

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE POST-CONFERENCE WORKING GROUP

Terms of Reference for the WG shall be:

The WG will consider the outcomes and recommendations from the OceanObs'09 Conference and, in consultation with the international organizations and expert advice, shall :

- Recommend a framework for moving global sustained ocean observations forward in the next decade; integrating feasible new biogeochemical, ecosystem, and physical observations while sustaining present observations; considering how best to take advantage of existing structures,
- Foster continuing interaction between organizations that contribute towards and are in need of sustained ocean observations, and
- Report back to its sponsors and disband by 1 October 2010.

Background

In 1993 three international organizations involved in the coordination of global climate observations and research, the WCRP, GOOS and GCOS, agreed to co-sponsor the Ocean Observations Panel for Climate (OOPC). The goals of the OOPC were to

- Foster the development and agreement of an international plan for sustained global ocean observations in support of the goals of its co-sponsors,
- Suggest mechanisms for the evaluation and evolution of the agreed plan and
- Liaise between all entities involved in global ocean observations.

Following a review of the status of the global observing system for climate, and with its many partners within the research and operational oceanography communities an Implementation Plan was developed (GCOS 92, 2003, and GCOS-107, 2004) and implementation called for by the UNFCCC and the GEO. The development of, and agreement on, the Plan has served as a powerful statement of priorities to the sponsors of international ocean activities.

OceanObs'09 is a key evaluation mechanism of progress on this Plan and to evolve it further into an integrated global marine ecosystem and climate observing and information initiative.

Much remains to be done to provide the sustained observations needed to address all the goals of the three OOPC co-sponsors. The desirability of expanding the global sustained ocean observing system beyond the physical and carbon climate system has been a goal from the beginning. Many international groups are involved in research and observations of the biogeochemistry, ecosystems and living marine resources of our planet. A goal of OceanObs'09 is to showcase these efforts and progress, identify key opportunities, foster the creation of a larger community of global ocean observation addressing as many needs as is feasible, and to identify way(s) forward for the coming decade.

The participants in OceanObs'09 and the sponsoring and endorsing organizations have called for establishment of a Working Group involving all interested parties to consider the plans and opportunities presented at the Conference and to propose a framework that will best serve the diverse sustained observing needs in the decade ahead.

This ongoing framework that the WG should recommend should include consideration of

- How to establish technical specifications and implementation plans

- How to fund the observing system and liason with potential funders
- How to periodically evaluate and alter the specifications and plans in the light of new knowledge, new user needs, and technology
- How to develop metrics to permit tracking of implementation progress
- Integration and coordination of current and planned ocean observation activities

The first meeting of the WG shall be called for its co-chairs as soon as feasible following the Conference. Membership will comprise of technical experts representing international research and operational organizations. The WG shall be self-funding, with members' expenses expected to be covered by the nominating organizations. The Working Group will report back to all the supporting organisations by 1 October 2010, and then disband.