IOC Circular Letter No 2599  
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IOC/JB/VL  
12 October 2015

To :  IOC Member States (Official National Coordinating Bodies for liaison with the IOC)  
Permanent Delegates/Observer Missions to UNESCO, and  
National Commissions for UNESCO of IOC Member States

cc. :  The Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission  
Officers of Major IOC Subsidiary Bodies (Scientific, Technical and Regional)

Subject :  Update on the IOC contribution to the 21st UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP 21), Paris, 30 November–11 December 2015

In preparation for the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, to take place in Paris between the 30th of November and the 11th of December 2015, the IOC Secretariat is fully mobilized to highlight and move forward the strategic agenda around the major ocean and climate issues.

The IOC started its preparation towards COP 21 with the organization of the UN World Oceans Day (WOD) at UNESCO Headquarters on the 8th of June, which was entirely focused on the role of the ocean in the climate system. The World Oceans Day event, organized in collaboration with the Ocean and Climate Platform, assembled 1200 representatives from the youth, scientific community and civil society for a day of discussions, which was concluded by a political segment in presence of high-level decision-makers and Heads of State. The resulting “Call for the Ocean and Climate” formulated by the scientific community and civil society organizations and presented on WOD 2015 has garnered wide public support for a global effort to promote the importance of the ocean in the international climate debate and contribute to successful negotiations for an ambitious agreement at COP 21. The full text of the “Call for the Ocean and Climate” as well as the key messages issued during the World Oceans Day event at UNESCO are enclosed in the attached flier.

IOC’s participation in COP 21 will build on the WOD key messages, will aim to highlight the importance of scientific research and observation in order to better understand ocean-climate interactions, and will communicate the objectives and results of the IOC programmes in these areas.
A series of major ocean events will be held during the UNFCCC COP 21, both at the Bourget conference site (in the Blue zone, accessible to UNFCCC accredited delegates and the Red Zone, open to civil society organizations) and elsewhere in Paris, to underscore the critical role of oceans for the world’s climate and the need for action. The events will involve over 100 agencies, groups and organizations, under the lead coordination of IOC, the Global Ocean Forum and the Ocean and Climate Platform, and will focus on advancing solutions on climate change in coastal and marine areas in support of the potential COP 21 agreement and the recently endorsed UN “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

IOC’s contribution to the COP 21 process has been devised along five main axes. A short description of each of them is provided below:

1) Contributions to the UNFCCC negotiations via official UN side events/exhibits on oceans and science:

- **One UN Exhibit - Science Booth**: IOC’s “Home Booth”, in collaboration with WMO. Open during all of COP 21 (UNFCCC Blue Zone).

- **Side event UN Oceans “One Ocean, One Climate, One UN: Working together for a healthy and resilient ocean” (IOC is the lead organizer)**: Highlighting UN system activities on assisting States to increase their knowledge base and build their capacity to adapt and achieve mitigation goals (December 2nd, UNFCCC Blue Zone, Room 4: 11:30-13:00).

- **Side event “Science-based climate information: bringing climate science and climate policy closer” (IOC is a contributing agency)**: Building dialogue among scientific and policy-related stakeholders on the role of science in the climate change policy-making process (December 4th, UNFCCC Blue Zone, Room 5: 13:15-14:45).

- **Side Event “The Importance of Addressing Oceans and Coasts in an Ambitious Agreement at the UNFCCC COP 21” (IOC, Global Ocean Forum, Ocean and Climate Platform)**: Presenting the outcomes of the Oceans Day organized during COP 21 (December 7th, UNFCCC Blue Zone, Room 6: 16:45-18:15) – see information on the Oceans Day under 3.

2) Contributions to the UNFCCC’s Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA):

- **Under SBSTA agenda item on Sustained observations and research, presentation on the Status of the Global Observing System for Climate (GCOS status report)** of which 1/3 is ocean and has been developed by IOC’s Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) Secretariat and Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) secretariat. (Participation of the IOC Executive Secretary).

3) Organization of events oriented toward specific stakeholder groups (policy-makers, the scientific community, the private sector, youth, etc.), in collaboration with civil society partners:

- **Ocean & Climate Forum (organized by Ocean & Climate Platform, IOC and Global Ocean Forum)**: Promoting an interactive debate about the role of the ocean in the climate system, the ocean-based technical solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and future supporting research and funding needs. The event will complement and report conclusions to the Oceans Day at COP 21 (Full day event, December 3rd, Civil Society Red Zone, Nelson Mandela Room: 9:30-18:30).

- **Oceans Day at COP 21 (IOC and Global Ocean Forum, Ocean & Climate Platform)**: Building on the recommendations and solutions put forward by the Ocean and Climate
Forum, with focus on policy action, with the participation of high level decision-makers, including UNESCO Director-General. (Full day event, December 4th, Civil Society Red Zone, Rio Pavilion: 9:30-18:30).

- “Ocean and Climate” Moment (IOC, Ocean & Climate Platform): Scientific round table to build on the overall outcomes and key messages from the UNFCCC COP 21 regarding the ocean (December 10th, Civil Society Red Zone, UNESCO Pavilion, 11:00-13:00).

4) Contributions to the UNESCO Pavilion at the Civil Society Red Zone:

- Ocean-themed exhibit and decoration at the UNESCO Pavilion during the Ocean and Climate Forum and Oceans Day at COP 21 (IOC): Multimedia exhibit with IOC and Partners’ materials (December 3rd - 4th, Civil Society Red Zone, UNESCO Pavilion).

- Other ocean-related events maybe organized in the UNESCO Pavilion.

5) Organization of ocean-related events at the UNESCO Headquarters and elsewhere in Paris, during COP 21:

- L'Université de la Terre 2015 (European Broadcasting Union; IOC will contribute to a session on oceans): Francophone televised debates on the theme « Faisons changer tous les climats » (December 4th – 5th, UNESCO HQ, various rooms: schedule TBA).

- The Place to B 800 Bloggers / Focus ocean (IOC, Ocean Climate Platform): Presenting the results of the Ocean and Climate Forum and of the Oceans Day at COP 21 to media representatives (December 5th, Time TBA, Saint Christopher's Inn, near Gare du Nord: 5 rue de Dunkerque, 75010, Paris).

Beyond highlighting the major issues surrounding the ocean and climate agenda, these events ultimately aim to catalyze ocean solutions as part of the global portfolio of climate actions. Much emphasis will be placed on the need to move forward on a strategic agenda on oceans and climate that seeks to foster ocean partnerships among all stakeholder groups and that places due importance on the need for a strong knowledge-base for policy-making.

I sincerely hope that the events outlined above will engage all Member States. I kindly invite Member State delegations present at COP 21 to support and attend any and all IOC events, in this way contributing to bolster the visibility and the importance of IOC’s contribution to COP 21. For any additional information on IOC’s engagement in the COP 21 process, please contact the IOC Secretariat through Mr. J. Barbierë, Head, Marine Policy Section and Regional Coordination (email: j.barbiere@unesco.org) and Ms. R. Hervé, Office of the Executive Secretary (email: r.herve@unesco.org).

Looking forward to your active participation, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

[signed]

Vladimir Ryabinin
Executive Secretary