IOC Circular letter No. 2381
(English only)

To: IOC Member States (Action Addressees) in Western Pacific region

Cc: Officers of IOC and Major Subsidiary Bodies (Scientific, Technical, and Regional)
Official National Coordinating Body for liaison with the IOC in other IOC Member States
Permanent Delegates/Observer Missions to UNESCO of IOC Member States
National Commissions for UNESCO of IOC Member States

Subject: IOC/WESTPAC-PICES Joint Workshop on Rapid Assessment Survey Methodologies for Detecting Marine Non-Indigenous Species
Phuket, Thailand, 19–21 July 2011

Action required: To identify and nominate suitable participants before 10 May 2011

Sir/Madam,

I am pleased to inform you that the IOC/WESTPAC-PICES Joint Workshop on the Rapid Assessment Survey Methodologies for Detecting Marine Non-Indigenous Species will take place at the Phuket Marine Biological Centre, Thailand, from 19 to 21 July 2011 with generous host of the Government of Thailand.

In recent years, the introduction of non-indigenous species into the coastal waters in many countries poses serious environmental and economic threats. There are many examples of disastrous invasions by such species that resulted in the loss of native species, changes in community structure and function, and damages to the fisheries and aquaculture.

Initial efforts have been made by IOC/WESTPAC since 2008, through his project entitled “Coastal Marine Biodiversity and Conservation”, to establish research networks, identify the regional status and raise the public awareness of marine non-indigenous species. Although IOC/WESTPAC has published the Current Status on Marine Non-indigenous Species in the Western Pacific based on the preliminary study of Member States, it is evident that not many marine non-indigenous species have been scientifically identified in the Western Pacific region, particular in the Southeast Asia region mainly due to the lack of efficient identification methods.

.../...
Meanwhile, the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) has been studying non-indigenous marine species in the North Pacific since 2006 with two major initiatives to develop international systems to collect, exchange and store relevant data, and to foster partnerships with non-PICES countries and International organizations due to a contribution for a project entitled “Development of the prevention system for harmful organisms’ expansion in the Pacific Rim” by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan. The first is the development of a comprehensive database for non-indigenous species and the second is a taxonomy initiative that includes rapid assessment surveys and collector surveys in PICES Member States.

Therefore, in order to help scientists in both regions to better understand their respective ecosystems and stimulate cooperation to improve scientific knowledge on this important topic, both organizations decided to hold this joint workshop with objectives to: (i) provide a contextual perspective on why monitoring for non-indigenous species is important; (ii) educate participants in Rapid Assessment Survey (RAS) methodologies and demonstrate their application; and (iii) provide participants of an overview of the PICES WG-21 database and show how all can benefit from the application. Enclosed you will find general information on this workshop (Annex I). Further information will be made available at IOC/WESTPAC website (http://westpac.unescobkk.org) in due course. The workshop will be conducted in English only.

On behalf of IOC, I encourage you to nominate one or more qualified experts to attend this workshop using the attached application form (Annex II). In accordance with the established procedure of IOC, the expenses for attendance of workshops/meetings shall be borne by the Member States. If however, this would not be possible, some limited funding may be available from sponsors to support selected participants from developing countries. A selection committee will be set up with a view to selecting the most qualified applicants to receive financial assistance.

It would be appreciated if your assistance could be provided in the identification of suitable experts from your country and the filled-in application form could be sent to Mr Wenxi Zhu (w.zhu@unesco.org) before 10 May 2011.

I would take this opportunity to thank you once again for your cooperation and look forward to the active participation of suitable experts from your country in this workshop.

Yours sincerely,

[signed]

Wendy Watson-Wright
Executive Secretary, IOC
Assistant Director-General, UNESCO

Annex:  I. General Information on the joint workshop
II. Application Form
GENERAL INFORMATION

Introduction

In recent years, the introduction of non-indigenous species into the coastal waters in many countries poses serious environmental and economic threats. There are many examples of disastrous invasions by such species that resulted in the loss of native species, changes in community structure and function, and damages to the fisheries and aquaculture.

Initial efforts have been made by IOC/WESTPAC since 2008, through his project entitled “Coastal Marine Biodiversity and Conservation”, to establish research network, identify the regional status and raise the public awareness of marine non-indigenous species. Although IOC/WESTPAC has published the “Current Status on Maine Non-indigenous Species in the Western Pacific” base on the preliminary study of member states, it is evident that not many marine non-indigenous species have been scientifically identified in the Western Pacific region, particular in the Southeast Asia region mainly due to the lack of efficient identification methods.

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Rapid Assessment Surveys (RAS) are one approach to quickly characterize the native, non-native and cryptogenic species present in different locations. Although specific methods vary slightly based on habitats being sampled or taxonomic groups being characterized, PICES WG 21 on Non-indigenous Aquatic Species (http://www.pices.int/members/working_groups/wg21.aspx) has developed methodologies that have been used within member countries to identify non-indigenous species in both intertidal and subtidal habitats. Intertidal habitats have been sampled using both a timed walk and quadrat/grab sampling methods, and subtidal habitats have been sampled using (tunicate) collectors, trapping for macrofauna (primarily crabs) and a survey of the fouling communities on floating docks and their associated structure. Species-level identification can be done using traditional morphological taxonomy, but more often it is becoming necessary to confirm these identifications using genetic markers. Given the global nature of biological invasions, it is important to engage those beyond PICES member countries. Thus, this demonstration workshop will provide participants with the tools to conduct surveys in their own countries and provide a context to why this type of activity is essential and how information on non-native species will be shared among IOC/WESTPAC and PICES member countries to benefit all. The assignment of status (native, non-native or cryptogenic) occurs following species identification.

Purpose of the workshop

1) Provide a contextual perspective on why monitoring for non-indigenous species is important;
2) Educate participants in RAS methodologies and demonstrate their application;
3) Provide participants of an overview of the PICES WG-21 database and show how all can benefit from such an application. (training on database use could be added).

Programme for the workshop

The workshop will be conducted three full days with lectures and field study covering:

Efforts and Practices of IOC/WESTPAC and PICES; Introduction to Rapid Assessment Surveys;
Dock Scrapings and Lab Identifications; Beach Collections and Lab Identifications; Taxonomy and Non-indigenous Species; continued processing of collections; Introduction to PICES WG21 Database; and Database Installation and Hands-on Use.

**Lecturers and Participants:**
Lectures will be given by the invited experts from PICES and IOC/WESTPAC, including Dr. Hiroshi Kawai (kawai@kobe-u.ac.jp), Dr. Thomas Therriault (thomas.therriault@dfo-mpo.gc.ca), and Dr. Suchana Chavanich (suchana.C@chula.ac.th), and others to be identified.

The participation for this workshop will be by invitation only; maximum 25, with emphasis on SE Asian countries.

**Venue and logistical arrangements**
The workshop will be held at the Phuket Marine Biological Center, Phuket, Thailand. Participants will be provided with information on travel and local lodging in due course. Some travel funds for selected participants are available via PICES and IOC/WESTPAC.
APPLICATION FORM

The Government of ………………………………………………………………………... proposes the nomination of the following expert to participate in the Workshop.

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<th>Family name</th>
<th>□ Dr / □ Mr / □ Ms</th>
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<td>Supervisor/Advisor:</td>
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<td>Contact person, in case of emergency</td>
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<td>Dietary Restriction</td>
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<td>□ Other, please specify</td>
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<td>Job responsibilities</td>
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<td>Major and/or Research Area</td>
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Brief statement of research activities that is linked to this workshop, and related publication if any
(This part is crucial for qualifying, so separate pages could be annexed to this form)

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<th>Prior Workshops related to non-indigenous species</th>
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<td>☐ No ☐ Yes, please specify the workshop titles:</td>
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Please provide with name and E-mail address of two referees whom can be contacted to support your application

Referee #1

Referee #2

Financial assistance

☐ I could cover my expense.
☐ I would apply for the financial assistance.
   ☐ Fully (including round trip airfare, accommodation);
   ☐ On airfare in the amount of US$
   ☐ On accommodation.

Date: .......................................................... ..........................................................

(Signature of Head/Director of the Institution)

Please return the completed form with your CV (with a 2-inch photo), by fax or e-mail to the following address before **10 May 2011**:

Mr. Wenxi Zhu, Head, IOC Regional Office for WESTPAC
Fax: +66 2 143 9245; E-mail: w.zhu@unesco.org