
- Plan and organise meetings, workshops, training courses and other capacity building activities relevant to the project;
- Liaise and maintain links with relevant IOC programmes and other projects;
- Establish and maintain links with other relevant organisations, institutions and programmes in order to promote co-operation with the Project;
- Seek partnerships and potential sources of funding to strengthen the Project implementation.

An IOC Project Office should be established in those cases where the project is of a nature that requires specific technical facilities and/or human resources that are not available at the IOC Secretariat (or cannot easily be transferred to the field) or where
implementation can be effected more efficiently or cheaper in the host institution/host country. Accordingly, the needs assessment for an IOC Project Office should demonstrate that technical infrastructures and/or facilities and/or human resources required for the efficient and effective implementation of the Project are not available or available at higher cost, at UNESCO/IOC Headquarters, Paris. Other elements may be the cost of living (per diem) for visiting experts or part-time staff, available space, proximity to academic or other expert communities.

Document IOC/INF 1193 further specifies that “minimum criteria” have to be met for the hosting of an IOC Project Office: A Member State that wishes to host an IOC Project Office shall, as a minimum:

- offer the bare use of office space and utilities (and related taxes) (see also 3.1.5), free of charge to the IOC for the duration of the agreement, and for a period not less than 3 (three) years;
- provide not less than the equivalent of 1 (one) local support staff. Offers made by Member States shall be compared on a competitive basis, taking into consideration all services and facilities offered.

Further specification for the establishment of decentralised offices are spelled out in document IOC/INF-1193.

- An IOC Project Office shall be managed by an IOC Project Office Manager who can be an IOC Staff Member (permanent/temporary position, or ALD appointment of limited duration) or an IOC Consultant. When appointing the IOC Project Office Manager, the intergovernmental nature of the IOC and rules of geographic distribution of UNESCO should be taken into consideration.
- The IOC Project Office Manager shall report to the Head of Section of the Section under which the Project is implemented and will be under the authority of the IOC Executive Secretary.
- An IOC Project Office will be hosted by an IOC Member State and will be the subject of a host agreement between the IOC and the IOC Member State. The host agreement will include a sunset clause specifying that the Project Office shall be closed upon completion of the Project. Nevertheless, it may be decided to renew the agreement based upon the renewal of the Project.
- The independent performance evaluation of an IOC Project Office will be managed by the related Head of Section, in consultation with the host country, and approved by the Primary or, where applicable, Secondary Subsidiary Body that oversees the project.
- The IOC Executive Secretary shall include a short assessment of a Project Office through the statutory report on implementation of the respective Resolution.

Only one offer had been received for hosting the IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS, from Rutgers University. The Ad-Hoc Meeting of the IODE Steering Group for IODE/OBIS requested the Secretariat to prepare the necessary documentation in
accordance with IOC/INF-1193 and to request preparatory negotiations between UNESCO and the US Government regarding the formal issues of establishing the Project Office at Rutgers University.

Hosting the Project Office at an academic institution has several advantages. One of the main objectives of the OBIS Project Office will be to assist in strengthening the capacity of Member States to manage biogeographic data and information (by organizing relevant training and the capacity building related activities) and to develop and provide products and services required by users. It would be of great benefit to IOC to be able to offer accredited courses and academically certified certificates. OBIS could also benefit by having recourse to students, possibly doing project work on OBIS-related issues, and using OBIS data. Last but not least, the possibility of twinning arrangements between an academic host organisation and Universities in developing countries, enabling exchange of students, should be explored. This might be related to UNESCO “UniTwin” programme and its related UNESCO Chairs.

Rutgers University Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences has been the host of the International OBIS Secretariat since the start of the Census of Marine Life and the inception of OBIS in 2000. The then IMCS Director, Prof. J. F. Grassle, was instrumental in creating and developing OBIS; IMCS heavily invested in OBIS through Prof Grassle’s staff time, and by hosting the secretariat. It is only natural that, given Rutgers’ willingness to fulfil the requirements of Document IOC/INF 1193, the IOC Project office for IODE/OBIS would be housed there.

3. PROPOSED WORK PLAN AND TIME TABLE FOR THE NEXT INTER-SESSIONAL PERIOD

During the Ad-Hoc meeting of the SG OBIS, a number of priorities for further development of OBIS were identified. These developments fall in a number of categories:

- **Data management**: further enhancing data availability through OBIS; harmonizing the application of standards, including quality control procedures across the OBIS network; enhancing data flows within the network and to external partners, with special attention to reciprocal data streams;
- **IT infrastructure**: completing the transition from the old OBIS IT Infrastructure (including v2.iobis.org) to the new application stack (including www.iobis.org); sharing the responsibility for maintenance and further development of the new code base among the members of the OBIS Network, particularly with the organizations that made an offer in kind in response to the Circular Letter;
- **Increasing the uptake of OBIS** by enhancing access to OBIS data for external users, stimulating scientific analysis based on OBIS data; creation of information products of relevance to the management of the marine natural resources;
- **Finalising the transition of OBIS** from a Foundation-supported project to a permanent part of the international scientific infrastructure under the IOC/IODE; completion of documents describing the relationships (1) between organizations constituting the OBIS Network, (2) between OBIS and IOC and...
UNESCO, (3) with other organizations.

To achieve these objectives the IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS carries out the following activities, with guidance from the SG OBIS and GE OBIS, and in close collaboration with the IOC Project Office for IODE:

- develop, host and maintain the international OBIS portal and related public awareness tools;
- assist OBIS Nodes to achieve their regional and thematic objectives;
- develop, strengthen and maintain OBIS data and information management training programmes and training tools;
- monitor and report on the use and impact of the OBIS dataset and tools, including citations;
- provide an environment (‘think tank’) to generate new ideas and perspectives;
- provide an environment for the development and testing of biogeographic data and information management technology;
- promote collaboration between all expert levels active in marine biogeographic data and information management, including scientists, data managers, information managers, other IOC programmes and projects, other organisations (e.g. EOL, GBIF, Barcode of Life) and international bodies (e.g. CBD, ISA, UNEP);
- provide marine biodiversity information at the request of IOC Member States and other UN agencies.

4. REQUESTED FUNDING FOR THE NEXT INTER-SESSIONAL PERIOD

A tentative budget is appended as Annex V to Document IODE XXI.43. Salaries are for the OBIS Project Officer and Data Manager, and assumes other OBIS tasks, including further implementation and maintenance of the OBIS IT infrastructure and hosting of the servers will be carried out at OBIS Nodes. As per Rutgers University budgeting guidelines, the salaries are increased by 3% yearly.

Meeting costs are estimated on the basis of 4 days subsistence of 150US$; air tickets average 1200US$. Number of participants for SG/IODE/OBIS is 20; for GE-OBIS is 10.

Other travel foreseen is for attending IOC, IODE, GEOSS, GBIF and GOBI meetings, and for visits to/from IOC Project Office for OBIS, to IOC Project Office for IODE (Oostende, Belgium) and/or Paris.

Overhead charged by UNESCO/IOC is calculated at 13%, and excludes the US contribution, since these funds will go directly to Rutgers University (in 2011-2012). Rutgers has agreed to waive overheads.

The Flemish Government has indicated that funds could be made available for meetings organised at the IODE Project Office.
It is clear that the present financial commitments are not sufficient to operate OBIS in 2012 and 2013, and only at a reduced level for 2011. The Committee will be requested to make a strong recommendation to the IOC GA for an increased contribution from the IOC; and for the establishment of the post of the Project Officer financed from UNESCO funding starting as soon as possible, but not later than January 2014.
THE OCEAN BIOGEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM (OBIS)

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission,

Noting the great progress that has been made under the Global Census of Marine Life (CoML) programme and that this ten-year initiative, to assess and explain the diversity, distribution and abundance of marine life in the oceans, will conclude at the end of 2010,

Gratefully acknowledging the foresight shown and the support given to CoML by the Sloan Foundation,

Recalling the expression of support at the start of the CoML and its associated Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) by the Executive Council at its 33rd Session and the Executive Secretary’s instruction to the IOC Secretariat to develop an appropriate mechanism for IOC involvement in the Census,

Further recalling that subsequent sessions of the IOC Executive Council and the Assembly have welcomed the progress achieved and called for continued interaction with this activity, in particular IOC Resolution XXIII-3, which encouraged the integration of OBIS into IODE, and the 39th Session of the IOC Executive Council, which called for continued development of the interaction between the Commission and CoML,

Appreciating the Resolution of the UN General Assembly A/RES/63/111, which, inter alia, reiterated “… its serious concern over the current and projected adverse effects of climate change on the marine environment and marine biodiversity, and emphasizing the urgency of addressing this issue”, and “encourages States, individually or in collaboration with relevant international organizations and bodies, to enhance their scientific activity to better understand the effects of climate change on the marine environment and marine biodiversity and develop ways and means of adaptation”,

Recognizing that an OBIS Programme within the IOC will create a valuable source of information for, inter alia, DIVERSITAS, UNESCO/MAB Programme and UNESCO’s Strategy for Action on Climate Change, as well as a wide range of other users within and outside the United Nations,

Recognizing also that OBIS has an important role to play in contributing to intergovernmental and international organizations dealing with global fisheries, environmental and biodiversity issues, including, but not restricted to, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Group on Earth Observations – Biodiversity Observations Network, the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and that this role should be continued and expanded in the future,

Recalling the request from the OBIS Governing Board and the decision of the IOC Executive Council, at its 41st Session, to consider possible scenarios for a future home for OBIS within the IOC, including the creation of an IOC/OBIS Programme and an IOC/OBIS Programme Office,
Acknowledging that CoML, and the research, information and data it has generated, provides an important tool for the international community to use in the development of policies for ocean and coastal management and to address the critical issues related to climate change,

Acknowledging also that the commitment of IOC and UNEP, pursuant to the UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/30 calling for an Assessment of Assessments, leading to a regular review of the state of the ocean environment, would not be feasible without access to the science, information and data on marine biodiversity, such as that accumulated under OBIS,

Noting with appreciation the agreement of the OBIS Governing Board, in April 2009, to the adoption of OBIS by IOC,

Decides:
- to accept OBIS within the IODE Programme and start its integration on a schedule that will ensure a smooth transition of OBIS into IOC as its responsibilities and funding under the CoML are completed
- to request the OBIS Governing Board to continue oversight of OBIS until the completion of the CoML 2010 Synthesis, in an advisory capacity, in consultation with the IODE Officers
- to maintain the identity and visibility of OBIS within IOC, taking into account the interest and commitment built up within the ocean biodiversity research community over the last decade, including the ability to interact with other relevant intergovernmental and international bodies;

Requests the IOC Executive Secretary:
- to make the administrative arrangements necessary for OBIS activities to continue under the auspices of IOC and its IODE Programme
- to set up a multi-source fund within the IOC Trust Fund for the support of OBIS and to keep the IOC Member States fully informed of the commitments made and the adequacy of the resources available
- to investigate and establish cooperation with, and support from, relevant research organizations, marine research stations, networks and other stakeholders
- to take the necessary actions for the creation of an extrabudgetary OBIS Programme Officer position, and the preparation of documentation for the Director-General and the UNESCO Executive Board, requesting a regular programme post for the OBIS Programme at the earliest opportunity
- to explore a formal agreement for the hosting of an IOC Programme Office for OBIS with the current host institution of the OBIS Secretariat at Rutgers University, N.J., U.S.A.
- to draft, in close consultation with the OBIS Governing Board, the Regional OBIS Node Management Group and IODE Officers, terms of reference for an OBIS Group of Experts, to be established under IODE
- to draft, in close consultation with the IODE Officers, revised terms of reference for the IODE Committee, taking into account the extended mandate of the Committee as a result of the adoption of OBIS
- to report on progress and submit the necessary items for the consideration and decision of the IOC Executive Council at its 43rd Session, in 2010;

Urges Member States:
- to contribute to the OBIS multi-source fund within the IOC Trust Fund
• to consider other financial and/or in-kind support for OBIS to assist with its technical and research activities
• to facilitate the collaboration of Regional OBIS Nodes and other OBIS data providers in the intergovernmental framework of IOC and its IODE Programme.
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNESCO/IOC PROJECT OFFICE FOR IODE/OBIS

The IOC Committee on International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange,

Noting the great progress that has been made under the Global Census of Marine Life (CoML) programme and that this ten-year initiative, to assess and explain the diversity, distribution and abundance of marine life in the oceans, will conclude at the end of 2010,

Noting with appreciation the offer by Rutgers University, N.J., U.S.A. to host the IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS,

Recalling the decision, through Resolution XXV-4, to accept OBIS within the IODE Programme, the requests to the IOC Executive Secretary to (i) make the necessary administrative arrangements necessary for OBIS activities to continue under the auspices of IOC and its IODE Programme, and (ii) to explore a formal agreement for the hosting of an IOC Office for OBIS with the current host institution of the OBIS Secretariat at Rutgers University, N.J., U.S.A,

Recalling further the Guidelines for the Structure and Responsibilities of the Subsidiary Bodies of the Commission and for the Establishment of Decentralized Offices as documented in IOC/INF-1193,

Acknowledging:

(i) the Proposal, submitted by the twenty-first Session of the IOC Committee on International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE-XXI) to establish the IOC Project Office for IODE at Rutgers University, N.J., U.S.A.,

(ii) that the Proposal complies with the requirements defined in IOC/INF-1193,

Decides to accept the offer of Rutgers University, N.J., U.S.A. to host the IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS;

Decides to establish the IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS at Rutgers University, N.J., U.S.A. with the following Terms of Reference:

(i) to maintain and develop the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS), its network, the international OBIS portal and collective database with emphasis on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the data and product/service stream;

(ii) to create an enabling environment, and assist in strengthening the capacity of constituent Nodes to manage biogeographic data and information and to provide biogeographic information products and services required by users;

(iii) to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the OBIS work plan as adopted by the IODE Committee
Requests the IOC Executive Secretary to establish a formal host agreement with Rutgers University, N.J., U.S.A.;

Requests the IOC Executive Secretary to provide the necessary secretariat assistance to the Project Office, taking into account IOC/INF-1193;

Urges IOC Member States to actively participate in and financially support the Project Office and its activities.
Annex 3: Draft Memorandum of Understanding

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING on the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS

Between

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), through its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, hereinafter called UNESCO/IOC,

the Headquarters of which are situated in Paris, France

of the first part

Rutgers University School of Environmental and Biological Sciences hereinafter called Rutgers, the Offices of which are situated in New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA

of the second part

Hereinafter called “The Parties”,

Preamble

Bearing in mind that UNESCO/IOC is a body with functional autonomy within the United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), whose statutes were adopted by the 30th Session of the UNESCO General Conference in November 1999.

Recalling that the purpose of the UNESCO/IOC is “to promote international cooperation and to coordinate programmes in research, services and capacity building, in order to learn more about the nature and resources of the ocean and coastal areas and to apply that knowledge for the improvement of management, sustainable development, the protection of the marine environment, and the decision-making process of its Member States.”

Recalling that, during its 25th Session the IOC Assembly decided to accept OBIS within the IODE Programme and start its integration on a schedule that will ensure a smooth transition of OBIS into IOC as its responsibilities and funding under the CoML are completed;

Noting that, in response to Circular Letter 2333, Rutgers/SEBS had responded stating its willingness to host the international OBIS Project Office, under the terms and conditions specified in Document IOC/INF-1193

Recalling that ... to as “the seat Agreement”
NOW THEREFORE, the Parties have reached the following understandings:

Article I

Terms of Reference of the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS

1. The main purpose of the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS shall be:

   (i) to maintain and develop the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS), its network, the international OBIS portal and collective database with emphasis on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the data and product/service stream;
   (ii) to create an enabling environment, and assist in strengthening the capacity of constituent Nodes to manage biogeographic data and information and to provide biogeographic information products and services required by users;
   (iii) to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the OBIS work plan as adopted by the IODE Committee

To achieve these objectives the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS carries out the following activities, with guidance from the IODE Steering Group for OBIS and the IODE Group of Experts on OBIS, and in close collaboration with the IOC Project Office for IODE:

   (i) develop, host and maintain the international OBIS portal and related public awareness tools;
   (ii) assist OBIS Nodes to achieve their regional and thematic objectives;
   (iii) develop, strengthen and maintain OBIS data and information management training programmes and training tools;
   (iv) monitor and report on the use and impact of the OBIS dataset and tools, including citations;
   (v) provide an environment (‘think tank’) to generate new ideas and perspectives;
   (vi) provide an environment for the development and testing of biogeographic data and information management technology;
   (vii) promote collaboration between all expert levels active in marine biogeographic data and information management, including scientists, data managers, information managers, other IOC programmes and projects, other organisations (e.g. EOL, GBIF, Barcode of Life) and international bodies (e.g. CBD, ISA, UNEP);
   (viii) provide marine biodiversity information at the request of IOC Member States and other UN agencies.

2. The establishment of the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS has been approved by the 26th Session of the UNESCO/IOC Assembly through Resolution XXVI (--).
Article II

Principles

The Parties enter into this Memorandum of Understanding following principles that are founded in respect, mutual goodwill, accord each other all reasonable co-operation and assistance as may be expected between institutions committed to the highest standards of scientific research.

Article III

Contributions

1. In accordance with the Guidelines for the Establishment of Decentralized Offices adopted through Resolution XXII-1 and as described in document IOC/INF 1193, the Parties to this Memorandum shall contribute as follows:

2.1 Cost of establishment of the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS:

UNESCO/IOC shall contribute:

(i) the cost of transferring of staff to the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE

2.2 Costs of Operation of the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS

Rutgers shall contribute:

(i) Office space for three members of staff, with all furniture and amenities for normal office operations;
(ii) The cost of utilities (water, power, heating, air conditioning) and telecommunications (telephone, fax);
(iii) Use of a permanent high-bandwidth internet connection;
(iv) The cost of taxes levied on the physical facilities;
(v) The cost of cleaning, maintenance and insurance of the physical facilities;
(vi) The equivalent of one full time support staff position, divided over several members of staff as follows: (1) One half time data manager, hired specifically to carry out OBIS data management tasks; (2) The equivalent of one half time position in support from Rutgers/IMCS members of staff to assist the Project Office with administration, finances, and support of office computing
(vii) Waiving of overheads on all funds that will be provided to Rutgers earmarked for supporting IODE/OBIS and its Project Office.

UNESCO/IOC shall contribute:

(i) The cost of remuneration of at least one Professional staff (the Head of the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS);

2. 2 Costs of closing of the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for ...

Rutgers shall contribute:

(i) Cost of closing of utility subscriptions;
(ii) Closing of telecommunication subscriptions

UNESCO/IOC shall contribute:

(i) Cost of moving from the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS to UNESCO/IOC Headquarters or other decentralized office;
(ii) Cost of transfer of UNESCO/IOC staff from the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS to UNESCO/IOC Headquarters or other decentralized office

3. The provisions on the privileges and immunities of the Seat Agreement will be applied for the Staff and materials assigned to the office.

**Article IV**

**Line management, Reporting and Review**

1. The UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS shall be managed by the Head of the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS who will be a UNESCO/IOC Staff Member. When appointing the Head of the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS, the intergovernmental nature of the UNESCO/IOC and rules of geographic distribution of UNESCO will be taken into consideration.

2. The line manager of the Head of the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS shall be the Head of the UNESCO/IOC Programme Office for IODE and the latter will be under the authority of the IOC Executive Secretary.

3. UNESCO/IOC will report yearly to Rutgers on the following performance indicators: (i) volume of primary biodiversity data available through the international OBIS Portal; (2) statistics on the use of the international Portal; (3) statistics of the number of publications making use of, or referring to OBIS data; (4) the number of visiting scientists, and students on study attachment; (5) meetings of international and intergovernmental organisations attended by Project Office staff.

4. An independent performance evaluation of the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS shall be organized once, jointly by UNESCO/IOC and Rutgers, prior to the expiry of this Memorandum of Understanding. The evaluation shall be submitted for approval to the IODE Committee that oversees the Project Office activities. The IODE Committee may, as it deems necessary, recommend the renewal or extension of this agreement and will submit this Recommendation to the next available Session of the IOC Assembly or Executive Council.

5. The UNESCO/IOC Executive Secretary shall include a short assessment of the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE/OBIS, including information on the financial contribution by UNESCO/IOC Member States, through the statutory report on implementation of relevant IODE Resolutions as submitted to the UNESCO/IOC Assembly of Executive Council.

**Article V**

**Duration and Extension**

1. This Memorandum of Understanding will come into effect on ...

2. This Memorandum of Understanding will have a duration of 5 (five) years from the date of signature. Based upon the results of the review referred to in Article IV above, the Memorandum of Understanding can be renewed after approval by an IOC Governing Body through a relevant
Resolution and by Rutgers through a decision of its Executive Dean of Agriculture and Natural Resources

**Article VI**

**Modifications**

This Memorandum of Understanding can be modified by written agreement between the Parties.

**Article VII**

**Dispute Resolution**

1. The Parties will negotiate and cooperate with each other in good faith to resolve any disputes or conflicts that arise in connection with this MoU.

2. All disputes arising out of, or in connection with the present agreement or the breach thereof, shall be settled primarily by mutual understanding. In the event an amicable settlement cannot be reached, the matter shall be settled by binding arbitration of a sole arbitrator in accordance with the rules of arbitration of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) as at present in force.

**Article VIII**

**Termination**

This Memorandum of Understanding may be terminated by either party before the expiry date of the Memorandum by giving to the other party three months prior written notice of termination.

*As witness to their consent to this Memorandum of Understanding, the appropriate authorities hereunto provide their signatures,*

…………………………………………………

Dr Wendy Watson-Wright
IOC Executive Secretary &
Assistant Director-General of
UNESCO

………………………………………..

……………..(date) ………………..(date)