INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

Twenty-seventh Session of the Assembly
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Item 5.1.2.1 of the Provisional Agenda

PROPOSAL OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN FOR A CATEGORY 2 UNESCO REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH CENTRE ON OCEANOGRAPHY FOR WESTERN ASIA

Summary

Following a proposal of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to establish a Regional Educational and Research Centre on Oceanography for Western Asia as a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO, a fact-finding mission was undertaken in September 2012 by IOC to assess its feasibility. Further to the mission, the IOC Officers invited the Executive Secretary to include the proposal on the agenda of the Assembly at its 27th session.

Purpose of the document: This document outlines the background, scope, feasibility and foreseeable implications of the creation of the proposed centre. The text of the proposal, the report of the fact-finding mission and the letters of support from Member States in the region are collated in the addendum to this document. The Assembly will decide on its support to this initiative that will have to be carried out in conformity with the criteria outlined in 35 C/Resolution 103, concerning the creation of institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO and the decisions on the current Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for category 2 institutes and centres (35 C/22 and corr. and 190 EX/Decision 18(I)).

There are no financial and administrative implications for IOC: see paragraphs 20-23.

The proposed decision in paragraph 33 is referenced IOC-XXVII, Dec. 5.1.2.1 in the Action Paper (document IOC-XXVII/2 Prov.)
Introduction

1. The last decade has demonstrated an increased understanding of the importance of the ocean as a source of life, and the realization that building regional know-how is essential for facilitating the solving of regional economic and social problems.

2. The proposal is based on the conviction that Member States of the region are committed to making marine and coastal research and monitoring more effective and sustainable, and on the recognition that it can be achieved through regional partnership when exchange of experience between Member States can provide useful ideas and adaptable interventions for the region.

3. There are currently 82 Category 2 Institutes/Centres across about 60 countries approved by the General Conference of UNESCO. Within UNESCO science sector alone, there are almost 40 centres, of which almost 30 are dealing with different matters related to hydrology. Although not legally part of the Organization, they have assumed within UNESCO increasing importance in the achievement of the Organization's programme priorities. In 2012 the Director-General of UNESCO said at the 189th session of the Executive Board of UNESCO that “…category 2 centres were becoming increasingly important platforms for science programme delivery…and had proven their effectiveness in this regard.”

4. In October 2010 the Ambassador Permanent Delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran to UNESCO presented to the Director-General of UNESCO a proposal of his government to establish in Tehran a regional educational and research centre on oceanography for Western Asia within the framework of the Iranian National Institute on Oceanography (INIO), a leading institute in oceanography and coastal area management not only in the country but also in the region.

5. If established, it would be the first IOC related Category 2 Centre of UNESCO dedicated fully to marine and coastal issues. It would operate as a problem solving transparent mechanism at a regional level where formulation of research and education activities, planning and implementation of joint projects and sharing information would be carried out in accordance with UNESCO/IOC objectives and coherent regional policy.

6. The milestones of the preparation of the proposal for discussion at the Assembly:
   - October 2010, Iran (Islamic Republic of) presented the proposal to the Director-General of UNESCO and ADG/IOC for assessment and identification of further actions; (see addendum)
   - September 2012, Fact finding mission implemented by IOC at no cost for UNESCO/IOC with the objective to determine the technical and human feasibility of the establishment and operation of the centre;
   - October 2012, The mission report was circulated to the IOC Officers and staff for information and comments; (see addendum)
   - January 2013, The IOC Officers in meeting at Headquarters recommended to include the discussion of the proposal in the agenda of the IOC Assembly at its 27th session;
   - March-April 2013, preparation of a working document for the Assembly discussion at its 27th session.
   - June 2013, Discussion of the proposal during the 27th session of the IOC Assembly.

Objectives and Functions

7. The centre by its activities would create the basis for the best scientific understanding of the processes going on in the marine and coastal environment of the geographical area covering the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman and Caspian Sea. It would assist Member States of the region in achieving sustainable development and facilitating regional partnership and co-operation.
8. The objectives of the centre would be achieved by developing regional marine and coastal management policy, by identifying and meeting national and regional priorities through sharing knowledge and experience, by operating education and training programmes and raising public awareness concerning the need for sustainable management of sea and coastal areas.

9. To meet the objectives, the centre would use appropriate approaches and instruments including formulation of joint projects, policies and plans; development of knowledge-sharing instruments; fostering capacity building and knowledge dissemination activities; organizing assistance in mobilizing human, financial and material resources in case of emergency situations caused by marine natural hazards; and making operations of the centre open and transparent. The centre would report on a regular basis to the Member States of the region, Director-General of UNESCO and IOC Executive Secretary on the progress achieved and would be amenable to the evaluation process when UNESCO/IOC would so decides.

Regional and International Impact of the Centre

10. In addition to making contributions to the thematic areas of IOC, the centre would have access to the wide network of regional and international cooperation. The centre’s networking capacity, its objectives and functions would allow it to facilitate cooperation with other regional and international centres of IOC and UNESCO.

11. The scope of activities planned by the centre would contribute considerably to all four high level objectives of IOC related to reduction of the impacts of natural hazards, adaptation to climate change and variability, safeguarding the health of ocean and coastal ecosystems, and contribution to the sustainability of the coastal and ocean environment.

12. It is envisaged that the centre would strive to assist the IOC Regional Committee for the Central Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO) in meeting its objectives, especially in the area of data and information collection and management by the formulation of the ODINCINDIO programme (Ocean Data and Information Network for the Central Indian Ocean Region).

13. In addition to UNESCO and IOC, other relevant international and regional organizations such as FAO, IMO, UNEP, PERSGA, ROPME, and IOI would be linked to the Centre.

14. The Iranian National Institute of Oceanography (INIO) already has agreements with some of the above-mentioned organizations or contributes to those organizations’ objectives and programmes. With the establishment of the centre, links of cooperation would be extended and strengthened.

Structure and Legal Status

15. The centre would be a legal entity independent of UNESCO. The latter would not bear any responsibility or liabilities of any kind related to the operations of the centre, be they managerial, financial or otherwise.

16. It would be established within the framework of INIO under the authority of the Ministry for Science and Technology of Iran and would have autonomy to create and implement its own programmes and activities.

17. INIO has an outstanding portfolio of national and international projects focused on marine and coastal research and wide experience in organizing international meetings and training activities.

18. Operations of the centre would be guided and coordinated by the Governing Board which would include:
representatives of Member States which have sent to the centre letters of notification expressing interest in being represented on the Board, and wishing to participate and contribute to the Centre’s activities (Article 10, paragraph 2 of the Model Agreement presented in Annex to Document 35 C/22);

- a representative of the Director-General of UNESCO;
- a representative(s) of INIO.

19. The centre would have a secretariat composed of the centre Director nominated by the Government in consultation with the Director-General of UNESCO, and staff engaged in administrative functions.

Financial Matters

20. As part of its commitments the Islamic Republic of Iran will provide necessary resources, either financially or in kind, needed for the administration and proper functioning of the centre to cover cost of equipment, utilities, communications, secretariat staff, mission costs arising from UNESCO membership on the Governing Board of the centre and others.

21. It is expected that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran will contribute to the centre an annual amount of more than USD 500,000 for a duration of at least six years to ensure the sustainability of the activities of the centre.

22. The Iranian National Commission for UNESCO and National Committee for Oceanography have expressed their support to the centre and their commitment to be actively engaged in the development and activities of the centre and in its promotion.

23. Additional funding is expected from the countries and international organizations which have expressed interest to participate in the activities of the Centre through implementing joint projects and extra-budgetary activities.

Risks

24. Three types of risks have been considered in the fact-finding mission report:

- ability and capacity of the Centre to realize its objectives;
- financial stability;
- low level of cooperation within the region caused by political and other reasons.

25. Ability and capacity: The centre would have all necessary human and technical facilities which are today with INIO. They include state-of-the-art, well equipped research and development laboratories and seminar rooms as well as qualified staff who are committed to the development of the Centre.

26. The financial risk that IOC would incur in the establishment of the centre would be low, in view of the readiness of the Iranian Government to cover all costs related to the operation and maintenance of the centre.

27. Regional cooperation: At present, there are four international/regional category 2 Centres in Iran and almost 15 Category 2 Centres in South-West Asia and Caspian Sea region (none of them is dealing with marine or coastal issues). The experience gained by these centres demonstrates that they are working successfully, largely due to a friendly spirit of cooperation between Member States of the region and readiness to share their knowledge. It may be expected that the centre on oceanography, if established, would enjoy the same attitude from the countries of the region and would be able to establish the same type of partnerships which exist within the region with other Category 2 centres. Member States in the region have been invited to state their readiness to
cooperate with the centre both in advance of the Assembly and during the Assembly. All letters of support are available in the addendum to this document.

**Summary of the Proposal Evaluation**

28. The establishment of the centre is fully in line with IOC’s objectives and programmes. For the IOC, the centre could become a key partner in the development of its regional programmes like those of IOCINDIO, and global programmes like GOOS, Tsunami, Pollution Monitoring and IODE.

29. The planned centre’s activities in promotion and awareness raising could be most useful for publicizing widely a positive image of IOC and for demonstrating benefits that the countries of the region may have by contributing to IOC through active participation in the centre.

30. The centre’s mission, objectives and activities adequately address the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) related to the eradication of poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality and ensuring environmental sustainability. They are well aligned with the recommendations of the Rio+20 Conference as they are summed up in Document CEB/2012/HLCP-XXIV/BCK.3 of September 2012.

31. The strong support shown by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the creation of the centre is a sign of its commitment. In this difficult financial time, the establishment of the centre would make it possible for the IOC to use the centre’s scientific, technical and financial resources in the region and elsewhere. It would be a response to the region-wide and increasing need to properly deal with marine and coastal related matters.

32. The proposed institutional structure of the centre as a research, educational and coordinating body is in conformity with the guidelines of Document 35 C/22 and corr.

**Proposed decision**

33. In light of the foregoing, the IOC Assembly may wish to consider the following decision:

   **Establishment of Category 2 UNESCO Regional Educational and Research Centre on Oceanography for Western Asia**

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission,

1. **Having examined** Document IOC-XXVII/2 Annex 6 and Addendum,

2. **Acknowledging** that the creation of the centre will serve not only to bring technical capacity to the region but also support regional cooperation in ocean and coastal research, management and capacity development and correspond to the IOC regional policy,

3. **Noting** that the proposal and fact-finding mission report on the feasibility study undertaken fully correspond to the principles and guidelines for the establishment of Category 2 Regional Centres of UNESCO (Document 35 C/22 and corr.);

4. **Welcomes and endorses** the proposal and results of the fact-finding mission;

5. **Requests** the IOC Executive Secretary to prepare all necessary documentation to be submitted by the Director-General to the UNESCO Executive Board at its 192nd session;

6. **Calls upon** IOC Member States of the region and beyond to support the establishment of the centre and its activities and to take an active part in the work of the Governing Board of the centre.