

**REPORT OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL OCEAN  
INSTITUTE FOR 2023**





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## FOREWORD

The International Ocean Institute (IOI) annual programme of activities focuses strongly on the provision of the international and regional programmes on capacity development and education in ocean governance, and outreach in Ocean Literacy through the global IOI Ocean Academy. In this publication you will be able to read about the full range of activities carried out globally by the IOI in 2023.

Through the actions of IOI HQ and the IOI network efforts, IOI outreach was achieved via global training offerings and the IOI Ocean Academies. Considering only targeted IOI events, we can celebrate the nearly 250 early/mid-career ocean practitioners from 59<sup>1</sup> countries who successfully completed the 9 IOI training events in Ocean Governance (In-Person, Online, Hybrid); the 43 IOI Ocean Academy programme 20-hour online modules offered globally by 13 IOI Ocean Academy nodes in 12 languages with more than 1,300 persons completing the modules; and the 4 IOI Alumni Continuous Professional Development (CPD) webinars that reached more than 550 IOI Alumni and Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs). These numbers add to the additional outreach achieved through IOI participation in other webinars, seminars and ad hoc online workshops throughout 2023.

<sup>1</sup> Anguilla, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, China, Colombia, DR Congo, Egypt, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Guyana, India, Indonesia, IR Iran, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Laos, Liberia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Palestine, Philippines, Portugal, Russia, Senegal, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, UK, USA

Special events for 2023 reflected the IOI mission focus on extending the hallmark training for which the IOI is globally known, as well as expanding Ocean Literacy opportunities to greater audiences, and creating new partnerships and synergies with like minded organisations to achieve such aims. IOI remains a knowledge based organisation so that participation at international events where important Ocean issues are debated, remains an IOI priority with the intention to mainstream such topics within IOI capacity development opportunities at all levels. In this year, IOI organised the IOI Special Seminar: *Breaking the Stalemate: The Role of Ocean Literacy in Catalysing Progress on SDG 14 and Beyond* during the IOI Training Programme on Regional Ocean Governance for the Mediterranean, Black, Baltic and Caspian Seas, Malta. IOI was represented at the *5th International Conference on Sustainability Education* (5th ICSE), New Delhi, India, with a keynote contribution to the launch of the Conference focusing on the importance of Ocean Literacy education to achieve Sustainability Education; this thematic was further emphasised during the 5th ICSE Special Thematic Session: *Building a multi-country, civil society partnership to increase the resilience of coastal populations in South Asia*, in partnership with IOI Ocean Academy India partners Terre Policy. IOI delegates participated in a number of international events such as the *International Symposium of the United Nations Regular Process on strengthening the ocean science-policy interface, in Paris*; the *2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) UAE (Dubai)*; the *IGC on an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction*, New York; the *23rd UN ICP New Maritime Technologies: Challenges and Opportunities*, New York; and the *UN Trade Forum 2023 - Toward the SDG Summit 2023: High-impact trade initiatives for accelerating the SDGs*, Geneva.

In implementing its mission, the IOI gratefully acknowledges the support and guidance of its Governing Board which brings to bear its expertise and substantial joint experience in directing the IOI mission and plans of action. The IOI's ambitious programmes could not be achieved without the continued and generous financial support of the Ocean Science and Research Foundation, and other sponsors and supporters.

Heartfelt thanks are also due to the IOI Governing Board, IOI partners and supporters, the Secretariat at IOI HQ, and the IOI family of Centre directors and Focal Points, the Directors of the IOI Ocean Academy programmes, and IOI Alumni, who propose and implement the rich event calendar of the IOI, and to and their host institutes, for their tireless work, support and encouragement.

I warmly invite you to read our report of activities for 2023 and to contact us for more information on topics of interest.



**Antonella Vassallo**

Managing Director, IOI Headquarters



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## MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT

In 2023, an encouraging news for the ocean was the adoption of the new United Nations High Seas Treaty under UNCLOS on the Conservation and Sustainable use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), after nearly two decades of negotiations. The Treaty brought to focus the vital importance of the ocean and its preservation for the benefit of the present and future generations.

The adoption of the Treaty is considered as a landmark achievement and a critical instrument in addressing the threats facing the ocean. However, the success of the Treaty will depend entirely on how the Treaty is implemented and applied in practice upon its entry into force following ratifications by at least 60 Contracting States.

The Treaty can only fulfil its stated objectives if there is a general awareness of its objectives and implications and what it actually means in real life. This is particularly true in relation to developing countries and countries in transition where there is tremendous need for easily available information and awareness.

In this context, the IOI through its capacity development and training programme on ocean governance continues to train ocean professionals in fulfilment of its mission since its foundation in 1972. The Alumni of the regular training courses, fully conversant with the latest developments in ocean governance, continue to spread ocean knowledge and information at a global level. The online Continuous Professional Development (CDP) series designed to bring the latest ocean knowledge to the attention of the Alumni has proved extremely successful in bringing together experts and IOI Alumni, providing an opportunity to explore implications of the latest ocean related developments.

As the need for ocean knowledge increases, the IOI's training and ocean literacy programmes gain popularity. The IOI online Ocean Academy Programme, which was launched in 2022 as part of the IOI's 50th Anniversary event, received overwhelming demand in 2023 and experienced an unprecedented success. The IOI Ocean Academy online modules were delivered in 13 countries in 12 languages with over 1300 persons completing the programme in 2023. This Ocean literacy programme is unique in making ocean knowledge freely available to interested persons of all background in their local language. Complemented by the IOI training courses and other ocean literacy programmes, the organisation was able to achieve an unprecedented expansion of its global outreach. The participation of the IOI Alumni as Ocean Academy Directors, responsible for delivery of the Ocean Academy courses, is an indication of the success of the IOI's capacity development and training programme.

In 2023, IOI also extended the scope of its cooperation with a number of international, and national institutions through signing MOUs and cooperation agreements with organisations such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Indian Maritime University and University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

The IOI's accomplishments in 2023, some which are highlighted in this report, are due to the dedication and commitment of the entire IOI network and the Secretariat at the Headquarters. I wish to express my deepest gratitude to all those who contributed to its success. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Ocean Science and Research Foundation (OSRF), for their generous financial support, to the members of the Governing Board for their leadership and guidance and to all other partners and sponsors for their support and contribution.

My special thanks and gratitude to the IOI Centre Directors, Ocean Academy Directors, Focal Points, the Managing Director and Secretariat at the Headquarters in Malta for their commitment and invaluable support and cooperation without which IOI would not be able to accomplish its objectives. I also acknowledge the valuable contribution of IOI Alumni who continue to spread the IOI message worldwide.



**Mahindokht Faghfour**  
President, International Ocean Institute



Portrait of Dr Faghfour by Majid Faghfour

# IOI - THE INTERNATIONAL OCEAN INSTITUTE

**Antonella Vassallo**  
 Managing Director, IOI



**The IOI was founded in 1972** by Professor Elisabeth Mann Borgese (1918-2002) as an independent, non-governmental, non-profit, knowledge-based institution which focuses on sustainable governance of the ocean and its resources so that current and future generations can share in their benefits. The respect for common goods, the peaceful and sustainable use of ocean services and resources, the common heritage of the high seas and the need to support and empower people and countries in managing their relations with the ocean in a sustainable manner remains the ethical and moral foundation of the IOI.

**The mission of the IOI** is to ensure the sustainability of the Ocean as “*a source of life*”, and to uphold and expand the principle of the common heritage as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

### The structure of the International Ocean Institute and the IOI global network

The IOI Board of Governors functions as the substantive backbone; it drives IOI deliverables and provides quality control. The IOI Board governs the IOI institute and has the oversight for all IOI activities, strategic development, the institute’s management, finances and fundraising. Governing Board members are closely involved in the activities of the IOI and take responsibility for defined tasks. The Secretariat of the IOI at the Headquarters in Malta is responsible for day-to-day operations; the IOI HQ supports the Board Members in fulfilling their mandates and works closely with the Centres of the IOI network to implement the annual programmes.

Following the formal endorsement and implementation of the IOI Strategy by the IOI Governors in December 2015, the IOI network consists of 31 Centres and Focal Points, in 29 countries around the globe as well as through collaboration with strategic training partners

### Main Pillars of IOI Activities



### Programme of action

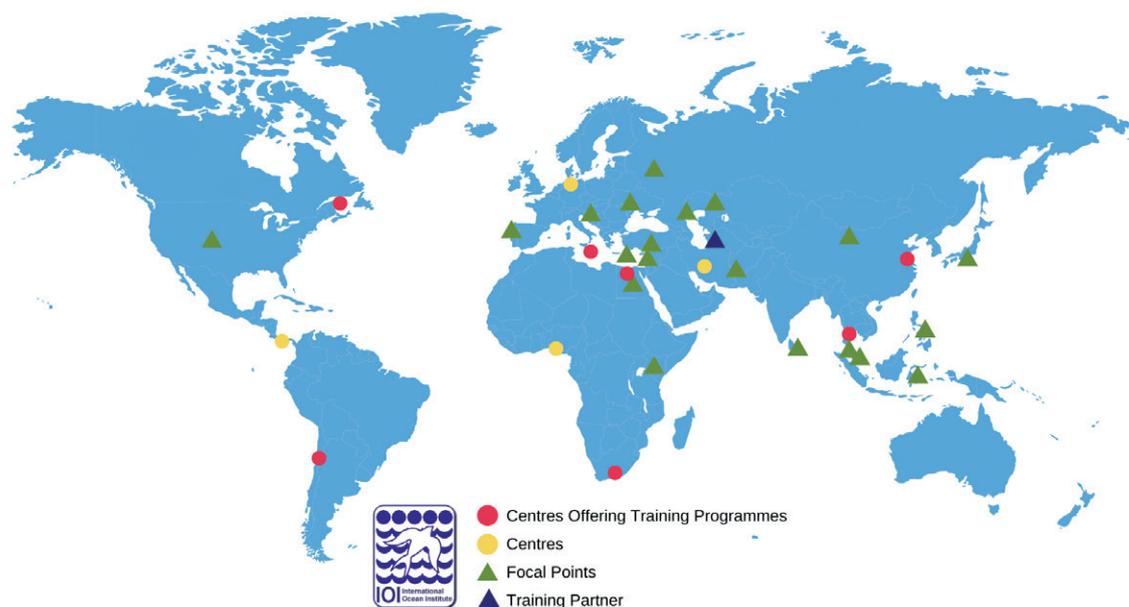
In order to achieve its stated mission and goals, the IOI works through a global network of Centres and Focal Points which is administered through the Headquarters based in Malta and which acts as the secretariat for the IOI Governing Board. The IOI Board sets out the broad activities and programmes of the IOI based on a strategy for action. The IOI

network also benefits from close support and collaboration from its Training Partners and the Alumni of IOI training programmes over the years.

IOI training centres are responsible for organising and providing the hallmark ocean governance training programmes of the IOI. They are supported in their work by dedicated IOI Centres in the geographical vicinity. The IOI benefits from the support of the IOI Centres and Focal Points as well as through collaboration with strategic training partners.

in Ocean Governance. Course participants acquire the knowledge, skills and essential attitude for effective ocean governance. They are empowered to apply contemporary approaches to coastal and ocean management, with an emphasis on the moral, ethical and legal values in Ocean Governance (equity and peaceful uses of the ocean). The portfolio of IOI training programmes is complemented by the Open Online Course: **“One Planet – One Ocean”** launched with partners:

<http://www.oceanmooc.org>.



### Training and education, and capacity development

Since its foundation, IOI has trained young practitioners, particularly from developing countries and countries in transition, and contributes towards a growing global network of trained and empowered leaders fully conversant with the latest developments

### IOI Publications and International Relations

The IOI promotes its training and capacity development activities by producing and disseminating publications as a further core activity of IOI and by partnering with international, regional, national and local institutions and governments, as well as public and private institutions working in the field of Ocean Governance.



The World Ocean Review series was launched in 2010 and is a result of cooperation between the publishing house Mareverlag, the Cluster of Excellence, “The Future Ocean” based in Kiel and the IOI. The purpose of these periodic publications is to present scientifically robust knowledge in a form accessible to any reader. Free copies are available online through: <https://worldoceanreview.com/en/order>

**IOI works with its partners and networks to achieve its goals**

IOI enjoys special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and consultative status at some of UN’s Specialized Agencies. The IOI further maintains a number of MOUs and benefits from strong collaboration with key partners in the field of ocean issues, capacity development and education in this thematic area.



The Ocean Yearbook, produced since 1978, is a collaborative initiative of the IOI and the Marine and Environmental Law Institute at the Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada. It presents leading-edge articles, reports and reference materials devoted to the issues and concerns affecting the world’s oceans.

**IOI programmes are financed by donors and through partnerships and sponsors**

Major financial support comes from the Ocean Science and Research Foundation (OSRF); the IOI also receives additional financial contributions for its projects and in-kind support through other partners which is substantial in terms of quality and quantity and complements the financial resources for IOI to deliver its programmes and fulfil its mission.

The IOI reports annually on its activities through the publication of its Annual Report available for download through the IOI website.

IOI TRAINING PROGRAMME PORTFOLIO		
INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES		
• Post Graduate Degree: Master of Arts in Ocean Governance; with the Faculty of Laws of the University of Malta		Malta
• Ocean Governance: Policy, Law & Management		Canada
REGIONAL PROGRAMMES		
• Regional Ocean Governance for the Mediterranean, Black, Baltic & Caspian Seas		Malta
• Ocean Governance Training Programme for Africa		South Africa
• Sustainable Development & Governance of the Caspian Sea		Turkmenistan
• Ocean Governance for the Western Pacific Region		PR China
• Regional Ocean Governance Framework, Implementation of UNCLOS and its Related Instruments in the SE Asian Seas & the Indian Ocean		Thailand

## OCEAN GOVERNANCE: THE NEED FOR MORAL CLARITY

**Dr Awni Behnam**

Former United Nations Assistant Secretary General  
Former Senior Advisor to the Secretary General at UNCTAD  
Honorary President, International Ocean Institute,  
Affiliate Professor, University of Malta

***A commentary follow up to the joint paper “Twilight of Flag State Control”, (Behnam and Faust) published pursuant to the non-ratification of the UN Convention on Registration of Ships entitled Twilight of Flag States Control!***

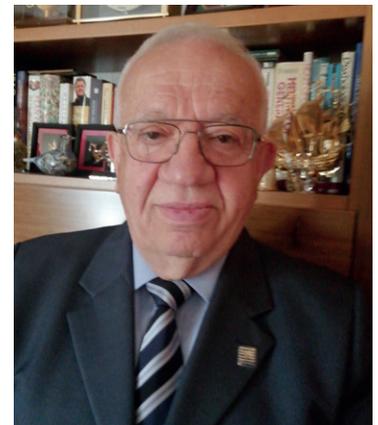
Hugo Grotius in his celebrated 1604 dissertation *Mare Liberum* states, “*Every nation is free to travel to every other nation and to trade with it.*”<sup>2</sup> This came to be known as the doctrine of “Freedom of the Seas”. Under the Freedom of the Seas doctrine, the use of the ocean for trade among nations provides for the extension of the Nation State from one coast to another by the ship carrying its nationality and flag. The ship - deemed an extension of the sovereign state whose flag it flies - is symbolic of its jurisdiction, control, responsibility and liability in law. Nevertheless, shipping for the most part throughout history has been concentrated under a few flags.

Churchill and Lowe explain that the ascription of nationality to ships is one of the most important means by which public order is maintained at sea. As well as indicating what rights a ship enjoys and to what obligations it is subject, the nationality of a vessel indicates which State is to exercise Flag State jurisdiction over the vessel.<sup>3</sup>

Nationality is granted when a ship is entered on the national register of the country authorising it to fly its flag. The exercise of control, however, is not automatic; it is generally dependent on the ability and

willingness “vigour”. The first is dependent on the existence or lack of a genuine link between the vessel and the Flag State relating to the existence of the flags of convenience, the latter is applicable to all flag registries. The 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea Convention<sup>4</sup> (UNCLOS) in articles 91–94 recognised the obligations of Flag States in the exercise of jurisdiction and control, but did not impart any solution to the basic problem of enforcing the obligation for a genuine link. Consequently, UNCLOS did not, in essence, strengthen the genuine link between a ship and the Flag State.

Edgar Gold captured this in his article entitled “*Learning from Disaster.*”<sup>5</sup> He explained that as international organisations had no enforcement power (which had traditionally been left to Flag States), acceptance or adherence to international codes and conventions did not entail that the accepting State was willing or able to enforce such codes. Moreover, in the case of the flag of convenience, Flag States had little or no actual controls, which resulted in some open-registry States not being involved in any enforcement at all. Gold agrees that the governance deficit, which he terms as “enforcement leakage”, was the root cause of the major disasters and substandard shipping in the 1980s and was a driving force for alternative methods of



Dr Awni Behnam,  
Honorary  
President, IOI

<sup>1</sup> Behnam A & Faust P; *Twilight of Flag state Control*, Ocean Yearbook 17, University of Chicago Press, (2003)

<sup>2</sup> *The Freedom of the Seas or the Right which belongs to the Dutch to take part in the East Indian trade*, a dissertation by Hugo Grotius (New York, Oxford University Press, 1916), p. 7

<sup>3</sup> R R Churchill & A V Lowe, *The Law of the Sea*. 3d ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 205.

<sup>4</sup> Available Online: <<http://www.un.org/depts/los/>>

<sup>5</sup> E Gold, *Learning from Disaster: Lessons in Regulatory Enforcement in the Maritime Sector*, *Review of European Community and International Environmental Law*, (1999), Volume 8, Issue 1, p. 18.

control to explore the lacuna in the effective exercise of jurisdiction and control by Flag States and to understand more fully the evolving role of alternative governance tools, including port State control and coastal State control, as *a priori* may not be sufficient.

In this regard, at least in the 1980s, it was thought that morally the final frontier for restoring an acceptable level of governance would be through international action, giving effect to the prime responsibility of Flag State. As such, hopes were high for the elaboration of the United Nations Convention on Conditions for Registration of Ships<sup>6</sup> under the auspices of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

#### Reasons for using Open Registries

There are numerous reasons why shipowners register vessels under Flags of Convenience (FOC) or (rather more politely) open registries, including evasion of taxes and avoidance of various governmental regulations, and freedom from restrictions on the use of cash flows. Some of the less reputable shipowners undoubtedly use these flags with the specific aim of concealing their identities and escaping the responsibilities and law enforcement procedures relating to maritime, safety, pollution prevention, etc., which apply under normal flags. However, there are also numerous transnational corporations of good standing involved in open-registry operations. The reasons why these companies choose Flags of Convenience relate in particular to crew costs.

Although crew costs represent a comparatively small proportion of the total costs of operating tankers and bulk carriers, these represent the only costs, other things being equal, that can be substantially varied by changing the flag of a vessel. Capital costs, which represent the major cost item, remain more or less the same regardless of the flag of a vessel, but the transnationals can achieve substantial cost savings by using a Flag of Convenience and recruiting a crew

from a low-cost labour supplying country.<sup>7</sup>

However, another consequence that has aroused the most public discussion over the years has been the amount of misconduct and irresponsible conduct associated with the operation of open-registry vessels. There are, of course, a large number of companies that operate FOC vessels in a responsible manner, not because of the open-registry system, but because they believe that safety and respect of international standards is good business. However, the same system that permits these companies to operate with more freedom than they could achieve under their home flags also permits the operation of vessels by irresponsible owners.

The problem arises from the fact that whereas a country with a normal registry can exercise authority over the owners, crew and vessel, an open-registry country in practice can only exercise authority over the nominal owners listed on its register book. Since these countries, unlike the normal registry countries, do not impose taxes, they do not have an incentive to identify the real owners; the key crew members of these vessels are nonnationals and consequently the only real remedy that an open-registry country can apply in the event of misconduct is to deregister a vessel.

However, the authors argued that de-registering is not an effective measure, since nominal owners can circumvent de-registration by changing their company and ship name, and thus re register. Some of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and International Maritime Organisation (IMO) conventions are enforceable by port States, but what action can be taken by a port State? A port State can take action against the crew or a vessel, but the owners are effectively outside its jurisdiction. Some of the traditional maritime countries were urging action to correct the abuses of the open-registry system without altering the system itself. However, the abuses are an inherent part of the system,

<sup>6</sup> The United Nations Convention on Conditions for Registration of Ships was adopted in February 1986 under the auspices of UNCTAD, TD/RS/CONF/23, 1986.

<sup>7</sup> A D Couper, with C J Walsh, B A Stanberry and G L Boerne; *Voyages of Abuse: Seafarers, Human Rights and International Shipping* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), at 11. Also, *Comparative Labour Costs*, UNCTAD TD/222/Sup.4, May 1979.

stemming from the fact that the real owners live outside the jurisdiction of the Flag State. Consequently, it is simply not possible to take effective action in respect of the abuses without taking action to ensure that there is a genuine economic link between owners and countries of registration.

As ships for the most purposes operate only under the jurisdiction of the Flag State in the high seas only international rules and regulations are applicable, provided they bind the Flag State either directly (ratification) or indirectly (common use). Under these conditions, if there is no genuine link (according to the standard terminology) between the ship and the State, serious questions arise as to the integrity of the system.

### **An issue of moral clarity in ocean governance**

Contrary to popular belief, this issue was first raised in UNCTAD not by the developing countries or by the UNCTAD secretariat, but by some developed market economy countries. These countries raised the issue at meetings of the Committee on Shipping and urged the UNCTAD secretariat to expedite the work in investigating open registries and to give top priority to the work.

Professor Alastair Couper et al., have poignantly documented at length the continuing and tragic predicament and suffering of seafarers in the book, *Voyages of Abuse*,<sup>8</sup> which shows how the human rights of seafarers are flagrantly violated on a daily basis. The book shows the failure of the international legal framework to provide seafarers with even the minimum protection. Couper et al. documented cases of their mistreatment outside of territorial seas, their servitude on substandard vessels, the mounting loss of life and disenfranchisement as FOC States abandon them in a flagrant dereliction of duty, which contravenes international law and minimum norms of decent behaviour. Clearly, there exists today a major lacuna between the intention of the drafters of

UNCLOS and the applicability of the law as it concerns the duties and responsibilities of the Flag States. This lacuna, as demonstrated by the extensive details in the elaboration of the international Convention on Registration of Ships, remains a challenge to the international community.

The questions we had asked:

- *How can the Flag State effectively exercise its jurisdiction and control over the ship flying its flag to implement its national and international obligations in maritime navigation?*
- *How can the Flag State conceive, define, and effectively implement a maritime policy, of which the ship is a part?*
- *How can one define the responsibility of the ship, its owner, or even the Flag State with insufficient links, mainly in the case of damage to third parties?*

These questions were supposedly addressed in the text of the Convention on Registration of Ships (the Convention). Some 25 years after agreeing to the Convention, which was unanimously adopted but never ratified, there is a great gap as to the moral clarity in the ocean in the governance paradigm.

What was aspired to by the majority of the international community in the Convention was adopted in order to regulate ship registration and to phase out the ugly and immoral side of Flags of Convenience. However, principal negotiators had no intention of ratifying the Convention and hence the lacuna continued to exist. In fact, since then open registries have expanded and metamorphosed into what UNCTAD and IMO describe as fraudulent ship registration and fraudulent ship registries.

Hence the attempt to bring Flags of Convenience under a universal international regime of jurisdiction where control had totally failed. Consequently, the alternative response to the absence of lack of state control clearly indicates that Flag States are not

*The article  
continues on  
page 52*

<sup>8</sup> A D Couper, with C J Walsh, B A Stanberry & G L Boerne; *Voyages of Abuse: Seafarers, Human Rights and International Shipping* (London: Pluto Press, 1999)

## 1

## ACTIVITIES OF THE IOI CENTRES AND FOCAL POINTS IN 2023

Lamiaa Mohamedein  
Chair of the IOI Network of  
Centres & Director IOI Egypt

Year by year the IOI family continues to grow and expand all over the world. The global activities and outreach of the IOI centres and focal points enhance the involvement of the IOI with its host communities and focus on acting locally while thinking globally, encourages all to consider the health of the entire ocean and planet and to take action in their own communities and cities enabling the IOI to be more effective within society.

IOI centres' and focal points' activities vary between celebrating the World Oceans Day (WOD), offering topical workshops, involvement in international activities, scientific publications, beach cleaning activities, television interviews, and awareness programmes beside the usual training courses and the activities related to them. Beside the face to face activities, the online IOI Ocean Academy programme added more outreach impetus to IOI activities around the world because of its ease of access across languages and backgrounds to make Ocean knowledge for all easily achieved.

At IOI, we believe in our mission to keep the ocean healthy and to sustain it for the next generations, and we as IOI family do our best to achieve this goal though many means.

### IOI Training Centres

*In addition to the wide roster of training and activities offered by each Training Centre header, the IOI Directors in South Africa and Thailand also offered IOI Ocean Academy modules online in English and Thai respectively to participants interested in becoming more ocean literate; more information on these activities is available in the dedicated chapter in this report.*

**IOI Canada** Ocean Governance Training, focusing on SDG 14 and the UN Summit of the Future, was conducted online from April 11th to June 1st. The interdisciplinary course, which offered both synchronous and asynchronous participation, explored key issues in Ocean Governance through lectures, discussions, readings, videos, and assignments. The 16 webinar-style sessions were organised into three modules, focusing on Law of the Sea, Fisheries, Aquaculture and Food Security, and State of the Ocean. The programme attracted participants from nearly 50 countries, with over 100 more registering for the self-paced study stream. A total of 73 participants completed the course requirements for a certificate.

The 17th annual Elisabeth Mann Borgese Ocean Lecture at Dalhousie University was held on the 28th September. Dr Anya Waite, CEO of the Ocean Frontier Institute, discussed A Framework for Ocean Climate Action, referencing her experiences at COP sessions and initiatives like the North Atlantic Carbon Observatory and Transforming Climate Action research programme. The event was moderated by Michael Butler, Director of IOI Canada.

A second workshop was also held by IOI Canada, on Ocean Governance for Indigenous Peoples 23 - 27 October. The workshop, funded by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and IOI, focused on interdisciplinary approaches to ocean and coastal governance, focusing on Indigenous needs, perspectives, and knowledge systems. Topics covered included law, conservation, ocean health, alternative energy, fisheries, and aquaculture. Indigenous lecturers and specialists shared their expertise.

#### IOI Canada



Representatives of IOI Canada participated in the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic's flagship annual WOD event on the Halifax waterfront, which brings together numerous government and non-governmental organisations in public outreach activities.

Director Michael Butler and Senior Research Fellow Peter Wells distributed flyers and posters about IOI Canada and the Bay of Fundy Ecosystem Partnership, to many of the groups and most importantly reinforced networking with like-minded organisations, including Indigenous representatives. As part of the communication effort, the origin of Ocean Day and the rationale for its global celebration on June 8 each year were explained together with reference to the relevant essay by Peter MacLellan<sup>1</sup> in "The Future of Ocean Governance and Capacity Development: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Mann Borgese (1918-2002)", edited by IOI Canada and published by Brill in 2018.

**IOI China's** Training Programme on Ocean Governance was successfully conducted in Tianjin, China, from 11 to 22 September. Co-organised by the National Marine Data and Information Service (NMDIS) of the Ministry of Natural Resources and the IOI China Regional Center for the West Pacific Region in Tianjin, this training attracted 36 participants from 12 countries. The programme was designed with four modules, focusing on Ocean governance, offered to participants from a diversity of practical and academic backgrounds. The programme was offered in hybrid format for two weeks, focusing on intensive class training through presentations and discussions, and

#### IOI PR China



one study tour to the National Ocean Museum. The presentations covered topics such as the legal framework of ocean governance, the impact of deep seabed mining, integrated ocean and coastal management, ocean governance policies, and ocean protection.

The IOI China Regional Centre maintains a close relationship with alumni, inviting them to deliver training programme announcements and recommend trainees. In 2023, four alumni who attended online training courses were offered full scholarships to attend physically in Tianjin. The number of IOI China alumni has reached 305.

The 2023 China-ASEAN Countries Training Course on Marine Information Technology was co-hosted by the IOI China Regional Centre and the Ocean Teacher Global Academy Tianjin Regional Training Centre. The course attracted 45 participants and provided training on ocean data management strategies, international legal frameworks, marine spatial planning, monsoon impacts, marine dual evaluation key technology, wave buoy calibration, marine economic statistics, and European marine observation and data network.

On World Oceans Day, IOI China and NMDIS organised a field trip to the Changlu Salt Farm in Tianjin, where participants learned about sea salt resources and the history of tribute salt. The event included a visit to the Sea Salt Science Education Base, where participants observed migratory bird

<sup>1</sup> <https://brill.com/display/book/edcoll/9789004380271/BP000098.xml?rskey=K1pULr&result=1>

sanctuaries and climbed up to the observation platform. NMDIS offered public lectures on ocean knowledge to students in four primary and secondary schools, focusing on ocean resources, ecological environment protection, and the history of Antarctic exploration. These activities aimed to raise awareness about ocean conservation and harmony between humans and nature.

**IOI Malta** delivered the annual hallmark Training Programme on Regional Ocean Governance for the Mediterranean, Black, Baltic and Caspian Seas, in Malta, an accredited course equivalent to 15 ECTS, in person, jointly by the IOI and the University of Malta from the 6th November - 7th December to a cohort of 16 participants hailing from 9 countries. Some new activities were included this year included a visit to the Tsunami Early-Warning System in Marsaxlokk, a lecture on the applicability of foresight within the blue economy, lectures on compassionate leadership and on NGOs, and participation within a digital ocean literacy tool demonstration conducted at the Esplora Interactive Science Centre.

The three flagship citizen science campaigns running in Malta (Spot the Alien Campaign – Spot the Alien Fish – Spot the Jellyfish) focus on sensitising citizen scientists on the issues of alien species invasions in the central Mediterranean Sea

and have been financially supported by the IOI since inception. The programmes were promoted at a number of high-profile and community events throughout the past year including via peer reviewed publications.<sup>2</sup>

In an interview with Xinhua, on the occasion of World Oceans Day, Director of IOI Malta, Alan Deidun, emphasised the importance of international cooperation to address the challenges faced by the World's Ocean, stating that these issues extend beyond a single country and require multilateral environmental agreements and cross-border cooperation.

In another interview for Euronews<sup>3</sup>, he stressed the importance of Ocean literacy to start changing people's mindset, behaviour and way of life, to bring about change themselves.

**IOI South Africa** (IOI SA) and its host institute, the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) hosted the 11th Ocean Governance Training Programme in Cape Town, South Africa, from 4-29 September. The programme included interactive sessions, group discussions, and practical field trips for 23 local and international participants.

A Letter of Agreement was signed by IOI SA with FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations) in March to develop training courses for implementing the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries. Deliverables include a successful national training event in the Philippines, a draft Handbook, and an eLearning course on the FAO Toolkit. IOI SA attended a workshop in November, in Rome, that brought together regional and global partners and small-scale fisheries organisations, involved in the

IOI Malta



<sup>2</sup> IOI Malta Citizen Science Project scientific publications:

1. Perzia, P., Cillari, T., Crociata, G., Deidun, A., Falautano, M., Franzitta, G.,...Castrì, L. (2023). Using Local Ecological Knowledge to Search for Non-Native Species in Natura 2000 Sites in the Central Mediterranean Sea: An Approach to Identify New Arrivals and Hotspot Areas. *Biology*, 12(9), 1158.
2. Ragkousis, M., Zenetos, A., Souissi J. B., Hoffman, R., Ghanem, R., Taşkın, E.,... Katsanevakis, S. (2023). Unpublished Mediterranean and Black Sea records of marine alien, cryptogenic, and neofaunal species. *BioInvasions Records*, 12(2), 339–369.

3. An abstract capturing the essence of the three citizen science campaigns in question was presented by Mr Johann Galdies – 2 Research Seminar – abstract titled: *Documenting the spread of marine invaders through two national citizen science campaigns*

<https://brill.com/display/book/edcoll/9789004380271/BP000098.xml?rskey=K1pULr&result=1>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/green/2022/02/22/every-second-breath-you-take-comes-from-the-ocean>



IOI South Africa

work on the SSF guidelines, to share lessons on the work conducted to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines worldwide, and to explore potential areas of future work and collaboration.

For World Oceans Day, IOI SA teamed up with Cape Kayak Adventures on the 10 June for a day of celebration in raising awareness on the importance of our Ocean and to promote its conservation. The public was invited for a beach clean-up at Three Anchor Bay beach, which is known to accumulate a lot of litter directly from the Ocean and through rainwater runoff from nearby roads, with the objective to pick up as much of the floating litter as possible. Cape Kayak supported the event and offered complimentary trips to the public so that 24 people could assist IOI SA staff with the Ocean clean-up. This experience was led by Kirshia Govender, IOI representative and Tracy Rauch, Cape Kayak, and her team of guides to allow for an informed experience highlighting the marine life in Table Bay including the threats to them.

IOI Thailand



**IOI Thailand**, in collaboration with its host institute, the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, local communities, marine guard volunteers and more than 20 private sector organisations, organised a one-day event at Lan Hin Khao, Tambol Tapong, Amphoe Muang, Rayong province to celebrate World Oceans Day. The event included marine and coastal environment exhibitions, marine endangered species rescue, beach and underwater cleaning, and turtle release.

**IOI Centres**

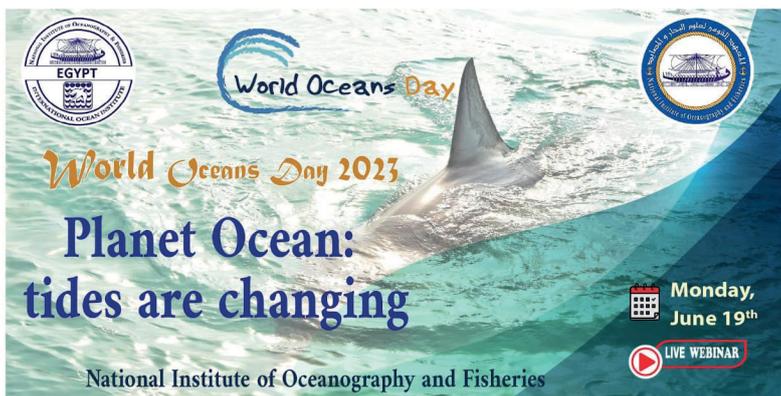
*In addition to the activities described under each Centre header, the IOI Centres in Costa Rica, Egypt and Nigeria also offered IOI Ocean Academy modules online in Spanish, Arabic and English respectively to regional participants interested in becoming more ocean literate; more information on these activities is available in the dedicated chapter in this report.*

**IOI Costa Rica**



**IOI Costa Rica**, organised a conference in collaboration with its host institute the Universidad Nacional (UNA), the Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR) and the Embassy of France in Costa Rica from 7-10 June. The event, titled "*Océanos y Sociedades*," featured a talk by Sergio Cambronero on the importance of ocean studies. The conference covered three main topics: marine-coastal contamination, ocean governance, and ocean-climate variability. Scientists from Central America (Costa Rica, Panama, Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala) participated in presentations and discussions. The event was broadcast live on Facebook.

**IOI Egypt**



**IOI Egypt** held two ocean governance training workshops in September and October. The first workshop, "*The Egyptian Seas: Governance, Law, and Management for a Sustainable Future*," was held at the National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (NIOF) in Suez, with 16 participants, including students, fresh graduates, and researchers from NIOF. A welcome speech was delivered by NIOF Director and IOI Centre Director, Dr Lamiaa Mohamedein. The second workshop, "*Red Sea Sustainable Development: Governance, Resources, impacts and Management*," took place in Hurghada, Egypt, from 15-18 October.

For World Oceans Day, IOI Egypt held two webinars discussing the UN theme and the blue economy. The first webinar, titled "*Planet Ocean: Tides are changing*," featured lectures on megafauna, sharks, eco-tourism, marine special planning, and marine spatial planning. The second webinar, "*The Blue Economy*," covered fisheries, shipping, and the concept of the blue economy. Both webinars were attended by 273 participants.

**IOI Germany** and its host institute, Leibniz Centre for Tropical Marine Research (ZMT), conducted a training course in November on the co-design and development of transdisciplinary research projects in a Global North/South perspective titled "*Generating Impact in Complex Coast and Marine Contexts: Co-design and Development of Transdisciplinary Research Projects in a Global North/South Perspective*". The course brought together eighteen enthusiastic participants from around the world, particularly from African and Asian countries, and

**IOI Germany**



IOI Nigeria



focused on developing a transdisciplinary research project plan with a particular emphasis on societal impact. Participants were able to develop a thorough understanding of theoretical concepts, methods and practical application while directly applying the material in case studies of their choice. Topics covered include transdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches, positionality and diverse perspectives, stakeholder mapping and engagement, impact planning, equitable research collaboration and participation, conflict management and work in conflict environments, effective science communication and evaluation of transdisciplinary projects.

ZMT commissioned a video<sup>4</sup> for World Oceans Day, shared on social media, where scientists were asked the question “*What is the most fascinating thing you have learnt about the Ocean as a marine scientist?*”, to inspire Ocean and climate action through positivity. Raimund Bleishwitz, Director, IOI Germany, spoke about coral reefs and the risks posed to them by climate change and about the importance for scientists and all other entities to work together to save them.

**IOI Nigeria** together with the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research (NIOMR), celebrated the 4Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Refuse) initiative to reduce plastic pollution in the environment. The event offered for WOD 2023 in Nigeria showcased successful recycling and upcycling of plastic waste in Nigeria, promoting the importance

of reducing plastic pollution. Participants visited exhibitors demonstrating waste-to-wealth products as income sources. The event aimed to raise awareness about reducing plastic pollution in Nigeria.

**IOI IR Iran** in cooperation with its host institute, the Iranian National Institute for Oceanography and Atmospheric Science (INIOAS) celebrated World Oceans Day with a one-day workshop for the children from local areas of Bandar Abbas (a coastal city located on the coasts of the Persian Gulf in south of Iran). Children were given introductory lessons on the concept of oceanography and how to protect the seas, emphasising the concepts of social responsibility toward protecting the marine environment and not littering. Since the event was held in an area of mangrove plantings, the children were also taught about the importance of mangrove trees for the environment. Finally, the participants took an active part in a coastal cleanup in the mangrove-planted areas.

IOI IR Iran



<sup>4</sup> <https://youtu.be/XTKobkNUK7Y>

**IOI Focal Points**

**IOI Chile Focal Point**, Nicolás Ojeda Zavala, together with *Universidad Autonoma de Chile and the Instituto de Investigacion en Derecho* of the Law School, organised the 2nd International Seminar “Oceans, Sustainability and Environment” (2do Seminario Internacional "Océanos, Sustentabilidad y Medio Ambiente"), 18 August, at Campus Providencia, Universidad Autonoma de Chile. Some of the speakers for this year’s event were Ambassador Maria Teresa Infante, Member of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS); Mariana Durney, from the International Seabed Authority (ISA); and Dr Blanca Rodríguez-Chavez, from the *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, Spain, among others. A Vassallo, Managing Director IOI, delivered the opening speech via pre-recorded video and Dr Frida Armas Pfrter, newly elected member of the ITLOS, and IOI training programme faculty member, delivered the keynote address. Dr Ojeda, ably moderated one of the seminar panels. The event was open for students, academics, professionals, and the general public, and for the second year in a row provided an opportunity to speak about the developments and international experiences. The success of this second iteration of the seminar is testament to the importance of this event and its consolidation as a forum to discuss topics concerning the protection of the marine environment, sustainable development, and future challenges, among others.

IOI Chile



**IOI Pakistan Focal Point:** For World Oceans Day, most of the activities in Pakistan were organised either by the faculty or alumni from IOI Ocean Academy Pakistan. A YouTube video<sup>5</sup> was commissioned by Dr Javed Afzal, IOI FP Pakistan, produced by maritime scholar and faculty member of the IOI Ocean Academy Pakistan - Professor Dr Azhar Ahmad - in coordination with the Pakistan IOI Ocean Academy, about the Ocean. The narration was well supported by illustrations and was specifically targeted for laypersons.

IOI Pakistan



**IOI Singapore Focal Point**, Dr Jai Acharya, represented the IOI at the Pre-INC 2 Asia online forum, 10 May, on “*the benefits of the plastic pollution treaty, specifically on the potential provisions on high-risk plastic product categories, circularity, and financing mechanisms*”. By participating in the forum, there was an opportunity to learn more about the legal framework on the plastic pollution treaty and the importance of its provisions in addressing the plastic pollution crisis in our oceans and beyond.

IOI Singapore



<sup>5</sup> [https://youtu.be/ge9-Gd1\\_M\\_o](https://youtu.be/ge9-Gd1_M_o)

Dr Acharya also participated in the “*Blue Carbon Forum*”: *The Rise of Blue Carbon Credits, Learning Exchange on Blue Carbon Initiative*”, organised by PEMSEA. This online event of knowledge exchange and learning among East Asian Seas countries and conservation stakeholders shared the on-going practices and learnings on blue carbon initiatives, and underscored the importance of having a standard accounting method for blue carbon and the importance of blue carbon in mitigating the climate crisis.

For World Oceans Day, Dr Acharya, as a representative of IOI, delivered a speech as guest of honour during a core event with Indian Maritime University (IMU) at its Vizag Campus with a virtual and physical presence of over 400 viewers/participants. Dr Acharya elaborated on issues regarding biodiversity, over exploitation of the ocean, ocean pollution, deep sea mining, replanting of mangroves and much more. Various competitions were also organised for students.



This year, 43 IOI Ocean Academy Courses were successfully delivered globally by 13 nodes in Costa Rica, Egypt, India, Maldives, Nigeria, Pakistan, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, and Ukraine. The programmes were offered in local languages, Spanish, Arabic, Marathi, Dhivehi, English, Urdu, Portuguese, Hindi, Sinhala, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian reaching some 1500 persons around the world.

A list of all the courses held in 2023 can be found in the dedicated chapter on the IOI Ocean Academy.

# 2

## IOI TRAINING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN 2023

Diane Axisa  
Secretary, IOI HQ



**OCEAN GOVERNANCE: SDG 14 AND THE UN SUMMIT OF THE FUTURE; ONLINE, 11 APRIL – 1 JUNE, OFFERED FOR BOTH SYNCHRONOUS AND ASYNCHRONOUS PARTICIPATION; ORGANISED BY IOI CANADA**

Topics covered:

- Ocean Governance and Law of the Sea
- Fisheries, Aquaculture and Food Security
- State of the Ocean



**17 participants from the Azerbaijan, IR Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan**

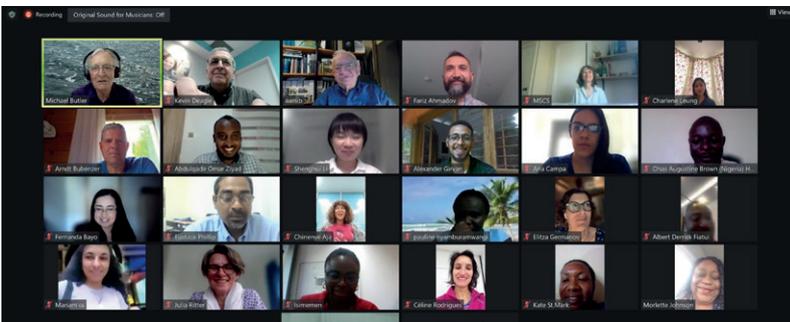
**IOI OCEAN GOVERNANCE TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION; HYBRID, 11-22 SEPTEMBER; OFFERED BY IOI CHINA WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE STATE OCEANIC ADMINISTRATION, MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES, PR CHINA, IN TIANJIN, CHINA**

Topics coverage:

- Ocean governance beyond national jurisdiction
- The international legal framework for Ocean governance
- Marine environment and ecosystem protection
- Integrated marine and coastal zone management
- Monsoon season and its social and ecological impacts
- The blue economy
- Key technologies and practices of marine dual assessment



**36 participants (14 online, 22 in-person) from 12 countries, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand**



**73 participants from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Central America, Europe, the Indian Ocean, North and South America, and the South Pacific**

**9TH IOI TRAINING PROGRAMME ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE OF THE CASPIAN SEA; 11-22 SEPTEMBER; ORGANISED BY IOI HQ IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CASPIAN SEA INSTITUTE OF TURKMENISTAN, IN TURKMENISTAN**

Topics covered:

- Oceans and Seas, Governance Frameworks
- Managing our relations with the oceans and seas
- Governance for the Caspian Sea

**10TH TRAINING PROGRAMME IN OCEAN GOVERNANCE FOR AFRICA; 4-29 SEPTEMBER; ORGANISED BY IOI SOUTHERN AFRICA IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA**

Topics coverage:

- Oceans and Coasts – Opportunities and Threats
- The Governance Framework
- Governance Tools
- Governance in Action
- Creating a Supportive Environment for Effective Governance



**23 Participants from 8 countries, Algeria, Cameroon, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania and South Africa**

**18TH IOI TRAINING PROGRAMME ON REGIONAL OCEAN GOVERNANCE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN, BLACK, BALTIC AND CASPIAN SEAS; 7 NOVEMBER – 7 DECEMBER; OFFERED BY IOI MALTA AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, IN MALTA**

Topics coverage:

- Global Ocean Governance Framework and Managing Our Relations with the Oceans
- Managing Marine Space and its Potential as an Economic Resource
- Multilateral Diplomacy and International Rule-Making, and Regional Sea Governance



**16 participants from 9 countries surrounding the regional seas: Egypt, Georgia, Iran, Morocco, Tunisia, Syria, Turkmenistan, Malta, and Latvia.**

**IOI GERMANY MONSOON SCHOOL: GENERATING IMPACT IN COMPLEX COASTAL AND MARINE CONTEXTS; ONLINE 1 - 10 NOVEMBER**

IOI Germany and its host institute, Leibniz Centre for Tropical Marine Research (ZMT), successfully conducted a training course on the co-design and development of transdisciplinary research projects in a Global North/South perspective. The course brought together eighteen enthusiastic participants from around the world, particularly from African and Asian countries, and focused on developing a transdisciplinary research project plan with a particular emphasis on societal impact.



**WORKSHOPS**

**IOI CANADA OCEAN GOVERNANCE WORKSHOP FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, 23 - 27 OCTOBER**

Following last year's successful pilot, IOI Canada delivered its second Workshop on Ocean Governance for Indigenous Peoples. Held in Halifax, this in-person, interdisciplinary training was planned with and for Indigenous Peoples from Mi'kma'ki, Wolastoqiyik and Peskotomuhkatik (Maritime Provinces). Presentations and discussions focused on topics ranging from law and UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) to fisheries and aquaculture, conservation, health of the ocean and alternative energy, with particular attention to Indigenous needs, perspectives and knowledge systems. Two half day



field trips complemented the learning experience with tours of both a unique land-based aquaculture operation and the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, as well as a visit to a Regional Fisheries Management Organisation.

**IOI NIGERIA OCEAN LITERACY AND IOI ALUMNI LECTURE SERIES; HYBRID, 1ST DECEMBER**

The Ocean Literacy and Alumni Lecture Series was held at the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research (NIOMR)/African Regional Aquaculture Centre (ARAC), in Nigeria, one of the activities planned for the South-South zone of the country. Around 50 participants from diverse academic backgrounds, university students, staff from research institutes, merchant navy cadets and officers, local community members attended in person. The highlight of this training was the lecture titled: *Ocean Facts and Myths: Unravelling the Truths Beneath the Waves*. Since most of the participants had diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, discussing local myths encouraged the exchange of indigenous knowledge.



**IOI EGYPT HELD TWO OCEAN GOVERNANCE TRAINING WORKSHOPS IN COLLABORATION WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF OCEANOGRAPHY AND FISHERIES (NIOF), 11-14 SEPTEMBER, 15-18 OCTOBER**

The first workshop, "The Egyptian Seas: Governance, Law, and Management for a Sustainable Future," was held at the National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries in Suez. The workshop, attended by 16 participants, included students, fresh graduates, and researchers from NIOF. The workshop was opened with a welcome speech by NIOF Director and Director Dr Lamiaa Mohamedein. The second workshop, "Red Sea Sustainable Development: Governance, Resources, impacts and Management," took place in Hurghada, Egypt.



## IOI AWARDS AND BURSARIES

### AWARD OF THE 2023 IOI ELISABETH MANN BORGESÉ (EMB) BURSARY; MALTA, 29 SEPTEMBER

The 2023 EMB Bursary was awarded to Mr Jake Bonello to carry out an investigation on the anti-fouling performance of a novel PMMA/TiO<sub>2</sub> nanocomposite coating and shall form part of a Master of Science with the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Malta. The study aims to determine if such a coating can further improve the lifetime of maritime vessels in an environmentally compatible manner. The coating consisting of poly(methyl methacrylate) (PMMA) loaded with titanium dioxide (TiO<sub>2</sub>) nanotubes is hypothesised to provide corrosion resistance, self-cleaning and anti-fouling properties that are beneficial for the application. The EMB Bursary funds will be utilised to enhance the current research work by supporting a research trip to Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, materials and consumables necessary for the research trip as well as open-access publications.

The 2022 EMB Bursary, awarded to Mr Ede Kossári-Tarnik to carry out a study on the extent of plastic polymer contamination within Maltese coastal waters, as well as the variability in distribution of microplastics in different layers of the water column, came to a fruitful end. EMB Bursary funds were used to enhance the research work by supporting additional sampling and to extend the scope of planned chemical analysis.

**L-R: Dr Ing Anthea Agius Anastasi, Dr Sophie Briffa, Pro-Rector Prof Joseph M Cacciottolo, Ms Antonella Vassallo, Mr Jake Bonello, Prof. Louis F Cassar, Mr Ede Kossári-Tarnik**



## 3

## IOI ALUMNI NETWORK AND PROGRAMMES IN 2023



Cosmin Chivu

Project Officer IOI HQ

**International Ocean Institute Alumni** Worldwide

IOI's Ocean Ambassadors Official IOI Alumni Website

**NEWS AND COMMUNITY**

**Welcome to this new online community platform!**

This is IOI's private, online community platform created exclusively for the Alumni of the International Ocean Institute (IOI) as well as faculty and Friends. It is a secure, password-protected environment established by International Ocean Institute. Membership is free.

Once you register, an email will be sent to confirm your membership and validate your email address. Be sure to click on the link in this email so your account can be activated.

or

After registering the site administrator will review your profile, and after his/her approval, you will receive an email with your login details.

**Become a member of the Alumni Community to:**

**VISIT A TRAINING PROGRAMME PAGE**

Just log on or register today! Your direct source for Training Programme events, discussions, member directory and more.

**MORE INFORMATION . . .**

**New Developments and Emerging Issues in Ocean Governance**

Online Course - 4th Oct - 4th Nov 2021 - via ZOOM - Deadline: 15th September 2021

This online Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course is offered jointly by IOI South Africa and IOI Canada as part of IOI's commitment to enhancing the professional development of its alumni. Nine live sessions in a series of three modules will utilise presentations, discussions, readings, videos and interactive

### IOI ALUMNI CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) SERIES IN 2023: QUARTERLY WEBINARS IN EMERGING OCEAN GOVERNANCE TOPICS FOR IOI ALUMNI

Throughout 2023, IOI HQ coordinated the global programme and delivery of four online 90-minute CPD webinars targeting IOI Alumni, with the primary goal of highlighting the latest developments in the ever-evolving Ocean Governance landscape. Additional goals were to offer fresh insights into current topics, enhance networking and Alumni interaction, and leverage networks of expertise in various thematics among different IOI Alumni cohorts and external experts.

#### 1. Sailing into the Blue Economy: Trends and Foresight (23 March)

This webinar aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the current trends in the blue economy, as well as future foresight and research directions that will be critical for achieving sustainable economic growth while protecting the marine environment. The expert speakers approached the topic from different angles based on their expertise.

Since its foundation in 1972, IOI has trained hundreds of young practitioners, particularly from developing countries and countries in transition, and contributes towards a growing global network of trained and empowered leaders fully conversant with the latest developments in Ocean governance. IOI Alumni have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for effective Ocean governance, and are empowered to apply contemporary approaches to coastal and Ocean management. Over the years, the IOI training programmes in Ocean governance have resulted in a critical mass of IOI Alumni and a global network of practitioners in Ocean governance.

Engagement and outreach to the IOI Alumni community continued throughout 2023, primarily through online events, as the principal format for maximising access and interaction with the global IOI Alumni community. Additionally, the IOI Alumni Channel accessed via the IOI's website (<https://www.ioinst.org/ioi-alumni/>) continues to offer a platform for the exchange and interaction of IOI Alumni, faculty and training directors. Usage of the site continues to increase with more Alumni sharing career opportunities and news, and with successive cohorts of graduates from IOI training events registering as members.

Setting things off, Awni Behnam (Honorary President, IOI) provided a short introduction to the historic evolution of the concept and addressed the opportunities and pitfalls that come with it. Lisa Pace (Senior Lecturer, The Edward de Bono Institute for Creative Thinking & Innovation) highlighted future trends and the challenges to harnessing blue economy opportunities for innovation whilst considering also the socio-economic implications of ocean-based activities. Following this, Alan Deidun (Ocean Ambassador for Malta and IOI Malta Training Centre Director, University of Malta) elaborated on interlinkages

ONLINE WEBINAR — IOI ALUMNI CPD

## SAILING INTO THE BLUE ECONOMY: TRENDS AND FORESIGHT

DATE 23 March TIME 15:00 - 16:30 CET REGISTER NOW

Introduction by: **AWNI BEHNAM**  
Honorary President, IOI

**LISA PACE**  
Senior Lecturer  
The Edward de Bono Institute for Creative Thinking and Innovation

**ALAN DEIDUN**  
Ocean Ambassador for Malta and IOI Malta Training Centre Director

**ANGELIQUE POUPONNEAU**  
Policy Adviser to the Chair of the Alliance of Small Islands States

Moderator: **COSMIN CHIVU**  
Project Officer, IOI

between the blue economy and the resources present in the deep sea, while answering the very timely question of whether or not we are heading towards a “Blue” Tragedy of the Commons. Ms Angelique Pouponneau (Policy Advisor, Alliance of Small Islands States) offered the attendees a unique perspective on how a sustainable blue economy requires policy, institutional and legal coherence for success – with a focus on the Seychelles.

## 2. Beyond Boundaries: How is the New “High Seas” Treaty a Game Changer? (13 July)

This engaging session focused on the new treaty of the “High Seas” on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (‘BBNJ’)). Experts drew attention to its key provisions and objectives, its significance in addressing gaps in existing international frameworks, and its ambitions to promote the sustainable management of marine resources. The speakers elaborated on future scenarios, highlighting potential implications and challenges associated with the implementation of this new treaty, opportunities for collaboration and innovation in scientific research, technology development, and sustainable practices.

The first speaker, Arne Langlet (PhD Student, MARIPOLDATA) highlighted how through a delicate balance of interests and some innovative drafting, BBNJ

negotiators managed to finalise a treaty that can pave the way for the sustainable governance and conservation of biodiversity in the high seas. Following this, Liliana Rodríguez Cortés (Delegate of the IOI to the UN in New York, Co-founder and CEO of Fundación Aramacao), offered the attendees a unique reflection on the BBNJ consultations, bringing insights from the actual negotiation room and focusing on the perspective of an NGO in the process. Rounding up the webinar, Klaudija Cremers (Research Fellow, International Ocean Governance, IDDRI) elaborated on the next steps in the road to implementation and how the adoption of the BBNJ treaty is only the first step towards the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, and that now States will have to ratify the treaty to bring it into force, establish core institutions and develop capacity, science and technology to ensure rapid, effective and equitable implementation of the treaty.

ONLINE WEBINAR — IOI ALUMNI CPD

## BEYOND BOUNDARIES: HOW IS THE NEW ‘HIGH SEAS’ TREATY A GAME CHANGER?

DATE 13 July TIME 15:00 - 16:30 CET REGISTER NOW

**KLAUDIJA CREMERS**  
Research Fellow, International Ocean Governance, IDDRI

**LILIANA RODRIGUEZ CORTÉS**  
Delegate of the IOI to the UN, Co-founder and CEO of Fundación Aramacao

**ARNE LANGLET**  
PhD student, MARIPOLDATA

By the end of the session, the participants gained a comprehensive understanding of the High Seas Treaty and its potential to reshape the conservation and management of biodiversity beyond national boundaries, hopefully setting the stage for a new era of Ocean Governance and sustainability.

### 3. Venturing Into the Abyss: Deep Seabed Mining (28 September)

The third webinar in the series focused on Deep Seabed Mining which currently presents a complex spectrum of opportunities and immense challenges that demand thoughtful examination. Not only does deep seabed mining represent a burgeoning industry with the potential to revolutionise resource extraction, but it also brings to the forefront pressing environmental, ethical, and social concerns juxtaposed against the consideration of the principle of the Common Heritage of Humankind as laid out in UNCLOS.

This engaging session proved to be highly informative and insightful, marked by the valuable contributions of Michael Norton (Environment Programme Director, EASAC) and Bobbi-Jo Dobush (Legal & Ocean Governance Officer, The Ocean Foundation). The Webinar delved into the multifaceted dimensions of deep seabed mining, focusing on its environmental, ethical, and technological implications.

Dr Norton's insights, drawn from his extensive experience in environmental science and policy, provided a comprehensive understanding of the complex intersection between international collaboration, environmental

preservation, and deep seabed mining. His emphasis on the importance of sustainable practices and the common heritage of humankind underscored the significance of responsible resource management in safeguarding our Ocean for future generations. Dr Dobush's passionate advocacy for Ocean conservation and her work in promoting a moratorium on deep seabed mining underpinned the ethical considerations associated with this industry. Her nuanced perspective on sustainable mining practices and the need for a balanced approach resonated deeply with the audience, highlighting the imperative of safeguarding marine ecosystems and respecting the rights of indigenous communities.

During the Q&A session, the Webinar participants actively engaged in discussions, addressing critical issues such as ecosystem disruption, biodiversity preservation, and the ethical implications of deep seabed mining. As the Webinar drew to a close, the participants appreciated the complexities surrounding deep seabed mining, along with a heightened awareness of the urgent need for responsible practices and international collaboration to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of our Ocean.

### 4. Breaking the Stalemate: The Role of Ocean Literacy in Catalysing Progress on SDG 14 and Beyond (7 December)

In the face of current challenges of Ocean degradation, increasingly unpredictable Ocean-climate modulation, and potential biodiversity collapse, distinguished experts examined how knowledge-based institutions such as the IOI can contribute to achieving effective solutions that meet the global SDGs and ambitions, while also considering the role that Ocean literate communities can play in accelerating this transition. With a primary emphasis on the critical need for heightened public awareness and understanding of Ocean issues, the seminar aimed to emphasise the significant impact of Ocean Literacy on fostering responsible and effective Ocean Governance practices amongst all stakeholders.

The seminar was chaired by IOI Honorary President, Awni Behnam, Training Course Director. Antonella Vassallo, Managing Director of the IOI, presented the IOI Ocean Academy programme, illustrating how it can play a significant role in improving global Ocean Literacy





through online, easily accessible, free-to-all Ocean knowledge modules anchored in local contexts and delivered in local languages. Vladimir Ryabinin, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO and Assistant Director General of UNESCO, discussed the contribution of Ocean literacy to sustainability, highlighting the significance of the Ocean Decade in achieving this. The next session considered the role of Ocean trade data and regulatory outcomes in building a sustainable Ocean economy and David Vivas Eugui, Chief of Section at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), shared insights on the topic. Nilufer Oral, Director of the Centre for International Law at the National University of Singapore and a member of the International Law Commission, explored recent developments in international law, diplomacy, and the Ocean including the importance of Ocean literacy for negotiating and diplomatic delegations. Alan Deidun, Course Director IOI Malta Training Centre, focused on leveraging cutting-edge technology to enhance Ocean literacy access.

#### OTHER IOI ALUMNI EVENTS AROUND THE WORLD

Besides IOI Alumni CPD webinars, a set of other events and opportunities organised by the IOI were also explicitly disseminated to the IOI Alumni so as to offer opportunities for attendance and to enhance knowledge outreach:

- IOI Nigeria Ocean Literacy and IOI Alumni Lecture

Series; Hybrid, 1 December: the IOI Centre in Nigeria delivered this series of lectures at the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research (NIOMR)/African Regional Aquaculture Centre (ARAC) to around 50 in-person participants from diverse academic backgrounds such as university students, staff from research institutes, merchant navy cadets and officers, local community members, while also allowing for IOI Alumni from Africa to join online via Zoom.

- The IOI Focal Point in Chile (Nicolás Ojeda), and the Universidad Autónoma de Chile co-organised the Second Seminar titled Oceans, Sustainability and Environment, on Campus Providencia, Universidad Autónoma de Chile, 18 August.
- The IOI Ocean Academy: this IOI programme on Ocean literacy is an excellent example of the outreach of the IOI Alumni within their communities and an excellent vehicle for their involvement as IOI Ocean Academy Directors. This programme allows for these dedicated graduates of IOI training programmes around the world to “give back” to their local and regional communities in the form of Ocean knowledge sharing, aiming to empower and encourage positive action in favour of Ocean conservation and sustainable use amongst all stakeholders.



## 4

## IOI OCEAN ACADEMY PROGRAMME



Antonella Vassallo  
 Managing Director, IOI HQ  
 Cosmin Chivu  
 Project Officer, IOI HQ



Ocean Knowledge  
 For All

The purpose of the IOI Ocean Academy – launched as a hallmark event to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the IOI in 2022 – is to enhance Ocean literacy globally,

**An IOI Ocean Academy Course  
 is designed to be delivered:**

in 20-hour  
 modules online

in local  
 language

free-of charge  
 for participants

by local experts, overseen by the IOI

**On completing an  
 IOI Ocean Academy module,  
 a participant will:**

gain a basic understanding of the ocean

be empowered to become more active  
 locally as stakeholders to positively influence their  
 communities and beyond

learn about the importance of Ocean governance,  
 sustainable and equitable human use, the principle  
 of the common heritage of humankind, respecting  
 the needs of future generations, all in locally relevant  
 context;

Anyone with a smartphone and WiFi can join  
 anywhere, anytime

focussing especially on communities where access to Ocean knowledge might be limited for various reasons. The action expands the traditional IOI training portfolio traditionally focussing on early to mid-career ocean professionals to reach an audience that may be defined as interested laypersons.

An IOI Ocean Academy Course is designed to upgrade the Ocean literacy of the target lay audience by providing an understanding of regionally and locally relevant Ocean information at an appropriate level. The IOI Ocean Academy Courses address specific regional needs and have a clear link to Ocean Governance and the IOI mission.

The online IOI Ocean Academy Courses are offered under the oversight of the IOI and implemented by local partners who may be either IOI Alumni or other competent and knowledgeable individuals or persons having a proven relation to IOI. The online IOI Ocean Academy Courses are offered at no financial cost to registered participants.



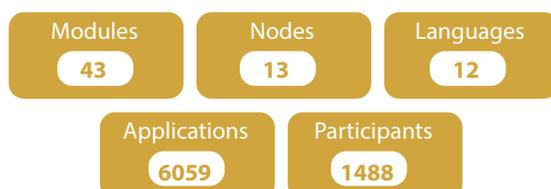
In 2023, 43 IOI Ocean Academy programmes were offered globally by\_

- 13 IOI Ocean Academy nodes (Costa Rica, Egypt, India, Maldives, Nigeria, Pakistan, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, and Ukraine)
- in 12 languages (Spanish, Arabic, Marathi, Dhivehi, English, Urdu, Portuguese, Hindi, Sinhala, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian)

for an audience of 1,488 persons around the world.



### Global Programme Outreach in 2023



*"It is of great satisfaction that the foremost programme launched as part of the IOI golden jubilee – the IOI Ocean Academy – was so successful, exceeding our expectations in reaching out to a global audience under the motto of "Ocean Knowledge for All". The IOI Ocean Academy programme was established to enable interested laypersons to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to understand the complexities of the Ocean and its local and global effects, now and in a changing future, and the impact and role of human activities, laying the foundations for more informed understanding and personal daily decision-making. The IOI Ocean Academy format of 20-hour modules offered online in local languages, delivering locally relevant Ocean knowledge via local experts affiliated with the IOI, and at no charge for interested participants of all backgrounds has proven to be a highly effective way of increasing global Ocean Literacy. The IOI Ocean Academy programme is truly a fitting tribute to the vision of Elisabeth [Mann Borgese], as well as a new milestone in the IOI mission to create knowledgeable and empowered Ocean leadership at all levels."*

**Antonella Vassallo, Managing Director IOI HQ**

**IOI Ocean Academy website and global outreach**  
<https://www.ioinst.org/ioi-ocean-academy-1/>

In addition to the work to create and backstop effective partnerships, a complete online home for the project is maintained and each IOI Ocean Academy open for registration is prominently shown on the Academy website, advertised in the IOInforma and reported on in the IOI e-bulletin so as to increase exposure of the programme and the opportunities to get involved.

The IOI Ocean Academy Programme was presented in international events by IOI Representatives:

- COP28 side-events: Decarbonizing ocean-based sectors through trade, investment, and technology policies, Trade House Pavilion, co-organised by UNCTAD, FAO, IMO, UNWTO, OECS and IOI; Special Session on the Concept of Ocean Literacy and its Importance, TERRE, 9 December, Dubai
- IOI Special Seminar/IOI Alumni CPD: Breaking the Stalemate: The Role of Ocean Literacy in Catalysing Progress on SDG 14 and Beyond, Hybrid, 7th December Europe House, Malta
- 5th International Conference on Sustainability Education, 19-20 September, New Delhi; SPECIAL THEMATIC SESSION: Building a multi-country, civil society partnership to increase the resilience of coastal populations in South Asia, 19th September, India



Country	IOI Ocean Academy Title	Start	Language
Costa Rica	Marine Science for Decision Makers: Using Ocean Databases to Support Sound Policy and Decision Making	May	Spanish
	Basic course on marine science of the Central American region	Oct	
Egypt	Contribution of Sustainable development goals to marine environmental conservation	July	Arabic
	Egyptian Marine Environment: Challenges and Opportunities for a Sustainable Future	Dec	
India	Ocean Literacy: Know Your Planet Beyond the Land	Mar	Marathi & English
		Oct	
Maldives	Island Ecosystem Conservation and Management for Ocean Governance	Apr	Dhivehi
	Fisheries in the Maldives	Aug	English
	International Maritime Transport and Opportunities in the Industry, with examples from the Maldives	Dec	Dhivehi
Nigeria	Ocean Science for All: Promoting Ocean Literacy In Nigeria	Aug	English
	Ocean Guardians: Empowering Nigerians through Ocean Literacy	Oct	
Pakistan	Importance of Oceans in Securing Economic and Climate Security for Pakistan	Jan	English/ Urdu
	Quest for Sustainable Blue Growth under Preserved Environment with Special Reference to Pakistan	Mar	
	Oceans – Security for sustaining life on Earth	May	
	Paradigms of Sustainable Use of Ocean Resources Containing Environmental Impact for Pakistan	July	
	Economically, Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Blue Societies with Special Reference to Pakistan	Oct	
Portugal	Ocean: Unity and Diversity	Feb	Portuguese
	Caring for the Ocean is Caring for Our Common Home	Oct	
Singapore	The Ocean, Our Source of Life and Livelihoods	Jan	English
		Mar	
		Jun	
		Sep	
		Oct	Hindi
South Africa	Learn more about South Africa's Ocean and Opportunities in the Blue Economy	Feb	English
		Jun	
		Nov	
Sri Lanka	Online Programme to Educate Students on the Biodiversity of the Aquatic Environment	May	Sinhala
		Jun	
		Sep	
	Certificate Course on Ocean Governance, Conservation and Sustainable Resource Management	Aug	
		Sep	
		Oct	
Thailand	Governing the Ocean and The Seas of Thailand and Their Resources	Apr	Thai
	Marine Resource Management and Protection with a Special Focus on the Status of Thailand	May	
Türkiye	Conservation and Sustainability of the Marine Environment in Turkish Seas	Jul	Turkish
		Oct	
Black and Mediterranean Seas	Sustainable coastal tourism development and Ocean governance	Oct	English
	Learning about Ocean. Ocean and Ocean Governance topic in a school curriculum	Nov	
Ukraine	Sustainable coastal tourism development and Ocean governance	Apr	Ukrainian
	Learning about the Ocean: Ocean Literacy in the School Curriculum	May	

## 5

## SPECIAL EVENTS IN 2023

## IOI PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

**UN TRADE FORUM 2023 - TOWARD THE SDG SUMMIT  
2023: HIGH-IMPACT TRADE INITIATIVES FOR  
ACCELERATING THE SDGs  
8 - 9 MAY, UN PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA**

Hosted by UNCTAD, the third iteration of the *UN Trade Forum* took stock of trade policies and how to best tailor them to the challenges that the world currently faces. Discussions focused on approaches aimed at making trading systems more resilient, particularly in developing countries, clarifying the effectiveness and feasibility of trade-related “high-impact initiatives” to respond to global challenges, and expediting progress towards the SDGs.

Representing the IOI, Dr Awni Behnam (Honorary President, IOI) participated in Session 2 of the forum which dealt with *building a sustainable Ocean economy for development*. Also attending this session were Ms Antonella Vassallo (Managing Director, IOI), Mr Peter Leder (Treasurer, IOI) and Mr Cosmin Chivu, (Project Officer, IOI). With longstanding cooperation between them, both the IOI and UNCTAD recognise the critical role of the Ocean in global



A Behnam, Honorary President, IOI

trade, transportation, and the blue economy while advocating for the integration of environmental considerations into trade and investment policies and ensuring the preservation of marine ecosystems and the livelihoods of coastal communities. Through their work, the IOI and UNCTAD remain committed to contributing towards the shared goal of promoting sustainable development while safeguarding the world's Ocean for future generations.

**IOI REPRESENTED AT THE 23RD UNITED NATIONS  
INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ON OCEANS AND  
THE LAW OF THE SEA (ICP) AT UN HEADQUARTERS  
5-9 JUNE, UN HQ, NEW YORK**

The twenty-third United Nations Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP) was held at UN Headquarters from 5 to 9 June on the theme: New Maritime Technologies: Challenges and Opportunities. Ms Liliana Rodriguez Cortes, Delegate of the International Ocean Institute to the United Nations represented IOI.

During the opening session Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel, João Miguel de Serpa Soares, stressed that the theme of this year's meeting couldn't be timelier, highlighting that new ocean technologies are important for tackling common and unprecedented challenges that pose significant threats to the ocean and its health. Noting that this ICP as a forum provides a valuable opportunity to focus on how technologies, in particular new technologies, could be part of the solution to these challenges.

In general, delegations expressed the need for robust and rapid technologies. The challenges for developing countries in the application of new maritime technologies were discussed, as well as the importance of marine observational data in decision making and scientific modelling and the need for



Ms Liliana Rodriguez Cortes, Delegate of the IOI to the UN

synergies and overcoming barriers in the use of new technologies, including through new legal frameworks. In this regard, discussions focused in turn on how the BBNJ Agreement would contribute to capacity building and maritime technology transfer; the main challenges facing such activities; the role of the public and private sectors, as well as international organisations, in funding such activities.

**IOI REPRESENTED AT THE FURTHER RESUMED 5TH SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE (IGC) ON AN INTERNATIONAL LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT 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 (ILBI BBNJ) 19 - 20 JUNE, UN HQ, NEW YORK**

*“The ship has arrived but difficult manoeuvres need to be made so it can be properly docked.”* A historical moment for the high seas – summarised from the report of Liliana Rodriguez Cortes, IOI delegate to the UN, New York<sup>1</sup>.

On Monday 19 June, at the UN Headquarters in New York, delegates, members of the IGC, and civil society gathered to adopt the high seas treaty under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). The Agreement was formally adopted by consensus, with some clarifying notes from the delegations from the Russian Federation, and from Venezuela. The text is available in all six languages of the United Nations and can be accessed from A/CONF.232/2023/4.<sup>2</sup>

António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, stressed that once delegations succeeded in drafting the agreement, it was now the time to call on all States to sign and ratify the agreement without delay. He emphasised the importance of building on the work of all delegations to secure a more healthy, resilient and productive ocean benefiting current and future generations.

Several delegations welcomed the successful adoption of the agreement, stressing that multilateralism is the best way to achieve the challenges of the threats of the oceans and that, adopting by consensus is a step forward for the conservation of nearly two thirds of the oceans. The adoption of this treaty was a fundamental landmark of conservation. They also expressed that a healthy ocean is critical to fight climate change. Therefore proper enforcement, capacity building and transfer of technology, access to knowledge and information will be key to achieve conservation. They highlighted that adequate financing and implementation of this agreement is crucial and emphasised that there was no time to waste to ratify this agreement and for it to enter into force.



Photo by IISD/ENB Pam Chasek

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ioinst.org/2023/06/28/further-resumed-fifth-session-of-the-international-legally-binding-instrument-under-unclos-19-and-20-june-2023/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N23/177/28/PDF/N2317728.pdf?OpenElement>

**IOI PARTICIPATION AT THE SPECIAL PANEL DISCUSSION UNDER THE THIRTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE TRADE PREFERENCES AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (GSTP), HARNESSING THE GSTP TO FORGE A DEVELOPMENT-LED SUSTAINABLE TRANSITION AMONG MEMBER COUNTRIES 19 SEPTEMBER, UN PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA REPORTED BY BEHZAD ALIPOUR TEHRANY, IOI REPRESENTATIVE**

The special panel discussion under the thirty-second session of the committee of participants of the General System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries (GSTP)<sup>3</sup> at the Palais des Nations was chaired by Awni Behnam, IOI Honorary President.

Dr Behnam in his introductory remarks recalled that: *“GSTP, as a unique partnership framework of South-South cooperation emerged from discussions of the Group of 77 and China within UNCTAD in 1988 to promote trade through preferential tariffs. Today, with rapid geopolitical, environmental and climatic changes, GSTP becomes more relevant. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as adopted in 2015 as well as 2030 Agenda, with SDG14 calling for use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development together with other ocean-based treaties, environmental/climatic protocols and agreements, bring about new dimensions and requirements to GSTP. The new circumstances highlight the importance of environmental goods and technologies that should be included in trade negotiations under GSTP. Thus, the present panel shall discuss how sectoral and technological tariff/non-tariff trade negotiations would respond to the greening of GSTP and how it could be harnessed to maximize the benefits of trade transactions amongst developing countries”.*



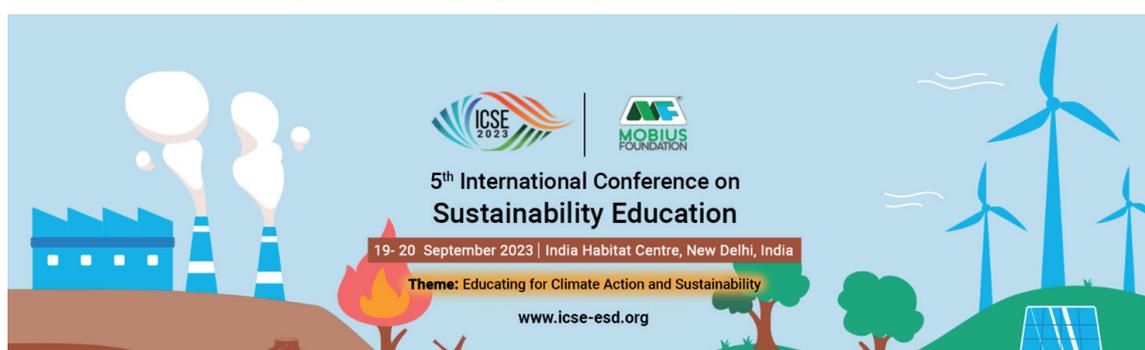
Panelists were Chantal Line Carpentier, Head, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, Division on International Trade and Commodities (DITC) UNCTAD; Robert Hamwey, Economic Affairs Officer, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, DITC (online from UN New York); Christophe Bellmann, Head, Policy Analysis and Strategy, Forum on Trade, Environment & the SDGs (TESS); and Carlos Correa, Executive Director, South Centre.

Following a call for comments from the floor, IOI representative, B Alipour Tehrany, recalled that that when GSTP was created, the environmental/climatic aspects of trade were almost non-existent; with their inclusion, trade financing as a key element in trade facilitation amongst developing countries is even more crucial. Considering the rising financial costs of, it is now necessary to find mechanisms to lower such costs so that developing countries are further encouraged to increase trade among them. On this note, Ms Miho Shirotori, Director DITC, UNCTAD also highlighted the importance of trade financing and promised to organise future follow up meetings in this respect through inviting proper actors to share their knowledge and experience in financing of transactions.

**5TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION (ICSE) 19-20 SEPTEMBER, NEW DELHI, INDIA**

In representation of the IOI, Antonella Vassallo, Managing Director, IOI HQ, was invited by the organisers of the 5th ICSE to deliver a keynote contribution to the launch of the Conference on Sustainability Education. The underlying thematic of her speech was the importance of increasing global Ocean literacy to achieve sustainability and effective climate action. This link is especially important when considering the critical Ocean-Climate interactions underpinning changing climate conditions and hence the safety and security of all stakeholders, and especially of vulnerable communities which so often bear the brunt of devastating climate change impacts. Bringing to the Conference's attention the critical importance of Ocean ecosystem services such as global oxygen production, food security and fisheries, the importance of the Blue economy, and

<sup>3</sup> <https://unctad.org/meeting/special-panel-discussion-harnessing-gstp-forge-development-led-sustainable-transition-among>



A Vassallo, Managing Director, IOI HQ, delivering the keynote speech

the role of the Ocean in modulating the planet's climate, education and literacy about the Ocean was firmly established as a critical topic to be included in sustainability education.

**SPECIAL THEMATIC SESSION 5TH ICSE; BUILDING A MULTI-COUNTRY, CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIP TO INCREASE THE RESILIENCE OF COASTAL POPULATIONS IN SOUTH ASIA  
19 SEPTEMBER, NEW DELHI, INDIA**

Additionally, and under the excellent organisation of IOI Ocean Academy (India) partners TERRE POLICY, a special thematic session focused specifically on coastal communities as typical beneficiaries of increased Ocean literacy in South Asia. The concept of the Session was to illustrate how the life and livelihood of coastal communities largely depends on the Ocean and its sustainable governance. Ocean Literacy is important for people to understand how they are impacted by, and conversely impact, the planet's environment. The overall objectives of the session were to highlight the need for Ocean literacy among local communities, address the need for cumulative

conservation plans, and help people develop a connection with the planet beyond the landmass.

A Vassallo presented the IOI Ocean Academy global programme as an effective example of Educating for Climate Action and Sustainability by making an effort to equitably provide Ocean knowledge to the public with no barriers of age, access, education, or language, making the global IOI Ocean Academy an effective model in achieving Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Sunil Murlidhar Shastri (Director, IOI Ocean Academy - India) further strengthened this concept and the achievements of the IOI Ocean Academy India organised in partnership with TERRE Policy NGO. Linking literacy and conservation, he quoted Senegalese Forestry Engineer Baba Dioum “*In the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. And we will understand only what we are taught*”. Explaining the expansion plans for India, Shastri announced the delivery of more programmes nationally, to reach different strata of society, and in more regional languages. Summing up the session he quoted “*It's not the end of the problem, but the solutions must begin somewhere*”.



L-R: L. Sonnenschein, A Vassallo, K Siripurapu, V Apte

Session recommendations and outcomes highlighted the need to make Ocean knowledge accessible, easy to understand and relatable for all, at all ages; to educate professionals and policy makers in their early to mid-career stage; to solve issues by applying a combination of Ocean knowledge and implementation; and to involve local communities in conservation and protection practices.

**IOI SPECIAL SEMINAR/IOI ALUMNI CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT Q4  
BREAKING THE STALEMATE: THE ROLE OF OCEAN LITERACY IN CATALYSING PROGRESS ON SDG 14 AND BEYOND  
7 DECEMBER, HYBRID, EUROPE HOUSE - EUROPEAN COMMISSION REPRESENTATION IN MALTA, VALLETTA**

As part of the annual IOI Training Programme on Regional Ocean Governance for the Mediterranean, Black, Baltic and Caspian Seas, organised by IOI Malta, the IOI, supported by and in collaboration with the European Commission Representation in Malta, organised this year's high-profile hybrid seminar with a focus on the pivotal role of Ocean Literacy in fostering the advancement of the SDGs, especially SDG 14 and the underlying theme of Ocean protection and conservation, and aimed to serve as a platform for insightful discourse and collaborative exploration of key overlapping concepts.

In the face of current challenges of Ocean degradation, increasingly unpredictable Ocean-climate modulation, and potential biodiversity collapse, distinguished experts examined how knowledge-based institutions such as the IOI can contribute to achieving effective solutions that meet the global SDGs and ambitions, while also considering the role that Ocean literate communities can play in accelerating this

transition. With a primary emphasis on the critical need for heightened public awareness and understanding of Ocean issues, the seminar aimed to emphasise the significant impact of Ocean Literacy on fostering responsible and effective Ocean Governance practices amongst all stakeholders.

The seminar was chaired by IOI Honorary President, Awni Behnam, Training Course Director. Antonella Vassallo, Managing Director of the IOI, moderated the seminar. Panellists Vladimir Ryabinin, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO and Assistant Director General of UNESCO; David Vivas Eugui, Chief of Section UNCTAD; Nilufer Oral, Director of the Centre for International Law at the National University of Singapore, member of the International Law Commission; Alan Deidun, Course Director IOI Malta Training Centre; all contributed sectoral insights to the development of the Seminar thematic.

This seminar was attended by the faculty and participants of the Malta Training Programme class of 2023 and IOI Alumni from around the world joined online. The participants of the training programme are early career ocean professionals from the coastal states of the regional seas. The class prepared a message emphasising the importance of concrete actions in integrating Ocean literacy into formal and informal education, promoting community involvement, and advocating for a unified "green" and "blue" approach to address interconnected challenges across all Sustainable Development Goals. The class emphasised that Ocean literacy should be transformative as well as informative. The message was presented on behalf of the Class of 2023 by Iona Muscat and Manar Shibly, and can be read in full here<sup>4</sup>.

L-R: Iona Muscat, Manar Shibly presenting the message on behalf of the class



L-R: A Deidun, A Vassallo, A Behnam, D Vivas Eugui

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ioinst.org/2023/12/18/loi-special-seminar-ioi-alumni-cpd-breaking-the-stalemate-the-role-of-ocean-literacy-in-catalysing-progress-on-sdg-14-and-beyond/>



L-R: Frédéric Degret, Valeria Ramundo Orlando, Charles Darr, Chantal Line Carpentier, Roel Hoenders, Cosmin Chivu, Didacus Jules, Jan Hoffmann; Photo credits UNCTAD

**IOI REPRESENTATION AT THE UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE (CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE UNFCCC), COP28, 30 NOVEMBER - 13 DECEMBER, DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

During COP28, the pivotal gathering where global leaders converged to address pressing environmental and climate challenges, Cosmin Chivu, Project Officer at the IOIHO, represented the IOI in a series of side events dealing with relevant Ocean thematics. His engagement underscored the commitment of the IOI to contribute meaningfully to the discourse on Ocean literacy, governance and conservation, underscoring the critical Climate - Ocean interaction.

**DECARBONISING OCEAN-BASED SECTORS THROUGH TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND TECHNOLOGY POLICIES CO-ORGANISED BY UNCTAD, FAO, IMO, UNWTO, OECS AND IOI, 9 DECEMBER, TRADE HOUSE PAVILION, DUBAI UAE**

The objective of this session was to identify main strategies for decarbonisation in place, identify relevant multilateral and regional policy, regulatory and data gaps and identify most promising technologies, sectoral, trade and investment incentives that could speed up a renewable energy transition, particularly in developing countries. In representation of the IOI, Mr Chivu presented the central ethos of the IOI, underscoring how education and Ocean literacy are a linchpin in the pursuit of effective decarbonisation strategies in Ocean-based sectors, and how this connection becomes particularly crucial when examining the essential interplay between the

Ocean, Trade and Climate, which forms the foundation for evolving climate conditions and, consequently, the well-being and safety of all stakeholders. This is especially pertinent for developing countries and vulnerable communities, who frequently endure the severe consequences of climate change.

**SPECIAL SESSION ON THE CONCEPT OF OCEAN LITERACY AND ITS IMPORTANCE; CO-ORGANISED BY TERRE AND IOI OCEAN ACADEMY, INDIA 9 DECEMBER, DUBAI, UAE**

Additionally, and under the excellent organisation of IOI Ocean Academy India partners TERRE Policy Centre, a special thematic session focused on Ocean literacy further highlighted how Ocean knowledge - especially in local communities – can contribute and facilitate sustainable living. C Chivu showcased the IOI Ocean Academy global programme as a compelling



L-R: C Chivu, V Apte; Photo credits Terre Policy Centre

illustration of educating for Ocean literacy, climate action and sustainability, effectively enhancing the Ocean literacy of people worldwide, breaking down barriers of age, access, education, and language, serving as a successful model in aligning with Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The IOI expressed gratitude for the dedication and efforts of its partners globally in implementing this ambitious ocean literacy project, with special acknowledgment for the partner team involved in the India programme. The session was ably moderated by Vinita Apte, Founder Director, TERRE Policy Centre and Director, IOI Ocean Academy, India.

**INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF THE UN REGULAR  
PROCESS ON STRENGTHENING THE OCEAN SCIENCE-  
POLICY INTERFACE**  
**ORGANISED BY UN DOALOS - IOC UNESCO;**  
**12-13 DECEMBER; IOC-UNESCO HEADQUARTERS, PARIS**

Endorsed by the UNGA, the two-day international symposium on strengthening the Ocean science-policy interface was organised under the programme of work for the third cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment.

In view of the synergies between the Symposium thematics and the mission and programmes of the IOI in developing Ocean governance capacity globally, the IOI represented by Awni Behnam, Honorary President, and Antonella Vassallo, Managing Director, was invited to attend

this meeting. Special emphases of the panel on Ocean literacy were placed on inclusivity, co-design, and indigenous knowledge, especially across the wide spectrum of stakeholders contributing to science-based policy making in different regions globally. The audience was made up of experts, policy and decision-makers, trainers and educators from national governments, intergovernmental institutions, private sector entities, and civil society united by their reliance on scientific advice to develop ocean-related policies.

As well as benefitting from the panel contributions and audience interactions, the Symposium provided an excellent networking opportunity for the IOI delegates for whom it was a privilege and a pleasure to meet again with many accomplished alumni of the IOI Training Programmes as well as with partners in the global network of the IOI, who are able to further grow and share in different regions globally, the benefit of a sound investment in science-based policy training.

**IOI OFFICIAL VISITS IN 2023**

**PRESIDENT OF MALTA**  
**1 DECEMBER, SAN ANTON PALACE, MALTA**

During the courtesy visit of IOI Honorary President, A Behnam and Managing Director A Vassallo to HE Dr George Vella, President of Malta, exchanges touched on the interdependencies of humankind, Ocean and Climate and the impacts of Climate change and their impact of life on the planet.

Photo credits to IOC  
UNESCO/UN DOALOS





L-R: A Vassallo, A Behnam, HE G Vella; Photo credits to the Office of the President

President Vella thanked Dr Behnam for his work along the years with the IOI, whose mission is to ensure the sustainability of the oceans as the source of life, and to uphold and expand the principle of the common heritage of mankind as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The IOI is grateful for the support of Malta to its mission and for hosting the IOI HQ locally, over the decades since establishment in 1972.

#### **MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AND TRADE**

**4 DECEMBER, SPINOLA PALACE, MALTA**

The Honorary President and the Managing Director of the IOI paid a courtesy visit to Minister Borg, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta. The importance of developing capacity in Ocean governance was discussed especially in the light of Malta's recent presidency of the UN Security Council, where, amongst other topics, the issues of climate impacts, sea level rise and small island states were given prominence. The IOI is hosted in Malta under the aegis of the Ministry, in recognition of the important



L-R: A Vassallo, Minister Ian Borg, A Behnam; Photo Credits, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

contribution of Arvid Pardo, Malta's first Ambassador to the UN, and IOI founder Elisabeth Mann Borgese to the process that would eventually culminate in the ratification and entry into force of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

#### **THE DIRECTOR, MEDITERRANEAN ACADEMY OF DIPLOMATIC STUDIES, 3 NOVEMBER, MEDAC OFFICES, MALTA**

A Behnam and A Vassallo met Prof Director Stephen Calleja and Senior Associate Academic Lourdes Pullicino. Among the topics discussed was the importance of Ocean literacy as another tool in multilateral diplomacy and policy and decision making; and the potential of future collaborations between the two institutes. During this meeting, Prof Behnam was invited to deliver a lecture to MEDAC students on multilateral diplomacy and ocean governance on the 5th December.



L-R: L Pullicino, S Calleja, A Behnam, A Vassallo; Photo credits, MEDAC

#### **UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP) AND IOI SIGN A 4-YEAR MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU), 13 FEBRUARY, IOI HQ**

The agreement provides a framework of cooperation to achieve shared goals and objectives of UNEP and IOI, especially regarding the work of the Global Environment Monitoring System for the Ocean and Coasts (GEMS Ocean) Programme which aims to provide relevant open and accessible data, analysis and information, guiding actions to protect and sustainably use marine and coastal resources. The IOI is a knowledge asset holder partner of GEMS Ocean, and jointly developed activities will focus on establishing Ocean literacy initiatives, and capacity building activities with particular attention to developing economies such as Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

## 6

## INSTITUTE MANAGEMENT 2023

**Antonella Vassallo**  
**Managing Director, IOI**  
**Peter Leder**  
**Treasurer, IOI**

### Report of the IOI Managing Director Antonella Vassallo

2023 was another year full of activity for the IOI with the main thrust of programmes and activities boosted by the momentum of Ocean-focussed interest and energy arising from an increasingly global recognition of the importance of the Ocean and its links to Climate modulation

While the most critical residual impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was reflected in the rising costs of travel and accommodation and visa expenses right across the global network - leaving a principally financial residual impact on the IOI programmes by year end - all planned capacity development and other scheduled programmes were delivered in line with the recommendations of the IOI Governing Board programme endorsements and funding allocations.

Through the actions of IOI HQ and the IOI network efforts, IOI capacity development outreach was achieved over 2023 via global training offerings and the IOI Ocean Academies:

- **8 Training Events (In-Person, Online, Hybrid) training some 250 early/mid-career ocean practitioners from 59 countries<sup>1</sup>;**
- **43 IOI Ocean Academy programmes offered globally in 12 languages by 13 IOI Ocean Academy nodes with over 1,400 persons completing the modules;**
- **4 IOI Alumni Continuous Professional Development (CPD) webinars estimated to reach more than 450 IOI Alumni and Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs)**  
*(Excluding additional outreach through other webinars, seminars and ad hoc online workshops)*

As in the preceding two years, in-person attendance to international or regional meetings gradually increased while still allowing for some opportunities to attend other smaller workshops and meetings online. On a positive note, being easily able to join events and training courses online to deliver messages and lectures ensured that the IOI Secretariat and Board members were able to contribute easily to events organised globally.

### International Activities and Partnerships

IOI Contributes to achieve SDG14 through Voluntary Commitments. Placing its experience, commitment and expertise at the service of the oceans community to achieve SDG14, the IOI is the lead partner in commitments 45943 and 18076 and a partner also in 18037:

#OceanAction45943: IOI Ocean Academy - *Ocean Knowledge For All*

#OceanAction41327: *Ocean Governance training & capacity development by the International Ocean Institute,*

#OceanAction41315: *A Massive Open Online Course: One Planet One Ocean: From Science to Solutions by Cluster of Excellence*

Actions to enhance the IOI's connection to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), the 'Ocean Decade'. In order to forge stronger links with the Ocean Decade, the IOI continued to build on its partnership with the Ocean Decade ECOPs Programme where there is significant overlap with the IOI's Alumni programme. Over 2023, much work focussed on preparations to attend the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference - *Delivering the science we need for the ocean we want* in Barcelona; specifically the preparation and participation in conference side events on Ocean Literacy, Capacity Development and Science Communication, Inclusivity in Ocean participation, and Intergenerational Dialogue and Networking.

<sup>1</sup> Anguilla, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, China, Colombia, DR Congo, Egypt, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Guyana, India, Indonesia, IR Iran, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Laos, Liberia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Palestine, Philippines, Portugal, Russia, Senegal, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, UK, USA

### International Events and Special Programmes

- The IOI Alumni Continuous Professional Development Quarterly Series: Q1 *Sailing Into The Blue Economy: Trends And Foresight*, 23 March; Q2 *Beyond Boundaries: How Is The New 'High Seas' Treaty A Game Changer?*, 13 July; Q3 *Venturing Into The Abyss: Deep Seabed Mining*; 28 September; and Q4 *Breaking the Stalemate: The Role of Ocean Literacy in Catalysing Progress on SDG 14 and Beyond*; 7 December. Organised by IOI HQ, moderated by C Chivu.
- UN Trade Forum 2023 - Towards the SDG Summit 2023: High-impact trade initiatives for accelerating the SDGs; 8th - 9th May, Geneva (A Behnam presented in Session 2, A Vassallo, P Leder and C Chivu also participated)
- PRE-INC 2 ASIA ONLINE FORUM, May 2023 and the PEMSEA Blue Carbon Forum in June 2023 – IOI represented by Jai Acharya (IOI Singapore Focal Point, Director IOI Ocean Academy)
- 23rd UN ICP *New Maritime Technologies: Challenges and Opportunities*, 5-9 June; L Rodriguez Cortes, IOI Delegate to the United Nations represented IOI;
- IGC on an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction; Further resumed fifth session New York, 19 and 20 June; L Rodriguez Cortes, IOI Delegate to the United Nations represented IOI;
- The IOI Focal Point in Chile (Dr Nicolás Ojeda), and the Universidad Autónoma de Chile co-organised the Second Seminar titled, *Oceans, Sustainability and Environment*, Hybrid and on Campus Providencia, Universidad Autonoma de Chile, 18 August; IOI Managing Director delivered keynote speech;
- Thirty-Second Session of the Trade Preferences among Developing Countries (GSTP) and Special Panel Discussion under the, *Harnessing the GSTP to forge a development-led sustainable transition among member countries*; Palais des Nations, Geneva; 19 September; Panel Chair A Behnam; IOI representative B Alipour Tehrani;
- 5th International Conference on Sustainability Education, 19-20 September, New Delhi, India; A Vassallo delivered keynote contribution to the launch of the Conference on Sustainability Education, focusing on the importance of Ocean Literacy education to achieve Sustainability Education; Special Thematic Session: *Building a multi-country, civil society partnership to increase the resilience of coastal populations in South Asia*, 19th September, India; in partnership with IOI Ocean Academy India partners Terre Policy, thematic session on coastal communities as typical beneficiaries of increased Ocean literacy in South Asia. A Vassallo presented the IOI Ocean Academy global programme;
- IOI Special Seminar: *Breaking the Stalemate: The Role of Ocean Literacy in Catalysing Progress on SDG 14 and Beyond*; 7th December, in Malta during the IOI Training Programme on Regional Ocean Governance for the Mediterranean, Black, Baltic and Caspian Seas, Malta;
- International Symposium of the United Nations Regular Process on strengthening the ocean science-policy interface; Paris, France; 12-13 December; Hosted by the UN DOALOS in collaboration with the IOC/UNESCO; IOI representatives A Behnam and A Vassallo
- COP28 UAE (Dubai); IOI representative Cosmin Chivu
- Additionally, throughout 2023, provision of guest lectures or other substantive support to the different IOI Ocean Academy events world wide, as invited; A Behnam, A Vassallo, C Chivu.

### **IOI Training Centres and IOI Centres events:**

#### ***8 Events (In-Person, Online, Hybrid) - training nearly 250 early/mid-career ocean practitioners - from 59 countries***

- IOI Canada: Course on Ocean Governance: SDG14 and the UN Summit of the Future (Online – Synchronous and Asynchronous); 11 Apr - 1 Jun
- IOI South Africa: 10th Training Programme in Ocean Governance for Africa (In Person); 4 - 29 Sep
- IOI Egypt: Training Workshop on “The Egyptian Seas: Governance, Law, and Management for a Sustainable Future”; (In-Person); 11 -14 Sep
- IOI China: Western Pacific Region Training Course on Ocean Governance (Hybrid); 11 - 22 Sep
- Turkmenistan: Training Programme on the Sustainable Development and Governance of the Caspian Sea (In-person); 11 - 22 Sep
- IOI Egypt: Training Workshop on Red Sea Sustainable Development: Governance, Resources, impacts and Management, Hurghada (In-Person); 15 - 18 Oct
- IOI Germany: Monsoon School: Generating impact in complex coastal and marine contexts: co-design and development of transdisciplinary research projects in a Global North/South perspective (Online); 1 - 10 Nov
- IOI Malta: 18th IOI Training Programme on Regional Ocean Governance for the Mediterranean, Black, Baltic & Caspian Seas (In Person); 7 Nov - 7 Dec

### **The IOI Ocean Academy**

Coordinated by the IOI HQ and offered with local partnerships globally as a 50th anniversary programme of the IOI, this year saw the expansion of the IOI Ocean Academy to new communities, in more languages and with more partnerships with IOI Alumni from different training programmes. 2023 saw the successful delivery of 43 IOI Ocean Academy Modules from 13 IOI Ocean Academy nodes, delivered in Arabic, Dhivehi, English, Hindi, Marathi, Portuguese, Sinhala, Spanish, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, and Urdu. Some 1,300 persons successfully completed the modules. More information on this programme is given in the related chapter.

### **IOI Alumni Programme**

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Series: Online Update Courses in Ocean Governance for IOI Alumni. As part of IOI’s commitment to enhancing the professional development of its alumni, IOI HQ spearheads the overall global programme tasked with implementing the online programmes targeting IOI Alumni. To this end, web-pages on

the IOI site not only host the IOI Alumni network portal but also offer a gateway to inform of CPD opportunities and collect registrations and expressions of interest for such events. The IOI works in partnership to offer the events to IOI alumni, taking advantage of networks of expertise in the topic areas. In 2023; the four quarterly events were organised by IOI HQ, and the panels moderated by C Chivu, himself an Alumnus of the IOI. Topics were selected to reflect the latest developments in ocean thematics and covered the Blue Economy, The New 'High Seas' Treaty, Deep Seabed Mining, and the role of Ocean Literacy in catalysing progress on SDG 14 and beyond; more details are available in the chapter of this report dedicated to the IOI Alumni Programme.

### **Implementation of IOI bursaries and scholarships**

IOI Elisabeth Mann Borgese Bursary, 2023, and presentation of the results of the 2022 Bursary: The 2023 EMB Bursary was awarded to Jake Bonello to carry out an investigation on the anti-fouling performance of a novel PMMA/TiO<sub>2</sub> nanocomposite coating and forms part of a Master of Science with the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Malta. The study aimed to determine if such a

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ioinst.org/loi-50/>

coating can further improve the lifetime of maritime vessels in an environmentally compatible manner. The 2022 EMB Bursary awarded to Mr Ede Kossári-Tarnik to carry out a preliminary quantitative and qualitative investigation of microplastics sampled from Maltese nearshore waters came to a successful conclusion.

### **Outreach, information dissemination, and publicity; IOI HQ Website and Connectivity**

IOI HQ serves as document repository for the IOI and additionally, the Secretariat takes responsibility for much of the general outreach, dissemination, and publicity required by the IOI and its network.

The IOInforma and digital outreach: The bi-monthly IOInforma, the IOI's electronic bulletin was published and disseminated with six issues in 2023, offered through a series of topic-tagged links, allowing for continuous update of news blogs to the IOI news site. Social media outreach continues with Facebook and LinkedIn profiles regularly updated with information, links of interest, and invitations to relevant webinars, training and other meetings.

IOI Website: The intention of having the IOI website as an easy-to-consult, one-stop-site on all matters on the IOI remains of paramount importance. The website contains links to Training, Education and Capacity Development, the IOI Ocean Academy modules, the Global IOI Network and International Relations, information on the IOI Board of Governors, IOI Periodic Publications, Newsletters and Reports, Latest News and the Latest IOInforma.

### **IOI Headquarters Premises**

The staff offices at IOI HQ were completely refurbished over summer to positively enhance the work environment, rationalise storage and retention of important IOI documents to conserve those of archival importance, and streamlining daily work practices, further moving to a paperless environment and increasing IOI cloud storage and backup facilities, teamed with appropriate web-security. Regular management TEAMS meetings continued to support a governance structure highly responsive to the rapid evolution of situations globally.

### **Report of the Treasurer**

#### **Peter Leder**

The 2023 financial year was once again, a very productive one. Despite generally increased costs for travel, visas and accommodation, for instance, most projects and events were implemented as planned. The strategy of further expanding the portfolio of online formats in addition to the indispensable face-to-face training programmes and thus further increasing the outreach of the IOI's offerings with available financial resources, has proven to be successful.

Over the past years, the IOI HQ and the entire IOI network have continuously fostered and expanded its capacities for handling IT technology and relevant software and applications. The IOI was able to benefit from this also in the financial year 2023; in addition to the face-to-face training programmes, over 40 IOI Ocean Academy online courses, 4 online events for IOI alumni and other online events such as webinars, seminars and ad hoc workshops were successfully completed within the planned budget. By using social media and other online tools, the IOI was able to increase its outreach and interaction with young ocean professionals as well as interested laypersons, in a cost efficient way.

Extra expenses were incurred by the renovation and re-equipment of office rooms in the IOI HQ in Malta. New office furniture and technology were purchased, thus adapting the equipment and appearance of the IOI HQ to today's standards, as a complement to the modernisation work on the premises of the University of Malta, which hosts the IOI HQ with office space free of charge.

The Secretariat at IOI HQ in Malta and our partners in the global IOI network have maintained the high functionality of the IOI and its programmes through their commitment and diligence and continue to give important impetus for the future development of the IOI and its programmes.

**Incomes/Expenses 2023**

In the financial year 2023, IOI retained its practice of a flexible and pragmatic implementation of the financial plans, allowing to adapt to changing situations and to take advantage of opportunities where and when possible and feasible within limitations set by the budget plan.

The total annual income amounted to €515,936 and the Swiss based Ocean Science and Research Foundation (OSRF) remained the main donor. Incomes from other sources exceeded expectations as additional funds were received for delivering another training programme in Turkmenistan for the Caspian Sea region on short notice.

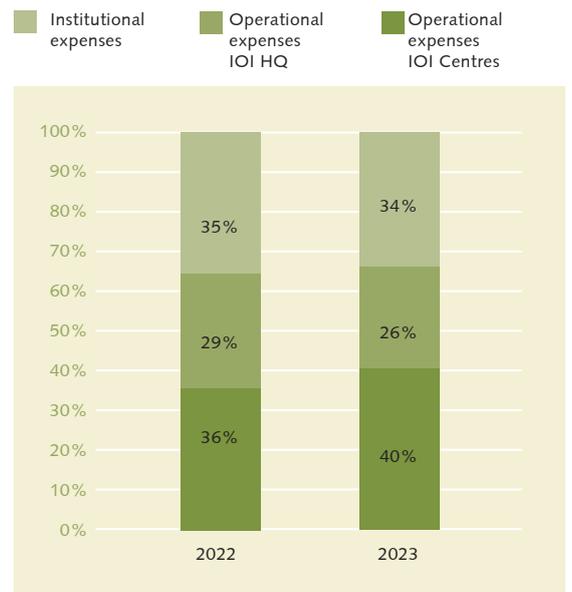
The IOI kept its course of maintaining efficiency and effectiveness of the administration. Most of the initiatives were implemented as planned. Only the projected training programme in Thailand was not implemented, but postponed to the following year. At the end of the financial year 2023, total expenditures amounted to about €506,079.

As incomes exceeded expenditures, the financial year 2023 was concluded with a surplus of about € 9,857. This surplus increased the cash reserves accumulated on IOI accounts over the past years.

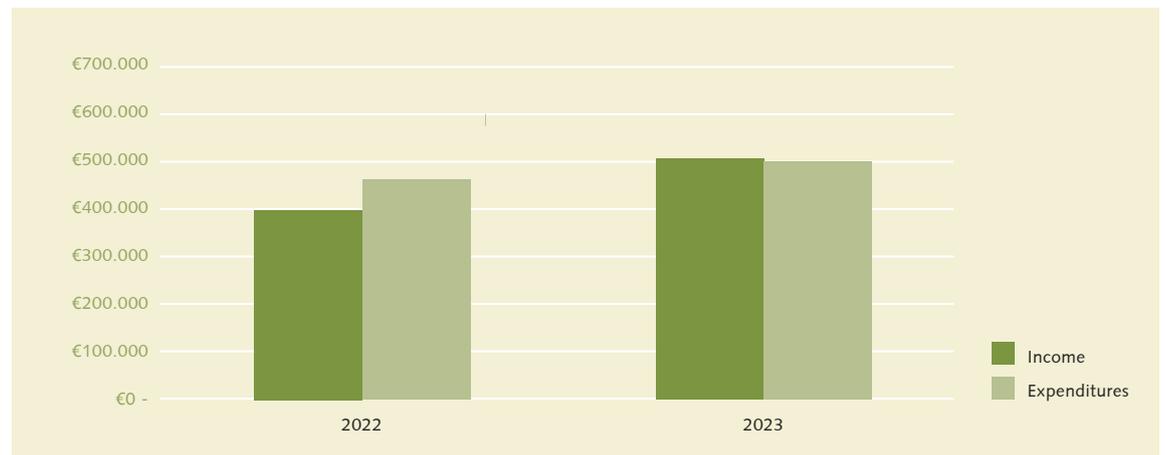
With regards to the structure of the IOI's

expenditures, projects implemented by IOI HQ amounted to €129,997 making up 26% of the institute's total expenditures. Despite increased institutional expenditures of €172,467, mainly driven by extra costs for refurbishment of the IOI premises in Malta and a general increase of prices related to institutional travel connected to international partnership projects, this share on total spending decreased to 34% of total spending. Funds transferred to and spent by IOI Centres and the network worldwide increased to €203,615, making up 40% of IOI's total expenditures in 2023.

**Composition of Total Expenditures 2023**



**Overview Income/ expenditures 2022 and 2023**



## Fundraising

The IOI as a not-for-profit NGO and strongly depends on voluntary, in-kind contributions from individuals and institutions being committed to and engaged in the IOI and its network. As in the past years, those contributions provided the basis for all IOI deliverables, but needed to be complemented by financial contributions required to cover in-cash expenses related to IOI projects and administration.

The principal donor of the IOI remains the OSRF, contributing more than 87% to IOI's total income in 2023. This generous contribution was again crucial for the implementation of the planned work programme as well as for the effective management and administration of the institute and its network of Centres.

As in past years, the national organisations hosting the different IOI Centres globally provided matching funds or related support to cover direct costs related to specific capacity development and ocean literacy projects implemented by IOI Centres. Such contributions were not directly reflected in IOI's accounts, but were instrumental for the delivery of the projects and provide immense value in the outreach of the IOI's global activities.

## Financial Outlook

The financial surplus in 2023 led to an increase of funds on IOI accounts accumulated over the past years. IOI will continue in its efforts to secure additionally required financial support from its main funder OSRF and to open up new financial sources to maintain and expand its work programmes and deliverables. With the IOI's Education and Training Fund (ETF), the IOI has implemented an instrument designed to facilitate fundraising for IOI and its portfolio of training and capacity development programmes – including its global IOI Ocean Academy Ocean Literacy Programme. The Institute continues in its efforts to identify and establish new financial partnerships in order to accelerate the rollout of the successfully launched IOI Ocean Academy and to sustain this much needed initiative in the next years to come.

The approach of attracting additional funds through tailored projects - such as special topical seminars and workshops - prepared and delivered by IOI in co-operation with (co-) funding partners will also be continued in future.

*The article continues from page 15*

universally doing their duty to replace an effectively damaged regime.

The author and P Faust had pointed out that state control at its inception was an instrument used by individual governments to ensure compliance with selective obligations placed on foreign vessels; a major shortcoming of that approach is the possibility to avoid control through shifting operations patterns with the lack of co-ordination among Flag States - hence the broader picture in ocean governance is poisoned by lacking moral clarity.

The latest UNCTAD Annual Maritime Review (2024)<sup>9</sup> - quoting the IMO - describes the current damning evolution of a fleet of between 300 to 500 ships primarily, with unclear ownership and a severe lack of insurance as a dark fleet or shadow fleet to circumvent - amongst others - sanctions and high insurance costs, and operating under fraudulent ship registration. Such tankers in the dark fleet engage in ship-to-ship transfers as they disguise cargoes, destinations, or origins, to avoid oversight or regulation, by Flag or coastal States, and risking the great damage of resulting oil and other pollution.

UNCTAD has pointed out that there is currently no single specific international instrument or treaty that contains a standardised and universally accepted definition of fraudulent ship registration. Instead, the concept is addressed through a combination of multiple and International Maritime Conventions focused on this disparate subject matter and other legal instruments, domestic laws, and industry best practices. There is no currently binding international framework to regulate ship registration or encourage transparency; ship registration and ownership records are essential for verifying ship legitimacy and detecting fraudulent activities.

This phenomenon is addressed through a combination of multiple International Maritime Conventions focused on priority subject matters and other legal

instruments, domestic laws, industry best practices etc. Temporarily, there is currently no binding international framework to predict and regulate the ship registration process itself as well as developed jurisdiction and jurisprudence in this area. The UNCTAD Annual Maritime Review goes a long way to explain the standardised and universally accepted definition of fraudulent ship registration but there are variations in national conventions and agreements - including those adopted by the UN - which should be addressed further, and which indirectly address the issue of fraudulent ship registration.

*A personal reflection in relation to the future of ocean governance and moral clarity*

The ocean is humanities' final destination and humans must take into account the extent to which they sacrifice the sustainability of the ocean. The deliberate actions and decisions of humankind can indeed achieve a desirable balance, allowing us to live with the ocean and from the ocean sustainably, and for that we need to act with moral clarity. I will focus on few of the challenges showing how we humans have addressed aspects of multilateral cooperation in ocean governance and its sustainability.

Humans make choices, and we depend on moral clarity in making existential choices so that we may act with confidence. Decisions of legal, economic, or social implications, adopted, or derelicted by lack of implementation, in several cases intentional, or otherwise lacking in moral clarity, are often not related to an error of judgment but on true intention and commitment.

#### **What comes to mind**

More than twenty-five years ago, IOI founder Elisabeth Mann Borgese raised the fundamental issue of protecting the ocean's biodiversity in the high seas. This has now formed the foundational principle of the **Agreement under the United Nations Convention**

<sup>9</sup> UNCTAD Review of Maritime Transport (series) <https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/periodicals/22253459>

**on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction** (BBNJ Agreement) adopted on 19 June 2023, and now under governments' preview to ratify following long protracted negotiations.

The BBNJ Agreement is a great achievement, however in terms of clarity – and to much widespread regret - the scope of application for the protection of ocean's biodiversity covers only the column of water and not the seabed. A clear example of how consensus was finally reached, but bordering on the deceptive, if one had to examine the limits of multilateral diplomacy and the moral clarity in excluding protections to the resources and biodiversity of the seabed.

Similarly we celebrated the convention on World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies; but when seeking clarity on the scope of

application, the outstanding critical issue of the excessive capacity in distant fisheries does not meet the measures required to reduce excessive over capacity through subsidies, and does not effectively reduce or address the critical need to protect the ocean's biodiversity.

In addressing ocean sustainability in the nexus of climate change and threats to biodiversity, the lack of implementation of SDG14 (the least funded of the SDGs) and the existential threat of sea level rise for millions of humans, a final observation is that the lack of moral clarity in ocean governance is currently overwhelming and a distraction from realities.

In light of all the pressing challenges and the absence of consensus on critical matters, which threaten our very existence on this planet ocean, it might be high time to consider resetting the UNCLOS concept of “acquired rights” with the active practice of moral clarity.

<sup>1</sup> Michael Sakbani, An Essay on Moral Clarity, in michael.sakbani.blogspot.com, 17 March, 2024

## APPENDICES

The statutory term of Anita Coady has come to an end and thus her role as member of the board. The IOI acknowledges with gratitude and appreciation her sterling work to the IOI throughout her tenure. The IOI continues to benefit immensely from the combined expertise and guidance of its members.

### **IOI Governing Board**

Honorary President	Awni Behnam
Patron of IOI	Nikolaus Gelpke
President	Mahindokht Faghfour
Treasurer	Peter Leder
Governors	Simone Borg (Representative of the Government of Malta to the IOI Governing Board), Lamiaa Ismail Mohamedien (Chair of the Network of Centres), Wendy Watson-Wright, Shi Suixiang, Werner Ekau.

### **Ex-Officio Member of the Governing Board**

Antonella Vassallo, IOI HQ Managing Director

## IOI TRAINING CENTRES, CENTRES & FOCAL POINTS

### IOI Centres

The IOI Centres engage in a wide range of activities ranging from work at the community level to very specialised scientific research as part of large international programmes. The centres are embedded in the work programmes of their host institutes which are mostly universities and independent research institutes.

The roles of the IOI Training Centres are:

- To prepare, organise, and conduct training programmes in Regional and Global Ocean Governance. The curricula applied will be developed in co-operation between a dedicated IOI Task Force, the IOI HQ and respective IOI Training Centres;
- Support IOI in its core activities and in delivering IOI “products”;
- All IOI training courses will be funded/co-funded by IOI and supervised by IOI HQ;
- IOI Training Centres will closely co-operate with a dedicated IOI Centre in the geographical vicinity.

The roles of the IOI Centres are:

- To collect information and provide organisational and operational support for IOI core activities and products such as training events and publications, and in international relations in the region;
- IOI Centres shall be associated with an IOI Training Centre in the region and IOI shall support activities funded or co-funded and supervised by IOI HQ in co-operation with the related IOI Training Centre.

This is the link to the Centres page on the IOI website  
<https://www.ioinst.org/about-1/secretariat-and-network/ioi-centres/>

### IOI Training Centres

**Canada:** Michael J A BUTLER, Director, IOI Canada, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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**IOI Focal Points**

IOI has established 20 Focal Points particularly in countries where IOI Centres do not exist. The Focal Points have proven association with IOI, held appropriate qualification and experience and are engaged in activities relevant to the mission of IOI. They are of good standing, associated with a reputed educational, scientific or other ocean-related activity.

Focal points (IOI Network Nodes) provide intellectual contributions to IOI on a voluntary basis and are not expected to receive any financial support from IOI as to their nomination or work as focal points. They receive when appropriate, intellectual and moral support from IOI in promoting their own objectives, project and career prospects.

Their function/roles are to:

- Promote IOI and identify opportunities for activities related to the IOI core activities and mission;
- Propose applicants for IOI training courses;
- Disseminate IOI Publications and IOI Newsletter;
- Identify sources for funding in the respective region;
- They are the IOI contact point in the respective country;
- Activities of IOI Focal Points/Network Nodes will be bonded together by the IOI Centres;
- Activities of IOI Focal Points/Network Nodes will principally not be funded (co-funded by IOI).

The designations of Focal Points are made preferably from the list of IOI Alumni. When deemed desirable to establish a focal point(s) in a country or region where there is an active IOI Centre, the designation of such a focal point(s) will be made in agreement with the Director of such a Centre.

This is the link to Focal Points page on the IOI website:  
<https://www.ioinst.org/about-1/secretariat-and-network/ioi-focal-points/>

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Managing Director

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