



**INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION**  
(of UNESCO)

**INFORMATION DOCUMENT**

**GOOS REGIONAL POLICY 2013**

Following the reform of GOOS structures by IOC XXVI Res. 83 (2011) this document updates the GOOS Regional Policy adopted in 2006, and provides a vision and framework for:

- the role of the GOOS Regional Alliances (GRAs), their qualifications, and their approval by IOC governing bodies,
- the responsibilities of GRAs in GOOS,
- the terms of reference of the GOOS Regional Council (GRC),
- clearly defining the role of the GRC to provide a unified voice for global communication and exchange of information between GRAs and the GOOS Steering Committee, and
- the relationship of the GRC with other IOC bodies.



## GOOS REGIONAL POLICY 2013

The Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) Regional Alliances (GRAs) identify, enable, and develop sustained GOOS ocean monitoring and services to meet regional and national priorities, aligning the global goals of GOOS with the need for services and products satisfying local requirements. As an integral part of GOOS, the GRAs are tasked with adhering to the GOOS Principles (1998) of shared ocean observations, data policy, best practices and capacity development in their implementation of regional and national ocean observation systems.

Historically, the GOOS Regional Alliances were introduced as a way to integrate national needs into a regional system and to deliver the benefits of GOOS strategy, structure, and programmes at a regional and national level. The first GRAs were formed in 1994 and 1996 and were guided by the GOOS Regional Policy (IOC-WMO-UNEP/I-GOOS-VI/3 Annex VII, 2006)<sup>1</sup>. This Regional Policy grew outdated after the reform of GOOS structures by the IOC Assembly in 2011, and this document is intended to replace the 2006 GOOS Regional Policy<sup>1</sup>. The GRAs have evolved to meet a wide range of societal challenges related to both coastal and open ocean observations, and so this policy has also evolved to reflect GRAs today.

### 1. BACKGROUND

1.1. The Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) is a permanent global collaborative system for observations, modelling and analysis of marine and ocean variables to support operational ocean services worldwide. GOOS provides accurate descriptions of the present state of the oceans, including living resources; continuous forecasts of the future conditions of the sea for as far ahead as possible, and the basis for climate change assessments and scenarios. GOOS is sponsored by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and International Council for Science (ICSU), and is the ocean component of Global Earth Observing System of Systems (GEOSS). GOOS is implemented by Member States through their government agencies, navies and oceanographic research institutions working together in a range of global thematic panels and observing networks and regional alliances.

1.2. GOOS Regional Alliances (GRAs) are comprised of national and institutional efforts that come together at the regional scale to facilitate the advancement of GOOS, to aid the integration and coordination of sustained interdisciplinary ocean observations and services for scientific and societal benefit, and to provide mutual support for capacity development. The membership of GRAs varies between regions. In general they are made up of governmental and/or non-governmental organizations, and therefore have limitations in the controls they can impose and the communities they reach. The overall GOOS objectives will be most effectively met through GRAs adopting GOOS guidelines and principles (GOOS Principles<sup>4</sup>, Framework for Ocean Observing<sup>7</sup>) as well as supporting GOOS implementation plans (GOOS-1845, GOOS-1936), within the constraints of available resources and national law.

1.3. Within the framework of GOOS, the GRAs are encouraged to continue developing joint projects and alliances to meet the needs of their constituents.

1.4. GRAs contribute to and benefit from the global observing system coordinated through GOOS global panels. GRAs facilitate sustained ocean observing, data management, modelling and services that meet regional and national priorities. GRAs are not distinctly open ocean or coastally focused but respond to the needs of national and regional efforts they represent; however the nature of the GRAs is well-suited to accelerate the integration and expansion of observations and modelling from global to local scales. GRAs are capable of identifying observing system gaps and proposed strategies to fill those gaps.

1.5. GRAs are both informally and formally brought together. Informally in that they are often voluntary organizations that see benefit in coordinating across national boundaries. Formally, a minimum structure and adherence to GOOS Principles is outlined below for recognition as part of GOOS.

1.6. GRAs are and need to be driven by regional initiative. Considering the strong links that GRAs have with their national and regional stakeholders and regional heterogeneity, they can choose to embrace various organizational structures and forms. The relationship of the GRAs to GOOS must be flexible to take this into account.

## 2. THE ROLE OF GOOS REGIONAL ALLIANCES

2.1. GRAs should strive to:

- Uphold GOOS Principles (1998, GOOS-41)<sup>4</sup> and implement a Framework for Ocean Observing (IOC/INF-1284 rev.)<sup>7</sup>.
- Serve as a **platform for coordination and facilitation** of:
  - the identification of regional sustained observing **requirements** for societal benefit areas,
  - transboundary **observing networks**, and their link to global GOOS/Joint Technical Commission for Oceanography and Marine Meteorology (JCOMM) networks including those identified in GOOS implementation plans by the GOOS Steering Committee and its disciplinary panels,
  - real-time and archived **data streams**, from in situ and relevant satellite observations, and their link to regional and global networks (e.g. International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange IODE, Carbon Dioxide Information and Analysis Center CDIAC, the World Data Centers system, and the WMO Information System WIS),
  - the timely, free, and **unrestricted access** to data collected by the GRAs, as stated in Resolution XXII-6, IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy<sup>8</sup>, To achieve this, GRAs may develop and adopt their own international legal instruments in support of their regional data exchange policies, as appropriate.
  - information products and model output for the region that provide societal benefit, and their links to global and other international efforts (e.g. GODAE OceanView, JCOMM), and
  - **assessment** of regional **readiness and capacity** in each of the areas above, and the overall **performance** of the system in providing users with fit-for-purpose data and information products.
- Promote/manage programmes on **developing regional capacity**:
  - Through **sharing** of experience, success stories, best practices,
  - **Institutional capacity**: seeking sources of national and international financing, as part of end to end systems, developing win-win partnerships for technology transfer, working with existing GOOS, JCOMM, and IODE capacity-building programmes, and
  - **Human capacity**: scholarships, exchanges, technical skills workshops, programmes/workshops to develop leadership and grant-writing skills.
- **Encourage the development** of Regional and National Ocean Observing Systems by:

- **Promoting the visibility and value** and recognition of the services provided by ocean observing systems with governmental agencies and private companies and encourage integration at national, regional and global levels,
- **Advancing the scientific and technological developments** upon which services depend,
- Identifying gaps at regional and national level for ocean observations; and
- Encouraging and coordinating **participation** in international initiatives **considered of interest** by the GRA.

### 3. QUALIFICATIONS

3.1. A GRA is formed via recommendation or by agreement by IOC Regional Subsidiary Bodies, and/or between participating countries, and/or national organizations, and/or international bodies (Regional monitoring networks, Regional Fishery Bodies, Regional Seas Conventions, etc.). Membership should be chosen to best serve the data and information needs of organizations that use, depend on, or are responsible for the management of the marine environment and its resources in the region.

3.2. To be recognized as a part of GOOS, a GRA must show that it conforms to GOOS Principles and guidelines.

3.3. To the extent that the geographic range and activities of a GRA overlap with those of other GRAs, the GRAs involved shall establish formal and informal cooperation to ensure effective use of resources to the benefit of all.

### 4. APPROVAL

4.1. Proposals to be a recognized as a GRA must be approved by the Assembly or the Executive Council of the IOC. Recommendation for recognition will be received through the GOOS Steering Committee (GOOS SC) or from IOC Regional Subsidiary Bodies in consultation with the GOOS SC.

4.2. Proposals to be recognized as a GRA must include the following:

- Evidence that a management structure is in place that can deliver an integrated and sustained system by linking, enhancing and supplementing existing infrastructure and expertise in the region.
- Provision of an acceptable plan that has been endorsed by stakeholders (data providers and users) from the region and describes the procedures by which the observing system will be established, developed, and sustained. This must include procedures for quality assurance, conformance to internationally accepted standards and protocols for measurements, data management, and communications.

### 5. GRA RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. To ensure that there is a single forum where regional GOOS activities can be considered in their entirety, all recognized GRAs are expected to:

- designate one or more representatives to the GOOS Regional Council,
- participate in the bi-annual GOOS Regional Forum,
- provide at a minimum an annual report of activities,
- be responsive to GOOS Implementation Plans,

- participate in activities agreed to by the GOOS Regional Council, and
- maintain current management information with the GOOS Project Office for public display.

5.2. Reports to the GOOS SC shall include among other things (a) analyses of the extent to which GOOS Principles have been implemented, (b) status of regional ocean observing and forecasting systems and plans for development and (c) information about the provision of data (data quality and data availability) and the development of downstream services in forms and at rates required by user groups.

5.3. A decision to remove recognition of a GRA can only be made by the IOC Assembly or Executive Council, informed by advice from the GOOS Regional Council or the GOOS Steering Committee, or by recommendation from an IOC Regional Subsidiary Body in consultation with the GOOS SC.

## **6. GOOS REGIONAL COUNCIL (GRC)**

6.1. The GOOS Regional Council consists of the lead from each of the GRAs or their designated representative. The GOOS Regional Council was created by the GRAs at the 2nd GOOS Regional Forum (Nadi, Fiji, 2004) and is not a subsidiary body of IOC. Its creation was noted by I-GOOS-VIII (2007). This section is provided for the information of the Assembly.

6.2. The GOOS Regional Council provides a unified voice for global coordination and facilitates the exchange of information between GRAs and communication to and from the GOOS SC and GOOS Project Office (GPO).

6.3. The GOOS Regional Council responsibilities are to:

- capture information about each of the GRAs,
- discuss potential pilot projects for consideration regionally and by the GPO for funding through IOC or other mechanisms,
- communicate information about GOOS to the GRAs,
- assist with communications on the importance of ocean observing, and
- provide expertise across the GRAs and share best practices.

6.4. The GOOS Regional Council will be funded by the GRAs. The GPO may seek extrabudgetary funding to support representation of GRAs from developing countries at meetings of the GRC.

6.5. The GOOS Regional Council chair roles are to:

- collect information about the activities of the GRAs in coordination with the GPO,
- provide information about the activities of GOOS to the GRA's in coordination with the GPO,
- organize the GOOS Regional Forum bi-annually, and
- actively represent the GRAs to the GOOS SC and participate in the GOOS SC work plan as agreed to by the GRC.

GOOS Regional Council leadership will be a member of the GOOS Regional Council. The chair will be elected by simple majority vote by the GOOS Regional Council, and will serve for 2 years. The chair can be extended for a second 2 years if agreed to by the GRC and the incumbent. The GOOS Regional Council may decide to elect a vice chair to aid the chair in the administration of

the GOOS Regional Council. The leadership structure of the GOOS Regional Council may be changed by consensus of the GOOS Regional Council members.

## 7. RELATIONSHIPS of GRAs WITH GOOS AND IOC BODIES

7.1. The GOOS Steering Committee (SC) recognizes the GRAs as an important component of GOOS. The GRAs are represented on the SC by the GOOS Regional Council chair, an *ex officio* member. The GOOS SC does not have an official role in the governance of the GOOS GRAs, but will act to bring issues associated with GRAs to the IOC governing bodies if an intergovernmental decision is required.

7.2. The GOOS panels will be developing the work plan and implementation plan for the GOOS SC. The GRAs should take the panel's guidance into consideration when determining their work plans.

7.3. GOOS global observing networks and programmes are those linked to the three GOOS disciplinary panels and appearing in GOOS Implementation Plans. GRAs should seek to participate in these global GOOS networks and programmes by providing expertise to the panels, implementing programmes through the GRA, or facilitation at a regional scale. GRAs can be very effective in accelerating the build out of the GOOS in coastal areas. GOOS-193 and the output of the three GOOS panels will guide the work of the GRAs in the coastal domain, which will complement national needs.

7.4. GRAs also support collaboration with regional and developing observing systems (e.g. the Southern Ocean Observing System SOOS, and the Sustained Arctic Observing Network SAON).

7.5. GRAs also support national ocean observing systems.

7.6. The IOC Sub-Commissions, Committees, Programme Offices, and Project Offices, have important roles in the development and coordination of GRAs established under their purview. The IOC Bodies can (as appropriate) provide facilitation and support to all GRAs. GOOS is particularly closely linked to other IOC global programmes such as JCOMM and IODE. GRAs should engage with regional activities in these programmes to seek mutual benefit.

## References

1. [GOOS Regional Policy: IOC-WMO-UNEP/I-GOOS-VI/3 Annex VII, 2006](#)
2. [Terms of Reference GOOS Regional Council: Annex IV I-GOOS-VIII Final Report, Terms of Reference GOOS Regional Council, GOOS-165](#)
3. [IOC Res. XXVI-8 Resolution Strengthening and Streamlining GOOS](#)
4. [Strategic Plan and Principles for the Global Ocean Observing System \(GOOS\), \(1998\): GOOS-41.](#)
5. [Implementation Plan for the Global Observing System for Climate in Support of the UNFCCC \(2010 Update\): GOOS-184](#)
6. [Requirements for Global Implementation of the Strategic Plan for Coastal GOOS, \(2012\): GOOS-193](#)
7. [Framework for Ocean Observing. By the Task Team for the Integrated Framework for Sustained Ocean Observing: UNESCO 2012, IOC/INF-1284 rev.,doi:10.5270/OceanObs09-FOO](#)
8. [IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy: IOC Resolution XXII-6, 2003](#)
9. [GOOS Regional Bodies: Annex VIII of "The Integrated Strategic Design Plan for the Coastal Ocean Observations Module of the Global Ocean Observing System", GOOS-125, 2003](#)

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