



# ***Towards IPOS:*** *The Gateway between ocean Knowledge and Policy action* *Meeting Report*



On March 19 2024, as part of the Monaco Ocean Week, the event “Towards IPOS: The Gateway ocean Knowledge and Policy action” was held with the support of the Oceanographic Institute, Prince Albert I of Monaco Foundation, the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and the Monaco Scientific Centre. The workshop was set to assess and exchange over key design features for an improved ocean science-policy interface, actively integrating insights and perspectives from high-level stakeholders of the global ocean knowledge-decision interface.

The slides are available here:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DJ6DE-0hswYqRlpOgQpbe3mf0NSCwaYn/view?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DJ6DE-0hswYqRlpOgQpbe3mf0NSCwaYn/view?usp=share_link)

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## Introduction: Setting the stage Towards IPOS

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### - *Introductory addresses from the workshop's co-hosts:*

**Cyril Gomez** (*Oceanographic Institute, Prince Albert I of Monaco Foundation*) welcomed the participants at the Monaco Oceanographic Museum, a very symbolic venue. He recalled the urgency to add action to knowledge and increase the role of science for policymakers. He highlighted the necessity for policymakers to possess not only the determination, but also access to the most pertinent information to guide their decision. This vast knowledge is currently spread across various sources, often failing to meet the urgent demands of decision makers, or adequately encompassing diverse expertise and community perspectives. ***IPOS aims to bridge this gap by serving as a central hub, merging knowledge and decision making to foster a sustainable ocean.*** This objective corresponds with the values and mission of the Oceanographic Institute. Cyril Gomez insisted on the **necessary commitment from the private sector to protect the ocean.** Monaco will be hosting a special event in the context of UNOC 2025 dedicated to this issue: The Blue Economy and Finance Forum. Initiatives such as IPOS, the MBI and the upcoming BEFF, will embark us on a **collective journey towards a more sustainable future for our blue planet.**

**Olivier Wenden** (*Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation*) remembered that the **first ever IPOS dedicated workshop was held here in Monaco**, three years ago. IPOS has strong supporters at the Prince Albert II of Monaco foundation, but also other institutions of Monaco mainly because IPOS is about "Convergence and Dialogue". In a very fragmented world, convergence needs to be enhanced, leveraged anytime possible. The FPAII believes in science, however, science is nothing if it's not put into motion. **"Science without action is talking and therefore, we need more structures like IPOS"**. Olivier Wenden explained that **we need more transversal horizontal discussions between existing organizations, and in that sense, IPOS is crucial.** According to him, IPOS will be a key player years to come to achieve and meet all the targets that we have very ambitiously set with the 30 x 30, with a BBNJ agreement and with plastic treatment. It will be crucial to embark all stakeholders, of course the scientists, but also the private sector, the decision-makers and the civil society.

**Denis Allemand** (*Monaco Scientific Centre*) also reminded that the **IPOS concept grew up here in Monaco** during editions 2021 and 2022 of the Monaco Ocean Week. He insisted on the fact that the notion of ocean governance is particularly important in Monaco where oceanography was born with Prince Albert 1<sup>st</sup>. Denis Allemand shared an example to showcase **wonderful things that can be achieved by linking ocean science and policy makers**, regarding the population of bluefin tuna which had decreased by 80% by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Thanks to the action of policy makers, guided by good science, the population was restored. He then cited two books: *The Inexhaustible Sea* (1954) in which the author wrote **"We are already beginning to understand that what ocean has to offer extends beyond the limit of our imagination."** 50 years later, Philippe Cury wrote the following sentences: **"Resources thought to be indestructible have been pushed to the brink of collapse by overfishing. Man is turning the world ocean into a liquid desert."** (*Une mer sans poissons*). Denis Allemand concluded his speech by expressing his hope that IPOS will make a difference to ensure the future of our ocean.

### - *A testimony from three formidable ocean leaders:*

**Sylvia Earle** (*Mission Blue*) explained why science is so important to guide decisions. For decades, **the ocean was expected to be "too big to fail"**, we thought that we could take whatever we wanted in whatever quantities. However, she insisted, the world has changed, the ocean has changed. **Science has been documenting change, but it has not yet become a matter of policy of expectations, of**

**habits, or even of laws.** The current perception of the ocean does not match with this changing reality. Our laws are based on a scale that is simply not possible to fulfill. As scientists, it is crucial to share this new reality. She explained the **necessity for the science community to convey to policymakers the magnitude of what we do not know.** Nowadays, we celebrate a level of understanding that is unprecedented. Things that children of today understand about climate are things no one could know in 1950, but we are still locked into a certain habit of thinking, with rigid columns of walls that govern our behavior. **Maintaining the integrity of places like the deep sea, where the knowledge is just beginning to be understood, is an important role for IPOS, she said.**

**Françoise Gaill** and **Tanya Brodie Rudolph** (*Towards IPOS*) then reminded that the ocean is getting hotter every day, more polluted, less diverse and more inescapable on a global scale. To respond to this crisis, all decision makers need both the social and political will, and the best knowledge available. The Towards IPOS team is convinced that **IPOS is the solution to this challenge.** IPOS aims to set a new course, **where knowledge meets action,** where diverse expertise converse for a common goal, and where **every voice from scientists to local and indigenous knowledge are together.** *“We are not just envisioning a sustainable ocean. We want to create the pathway to achieve it”.* Since the initial discussion about IPOS three years ago, the Towards IPOS team have already come a long way, organizing international events, securing fundings and bringing together dozens of organizations in support of this initiative. However many questions remain open, this is why the Towards IPOS team wanted to organize this workshop, to assess and exchange over key design features for an improved ocean science-policy interface, actively integrating insights and perspectives from high-level stakeholders of the global ocean knowledge-decision interface.

#### - *An update Towards IPOS - by Adrien Vincent*

Following these introductory interventions, the Towards IPOS team shared with all participants an update on the most recent news on the path Towards IPOS, to respond to frequently asked questions about IPOS: What does IPOS look like? Who is it for? Who is involved? How is it going to work?, etc. Our objective is to **collectively set up the “IPOS blueprint” to answer all those questions by the end of 2024/early 2025.** In order to co-construct these answers, we are using different types of inputs:

- 1. Benchmarks and analysis** (analyzing what has been done, what worked and what didn't): thanks to the significant support and funding of the EU Commission which will help us respond to most of these questions (*through studies like the Seascope Assessment and best practices reports*).
- 2. Pilot Projects** (learning by doing, mistaking and adapting): which are based on real requests coming from political leaders and/or other involved stakeholders, who commissioned IPOS to help them answer burning questions in an accessible, action-oriented, inclusive and transdisciplinary way. We are currently working on four pilot projects: Deep Sea Mining, Ocean Indicator(s), Offshore Wind and Small-Scale Fisheries. Please, don't hesitate to contact us if you want to know more or to get involved in these projects.
- 3. Events and Workshops** (testing our assumptions and collecting key insights and perspectives): have been in the DNA of the IPOS since the early days, in Monaco, at UNOC 2022, the IOC-UNESCO Assembly, the European Parliament, COP28 in Dubai, etc. and more to come.
- 4. Consultation** (make sure we develop IPOS in a collaborative and intuitive way): thanks to a group of trusted advisors and several working groups including the Coalition of Scientific Institutions in support of IPOS, which is a crucial support to guarantee a privileged access to the knowledge we need to inform policy makers. And the “Towards IPOS” ecosystem is growing every day.
- 5. Policy outreach** (ensuring IPOS will answer the real need of policy-makers): by engaging with countries and political leaders and policymakers, so we can stress test our assumptions and can really collect their priority needs (in terms of products, in of content, of length, etc.).

**IPOS is still a work in progress**, and this is the reason why we prefer to talk about **“Towards IPOS”** rather than IPOS. And you all have a central role to play in helping us progress Towards IPOS. We nevertheless have already collected some emerging insights and design features Towards IPOS. For instance, lots of people have talked about IPOS for the past year as the “IPCC of the ocean”, although very catchy, especially with the general public, this sentence does not necessarily correspond to what our consultations so far have expressed in terms of what is needed and what could be the added-value of IPOS. We now prefer to evolve towards a slightly longer guideline, presenting IPOS as the **new gateway that (re)connects ocean knowledge and decision for sustainable ocean**.

In addition to that, some emerging values have been collectively identified in the last months, values that will guide the co-design of IPOS:

- **Demand driven**: we want to answer burning questions directly formulated by decision makers of other ocean stakeholders.
- **Action oriented**: we want to be at the service of action and implementation, equipping stakeholders with tools and recommendations to implement sustainable solutions.
- **Transdisciplinary**: we want to build on natural sciences, but also on social and economic sciences and all sources of knowledge to properly inform decision makers.
- **Inclusive**: we want to involve all sources of knowledge, beyond academic sources, including indigenous and local knowledge, R&D, etc.

After this introduction session, Adrien Vincent invited the first panel on scene to deep dive into key questions for the future of IPOS.

## ② Panel discussions to improve ocean science-policy interface and test IPOS key features.

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### **Panel #1: Reshaping the ocean science policy interface:**

The panel, moderated by **Loreley Picourt** (Ocean & Climate Platform), focused on exploring this “demand-driven” criteria to reshape the science-policy interface. Loreley Picourt insisted on this new defining element: the desire to create a **“two-way” dialogue between science and decision**. This is already on the way with leaders, heads of state such as President Macron requesting guidance from IPOS to synthesize the state of knowledge regarding the impacts of deep-sea mining. In this context, Loreley Picourt then asked two main questions: **who could make a request to IPOS** and **how do we actually evaluate that request** and how would IPOS governance be able to deal with requests?

- Director General **Charlina Vitcheva** (DG MARE, EU Commission) was invited to share her perception on the way IPOS could benefit decision makers. DG Vitcheva recalled that the EU Commission has recommended concrete actions for the International Ocean Governance for many years now. **IPOS was mentioned as one of the deliverables in 2022 EU IOG communication**. Moreover, this review of the international ocean governance communication was preceded by multiple consultation processes, (not only within the EU but also with important global players). **One of DG MARE’s guiding principles is to act upon the best available science**. The EU Commission commissioned a feasibility study for IPOS, which established its necessity: **“ocean knowledge-decision interface is a very fragmented space**, and ocean comes within the gap between processes and organizations” and **this is why we need to work towards IPOS**. DG Vitcheva came back on the question about “who should shape the questions”. According to her, it **has to be the ones who are shaping the policy decisions**. However, scientists will always be free to modulate, to give scenarios and it will need to be an **interactive process between scientists and policymakers**, building trust between the two communities she said (and

other stakeholders including NGOs, the industry, etc.). She then insisted on the necessity to fix key targets with milestones, leveraging the window of opportunity that is offered by UNOC 2025.

- Then, **Peter Haugan** (Ocean Panel) was asked about the possible way to accelerate, amplify the crucial work of initiatives such as the IPBES, the WOA and others, and the way IPOS could complement these initiatives. He first shared that when he originally heard about IPOS, he was a bit skeptical, but that he has seen the initiative evolve and that he is now **convinced that IPOS could make a difference**. He then shared some useful lessons on the process of engaging with heads of States, through his experience with the Ocean Panel (on how to harvest from the expert community towards policy action). One of the key priorities is to **produce opportunities for action**, for all stakeholders to act towards ocean sustainability thanks to concrete recommendations. Of course, there isn't a single solution that will solve all problems, but, Peter Haugan said, the idea could be to provide something like a **menu**, to offer advice to stakeholders based on the possibilities which are out there. In our **segmented world**, these possibilities can come from a **diverse range of existing bodies** and mechanisms and IPOS could help decision makers to access this menu. We need to have access to this knowledge to guide decision making.
- Finally, **Minna Epps** (IUCN) was asked about the different groups (NGOs, IOs, Governments, etc.) which could request guidance from IPOS. According to her, IPOS will have a "broker role" to make transdisciplinary knowledge accessible for all. There is a **need to close the gap between ocean science and policy** and IPOS could endorse this role. IPOS could take that "complicated science" and translate it for policymakers. **It's designed that way**, to bridge that gap. Mina Epps then insisted on the **consultation process, as an absolute key to integrate diverse stakeholders**, and if IPOS wants to be demand driven, this is where the demand starts. Representativity and inclusiveness are necessary, and IPOS needs to work on these issues from now, from its co-design. This means that IPOS needs to communicate with diverse stakeholders, from all over the world. Minna Epps mentioned the Seascape Assessment and the fact that **communication was identified as a key priority**, and it is crucial. Then she insisted on the need for data and knowledge to be **FAIR** (findable, accessible. Interoperable and reusable) and on the necessity to meet the key values identified earlier, particularly to take into consideration the indigenous knowledge. Regarding the demand, it is important that IPOS does not forget the **Global South perspective**. To conclude, Minna Epps mentioned that she sees **IPOS as a broker, a platform to integrate all stakeholders**, but consultation and governance structure are key for success.

## **Panel #2: Reconciling effectiveness & legitimacy:**

This second panel, moderated by **Patricia Ricard** (Paul Ricard Oceanographic Institute) focused on time and legitimacy, to gather insights regarding the production timing of IPOS deliverables. Patricia Ricard reminded us that time is the core issue. It takes a lifetime to successfully restore ecosystems and it only takes seconds to destroy. **Different stakeholders have their own mindset, with their own agenda and their own timing**. For private actors, time is often envisioned in fiscal years, policy makers focus on the duration of their mandate and building trust and legitimacy requires time. **IPOS needs to find a way to bridge these scales and these time differences**.

- **Laura Pereira** (University of Witwatersrand) was asked about the kind of tools, and practices that could contribute to reconciling these agendas. She started by explaining that **the way science is done will not be changed**, "that science will need to continue to do what science does". Therefore, according to Laura Pereira, the challenge Towards IPOS will be less about understanding and evaluating the state of the ocean right now but more about the decision-making perspective: "how do we actually act". **The challenge will not be just about "what is the problem" but how do we actually address it**. Laura Pereira believes that the **mission identified for IPOS to create a sort of centralized system to facilitate access to diverse**

**knowledge, not just looking at academic science but also integrating different knowledge perspectives, marginalized voices, humanities, art, scenarios, etc. is key.** IPOS will be a way to bring this diverse knowledge in front of decision makers and have them confronted by the fact that the information is out there. One of the main tasks she identifies for IPOS will therefore be to **work through the mechanisms that will aggregate, structure and facilitate access to these diverse knowledge systems, to be able to actually make a difference for decision makers** (as well as for business and civil society). She concluded by suggesting that IPOS's mission could be not about changing the way science is done but rather on the way **we're translating or helping decision makers across the world to actually access this various knowledge.**

- **Sophie Benbow** (Fauna & Flora International) complemented the previous intervention by arguing that, whatever the tools that IPOS will develop, **they will really need to be practical**, to be something that governments and decision makers can pick up and understand easily and rapidly, that they can identify the key recommendations regarding burning questions. This means that the deliverables will need to be in the right form of language (avoid jargons, acronyms, etc.). The question of language was also raised, as a true challenge for **accessibility**: is English the right language for IPOS deliverables to be produced in? Would it be feasible to produce content in the language of each requester? Then, Sophie Benbow continued by insisting on a very important point for her: **don't let perfect be the enemy of the good.** Scientists often want to work with very high confidence levels, while as decision-makers, you often have to work with the best data that are available in the short term. Therefore, IPOS will have to **bridge this gap between what the scientists and academics feel comfortable with and what the decision makers, the NGOs, the communities on the ground, actually need in order to make the decisions and change the policies** so that socially, economically and environmentally, we can see some benefits from the outputs and products that are coming from ecosystem.
- Transitioning to another perspective, inspired by the importance of media to raise visibility for urgent issues such as ocean sustainability, **Charles Goddard** (The Economist Impact) agreed on the fact that the **timeline of scientists, influenced by the desire for rigor seems fundamentally incompatible with the agenda of policy makers who need to have actionable information a very quickly.** Based on different engagements of the Economist group, including the World Ocean Summit and the Global Plastic Summit, he shared his reflection on the **lack of a formal science-treaty interface leading many countries to participate in international negotiations with levels of information and analysis that were simply not sufficient to make their decision.** He insisted on the fact that the lack of formal process to provide knowledge-based analysis to negotiators was particularly impacting Global South negotiators. **This is where the IPOS demand-driven process could be of particular interest, by connecting knowledge with the demand on specific issues** (related to treaties). This supposes a strong engagement across all stakeholders, including scientists, NGOs, the civil society, business, etc. This engagement **into a formal process is essential to help anticipate what is needed in the policy space.** IPOS could play a decisive role in defining this process to anticipate questions and needs of policy makers.
- Finally, focusing on the role and expectancies of the private sector, **Erik Giercksky** (UN Global Compact) shared his vision of what the dream tools would be to reconcile science and action. He explained that **companies are asking for direction**, that they are understanding that we face multiple crises and that the climate crisis is the most urgent one. This crisis has a direct impact on their activities, for private companies, any investment or operational decision is about risk. One thing that has been asked by companies is **science-based targets, and the UNGC has been working on this.** Science is indeed very important for companies to explain their decisions and to support other sources of knowledge. This is particularly true for the ocean industries, as most of the ports, shipping and energy sectors are run by the private sector. And **IPOS has a clear role to**

**play in that sense, to provide a continuous base of best available science and knowledge.** He quoted the example of a company which issued a blue bond last year, clearly expressing the need for some initial indicators on what is nature positive in the ocean. There is an important need on this issue, to provide quick guidance to speed up good policies and mechanisms, based on science-based targets that companies can follow. He concluded by saying that ocean solutions have to deliver on sustainability but we need **comprehensive global standards that we can apply and that the scientists have to contribute continuously.**

### **Panel #3: Maximizing synergies with existing initiatives.**

This last panel, moderated by **Ashok Adiceam** (French government), focused on the future governance, hosting structure and legal organization, including its “international of intergovernmental design”. Ashok Adiceam insisted on the governments’ responsibility at the science-policy interface and the **necessity to ensure that by the time of UNOC 2025, IPOS will be supported by many countries, following the current leadership of EU, France and Costa-Rica.** The three main questions he wanted to ask were following three main needs towards IPOS: the question of **benchmark** of good practices and how it could influence IPOS, the question of the “**menu**” and the priority topics for IPOS and finally the challenge of **communication** and how to address the larger audience (especially through the work that has been launched on the “Blue Indicator”).

- First, **Henrik Enevoldsen** (IOC-UNESCO) shared some insights and advice from the IOC perspective. Henrik Enevoldsen started by reminding that the interface between science and policy is high on the IOC agenda and that it is one of the main drivers in the Un Decade for Ocean science. Then, he insisted on the fact that the challenges of effectiveness, legitimacy and acceptance will always depend on the “owners wish”, in the sense that **any organization, either intergovernmental or non-governmental, will never be more efficient or less efficient than its members or owners wish to.** “There is no automatic power in being one or the other” he said. According to him, for IPOS, it really “**depends on the contract that will be established with those who demand, the ‘social contract’ that IPOS will be able to have with states**”. He added that the acceptance of science-based management is not given and that it often depends on cultural context. According to Henrik Enevoldsen, the **ability to provide advice or input through a science-policy process that will have impact really depends on how well it's prepared and how well it's set, and who will officially support it.**
- Then, **David Obura** (IPBES) shared some insights from his experience with IPBES and the way the science-policy interface works within this Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. IPBES has almost 150 governments as member states; these member states meet every year as part of the plenary sessions. This system, although it offers true legitimacy, also **sets very strong operational constraints on what IPBES do and how it can work,** because operational decisions have to be approved in the plenary to move forward. Moreover, many issues often take some time just to get to the point of actually bringing something to the plenary, let alone what it takes after that decision to move forward with what is accepted or not, he added. **While IPBES science “happens under a policy umbrella”** (for whom), **David Obura insisted on the importance to “have the firewalls between the governance process and the science process.”** It is crucial to ensure that, when **science is requested, it can move ahead to do what it does, as opposed to being under the influence of the policy.** Of course, dialogue may happen with policy makers, especially when it comes to the summary for policymakers, but it is important to ensure the independence of science and that scientists can contribute freely. **“We can be policy relevant but not prescribed”** he insisted. David Obura also explained that, unlike the IPCC, the IPBES doesn't have the cycle of regular reports and rather uses extensive processes to identify what are the critical issues, which makes IPBES a demand driven process for topics. However, he explained that **from the time a topic is accepted to the**

moment the report comes out, it takes a minimum of five to six years, which is a very long time. He finally insisted on the necessity for **IPOS to work on the complementarity with the World Ocean Assessment**, to make sure that IPOS will not be vulnerable to political expedients, to **favor the terms connection rather than gateway** and not to use the word “alternative” source of knowledge since it could pre-suppose that scientific knowledge is the best source.

- **Hans-Otto Poertner** (Alfred Wegener Institute) continued by saying that a lot of what was shared by David Obura about IPBES was true for IPCC as well. He emphasized that **interactions with governments, with policy, could be very challenging and risky** for an organization like IPOS to start as an intergovernmental organization. He would rather be in favor of starting as an international not to let policymakers interfere too soon. Hans-Otto Poertner explained that according to him, IPOS could grow strong by **building complementary activities that would fuel information into the assessment processes through the scientific literature**, not necessarily by doing original research, but by compiling information that is otherwise missing. He added that, from the latest assessment, gaps have been identified especially in the regional context. He argued in favor of an IPOS which could **have strong regional hubs that bring in sustainability information from the different regions, from the different knowledge systems, and produce that information in a way that it can be considered by policymakers**. He also noticed that the ocean community is currently leading in trying to develop an overarching understanding of sustainability. We need sustainability ability in all policies, concerning land and the ocean, with mutual learning from each other. IPOS could for example be a **role model to influence the creation of an Intergovernmental Panel on Sustainability that brings the ocean and land together**. He concluded by insisting on the fact that there is **only limited time to act**, and that a good way to convince policymakers and big companies could be to bring forward the information of what we are going to lose if we are not acting now.
- Finally, **Genevieve Pons** (Jacques Delors Institute) shared her perspective, based on her rich experience with intergovernmental and international organizations. **She agreed on the difficulty, the time and effort needed to achieve common decisions when 150 countries or more sit around the table**, while the path towards IPOS needs to be very quick in order to be ready by June 2025, for UNOC. “When we have to be quick, she said, I think Hans-Otto’s position is the right one, we will not have time to build an intergovernmental organization”. She shared another experience from the EU “Starfish” mission (Restore our ocean and water). This mission is guided by the 5 “branches” of the Starfish: **science and governance** (two pillars), **and fighting pollution, active protection and a sustainable blue economy**. We agreed during the Forum International de la Mer in Bizerte, Tunisia, that this idea of the Starfish is taken out at the international level. Then, transdisciplinary expert groups were created to create recommendations which were then endorsed by the European Commission. She thinks that it could be very effective **to reproduce this system at the international level, with an international group of experts**.

**Tanya Brodie Rudolph** (Towards IPOS) then concluded the workshop by thanking all participants for their authentic, genuine and insightful contributions on key challenges towards the implementation of IPOS. The Towards IPOS team hopes that it will be able to pursue these discussions with all the experts present today as well as many others. *“We’re all ocean people. We know that the ocean is the source of life. During our lives, the decisions that will be made will matter more than probably at any other time in history. That’s a significant responsibility, the decisions that we make need to be led by science. The IPOS is emerging with this objective, and we need your help and participation”*.

**“It always seems impossible until it’s done” (N. Mandela)**  
So let’s do it together!