In accordance with rule of procedure 8.1(a), the Chairman of WESTPAC delivers an oral statement on recent developments in the work of the Sub-Commission and perspectives for the coming years, and beyond.
This year is the 25th year of the IOC Sub-commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC) since its establishment in 1989. On this special occasion, it is worth recalling the first regional programme under the auspices of IOC in the region entitled “the Cooperative Study of the Kuroshio and adjacent regions (CSK)”. This regional programme was conducted during 1965-1977 with 12 countries participating in and supporting joint research into this current which flows from the tropic Pacific northward via the East China Sea towards the North Western Pacific.

Since then, a number of activities were carried out in this region with the strong spirit of cooperation gradually built up among countries that led to the generation of WESTPAC. No matter either hard time or difficult time that WESTPAC went through, there are plenty of lessons we shall draw from the past and take good practices for the future. The present success of WESTPAC was built upon great efforts of member states in the region over several generations.

I started my chairmanship of WESTPAC since the Ninth Intergovernmental Session of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC-IX, Busan, Republic of Korea, 9-12 May 2012). Despite a short service time in my capacity as Chair of WESTPAC compared to its history, I am proud to work for the most outstanding IOC’s Sub-Commission, especially with all member states and friends and colleagues in the region. I could see the great change happening to WESTPAC since I got involved in 2005 as the coordinator of the Southeast Asian Global Ocean Observation System (SEAGOOS). At that time, WESTPAC was in a very difficult time without much cooperation and joint activities among countries. Since 2008, we were able to get together and take a difficult revitalization processes, which enables WESTPAC to concert the efforts of countries, revitalize and establish new programs based on the common interests, and rebuild the confidence of countries in WESTPAC. I would say that it couldn’t happen without the spirit of cooperation and strong willingness of WESTPAC Member States to support and work together. In-kind and in-cash support to the IOC WESTPAC was rapidly grown up. I firmly believe because we trust in our organization and feel that it belongs to all of us.

WESTPAC has been implementing many projects, programmes, and activities, which are of great help to build up and generate ocean science knowledge to the region especially for the young scientist. I had a chance to participate in some of capacity building activities of WESTPAC long time ago. These activities enable me to learn more about ocean science and to make friends working in the same field in the region. Many of those friends are now working together under the WESTPAC framework. This could keep building up of generation to generation of the ocean science and research in the region. The capacity building is therefore one of very important activities of the WESTPAC. During the period of my Chairmanship, I had chances to visit and discuss with many member state. I was happy to learn that they all give high priority to building capacity for young scientist and many member countries are also considering to
establish the Regional Training and Research Center (RTRCs) under the framework of WESTPAC. I am looking forwards to seeing more new RTRCs.

The results of WESTPAC’s projects and programmes have been leading to the development of research projects/programmes in many member countries, as they are very important to the livelihood of people in the coastal community. We did play a lot of attention on the impact of anthropogenic activities to the health of ocean in the past. WESTPAC did very well implementation of those projects and programmes in response to these related issues. However, there are still many challenges member states are faced with in the region such as the impacts of climate change to the ocean and society, etc.

Given lack of knowledge on these changing processes and impacts in the region, WESTPAC has been aware of these impacts, and keeps establishing new projects on the issues. It is not an easy job as it not only requires relevant expertise, but also a lot of resources to support. Since the WESTPAC is handling many activities with limited resources over recent years, It is a challenge to WESTPAC. How can we keep addressing existing issues on one hand and establish new ones on emerging issues under the framework of WESTPAC? My experience during last three years of working very closely with WESTPAC makes me believe that it is with strong collaboration and support from member countries and scientists in the region that could make it a success. I sincerely expect that member states will continue their strong ownership over WESTPAC as they have been doing so in the past. I could not miss pointing out one of very important engine driving WESTPAC, i.e., the WESTPAC office, especially Mr Wenxi Zhu and his staff who have been working diligently behind the success of WESTPAC. They are the greatest assets of WESTPAC and IOC. In this sense, I believe all countries in the region would join me in urging IOC to take effective motivation measures to keep them for WESTPAC and IOC.

Finally I would like to thank all member countries, friends and colleagues who are providing strong support to me during my period of the Chairman of WESTPAC. I enjoy working together with all of you. I do promise I will keep contributing to and working with WESTPAC as much as I can.