

FOURTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF UNESCO CATEGORY 2 REGIONAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CENTRE ON OCEANOGRAPHY FOR WEST ASIA (RCOWA)

(12:00- 14:00 Tehran Time, 12 January 2021, Online)

SUMMARY REPORT

1. OPENING AND WELCOME

The Chair of the RCOWA Governing Board, Prof. Behrooz Abtahi, opened the 4th Board meeting which was held virtually at 12:00 Tehran Time (GMT +4:30) on 12 January 2021. He started with a welcome address expressing thanks to all Members of the Board joint the meeting. He mentioned the challenges the COVID-19 Pandemic raised for the whole world which was the reason of organizing the meeting in an online modality. He mentioned that RCOWA tried its best in this difficult situation to continue its activities and change these challenges to opportunities.

His address was followed by the welcome of the IOC Executive Secretary, Dr. Vladimir Ryabinin. The IOC Executive Secretary appreciated the activities of RCOWA and informed the Board of the correspondences between IR of Iran and IOC for renewal of RCOWA Agreement of establishment. He also noted that the duration of the RCOWA agreement will end in December 2021 and this year would be important for RCOWA since the formal process for renewal of the Centre should be fulfilled. He continued his speeches about the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development which will start this year in 2021. He mentioned the program of "The West Asia Blue Waters" that was proposed by RCOWA and appreciated RCOWA for it.

2. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

The Chair described arrangements for the online session, explain that the session's time was set to 12:00 pm Tehran Time considering the time differences of the members countries, so that all members of the Governing Board can participate in the meeting.



The Chair introduced the Documents: RCOWA 4/1, Provisional Agenda for comments and adoption, and RCOWA 4/2, List of Documents which were approved by the Board. He then focused on the objectives of the meeting.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES AND COMPOSITION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD

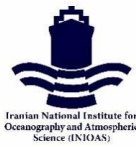
The Chair reminded participants of the procedures on the establishment of Category 2 Centres under the auspices of UNESCO, approved by UNESCO General Conference at its 37th session in October 2013 (37C/18 Part XVII0, and of Article 7 of the Agreement between UNESCO and Ministry of Science, Research and Technology of I.R. of Iran on the Establishment of RCOWA, containing information on composition, responsibilities, and functions of the Centre Governing Board.

The Chair invited Mr Justin Ahanhanzo, the representative of UNESCO to inform the Board Members of any updates of the criteria and strategy of UNESCO especially the ones affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The representative of UNESCO appreciated the activities of RCOWA during the last year and informed the board of the new strategy of UNESCO for establishing / renewal of Category 2 Centres (2019). He also informed the Board that the reports are online and asked the RCOWA Director to upload it in the new system designed by UNESCO for the reports of the Category 2 Centres.

4. RCOWA ACTIVITIES REPORT IN 2019 AND 2020 (DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC)

The Chair referred to the implementation of the work plan approved by the 3rd session of the RCOWA Governing Board and introduced a brief report on activities of the Centre for the period 2019 and 2020 (DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC). The Chair reported the following RCOWA activities:

- Workshop on Effects of Climate Change on the Indian Ocean Marine Environment, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 10-11 November 2019, in cooperation with IORA-RCSTT (***Frozen due to COVID -19 Pandemic***)
- Cooperation in organizing "Ponto-Caspian Stratigraphy and Geochronology (POCAS)" Conference, 12-18 October 2019 in Tehran, I.R. of Iran
- Third Session of the Governing Board of Regional Education and Research Center on Oceanography for West Asia (RCOWA) under the auspices of UNESCO, 27 June 2019
- Online meeting with Dr. Vladimir Ryabinin, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and Assistant Director- General of UNESCO on RCOWA related activities, 6 May 2020
- 2nd International Conference on Oceanography for West Asia (RCOWA-2020), 16-17



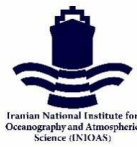
September 2020 in an online modality due to COVID-19 Pandemic.

- Four online workshop webinars preceded the RCOWA 2nd conference (RCOWA-2020) from 12th to 15th September 2020 on the following titles:
 - Trends of Coral Reefs of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, 10:00 am-13:00 Tehran time (05:30 am- 08:30 am GMT), Saturday, 12 September 2020
 - Microplastics Pollution in Marine Environment, 10:00 am-13:00 Tehran time (05:30 am- 08:30 am GMT), Sunday, 13 September 2020
 - Marine Biogeochemical Processes in the Perspective of Climate Change, 10:00 am-13:00 Tehran time (05:30 am- 08:30 am GMT), Monday, 14 September 2020
 - Tsunami Early Warning System, 10:00 am-13:00 Tehran time (05:30 am- 08:30 am GMT), Tuesday, 15 September 2020
- Pursuing the process of renewal of RCOWA Agreement on its establishment.
- Cooperation in organizing a one day workshop on "Development and applications of bioactive substances derived from marine organisms", 19 February 2020, Tehran, I.R. of Iran.
- Online Workshop-Webinar on "Age-depth modeling of marine and lacustrine sediments using 'clam' and 'Bchron' packages in R statistical software", 4 January 2021

The Chair also reported briefly on the activities of RCOWA in 2019:

- Cooperation in organizing "Ocean Teacher Global Academy Training Course: Remote Sensing of Coral Reefs", 20 - 23 October 2019, Tehran I.R. of Iran
- Holding the Workshop on Seismic Data Acquisition, 11 October 2019, Tehran, IR. Iran
- Holding "3rd Session of the Governing Board of UNESCO Category 2 Regional Education Sand Research Centre on Oceanography for West Asia (RCOWA)", 27 June 2019, UNESCO/IOC Headquarters, Paris, France
- Holding "Ocean Acidification workshop: Developing regional capacity for ocean observations in support of SDG target 14.3", 8 – 9 June 2019, Tehran, Iran
- Cooperation in organizing "12th Session of the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (ICG/IOTWMS-XII)", 9-12 March 2019 and "Expert Consultation on Scientific Tsunami Hazard Assessment of the Makran Subduction Zone", 8 March 2019, Kish Island, Islamic Republic of Iran

The Board appreciated the activities of the Centre.



5. EXTENSION OF AGREEMENT OF RCOWA ESTABLISHMENT

The Chair informed the Board Members of the ending of the duration of the Agreement of RCOWA establishment as it was signed in 2015 between the Minister of Science, Research and Technology of IR. of Iran and the UNESCO Director General for a period of 6 years.

The IOC Executive Secretary informed the Board of the correspondences in this regards between Iran and IOC and the fact that the duration of the RCOWA agreement will end in December 2021. He noted that the formal processes should be fulfilled according to the new rules and strategy for UNESCO Category 2 Centres.

6. WORKPLAN FOR 2021-2022 AND BUDGET MATTERS

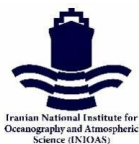
The Chair introduced Document RCOWA 4/6 containing a draft of the work plan and budget for 2021-2022. He paid special attention to the centre's contribution to the key IOC programme activities in marine science and research, especially the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

The Chair reminded the Board of IOC-UNESCO Call for Actions for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) and informs the Board that the RCOWA activities will be in line with the Decade initiatives. He requested the Board to comment on the RCOWA proposal as an Ocean Decade programme entitled "The West Asia Blue Waters".

The program covered a wide range of different oceanographic disciplines that are organized in 5 projects with the aim of environmental preservation, education, data and information sharing and associating coastal dwellers in ocean and coastal observations

1. An accessible ocean and marine science and technology in West Asia, establishing marine docs system, west Asian ocean and marine experts system and ocean biogeographical system for the exchange of information among scientists and end users
2. Free remotely sensed database for scholars and end users to decipher ocean and marine health in west Asia
3. Marine news, transfer of general ocean and marine science to schools, local people and people who goes to sea for work and leisure to share their findings (pollution, new species and abnormal events)
4. Clean coast, clean sea, healthy life
5. Floating school, involving students, teachers and decision makers in research on the scientific vessels to see how the ocean system works

The Board endorsed the Program and approved the work plan.



7. DATES AND PLACE OF THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE RCOWA GOVERNING BOARD

The dates and place of the next session was not determined since it depends on the pandemic condition. The consensus for the next meeting will be through future correspondences.

8. ADOPTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the session, the chair announced that the report of the session will be sent to all Board members for comments and adoption. The Board sent their recommendations through email and adopted the summary report.

9. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 14:00 Tehran time, 12 January 2021.

* For Working and Information Documents of the session please see:

<http://www.inio.ac.ir/Default.aspx?tabid=2807>