



**Wendy Watson-Wright Statement to the Press  
For CoML news conference on 4 October, 2010**

I am honoured to be here with esteemed colleagues at this table and with all of you – the real stars of this celebration.

Let me start by congratulating the Sloan scientists, technicians, and of course the crews of the many research vessels involved in the Census. Their combined efforts have proven new technologies for the observation of marine biodiversity. If we were to define our planet in two words they would be/ 'water and life'. One of the greatest scientific collaborations of all time, you, the marine explorers from more than 80 countries, have delivered this historic first global [Census of Marine Life](#) showing that Planet Ocean is richer in diversity, more complex and interconnected, less explored, and more impacted by human activities than ever imagined. The Census also has provided us with a wake-up call.

In many ways, we've been treating the ocean like rowdy patrons at the public pool, with no lifeguard on duty. The census has stood up and blown the red whistle, telling us it's time to save lives. If we don't act now, we may lose many of the species in the oceans even before we even have a chance to get to know them.

We cannot manage what we don't measure, or as Jesse said, "baselines, baselines, baselines". To know the consequences of our actions, both good and bad, we must monitor the health of the ocean.

The Census has provided us with a baseline of what exists, but it's also made it clear there is much we don't know about life in the ocean. Many species that were found are new to science and their life cycles and way of living are a mystery.

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO is the only intergovernmental organization with a mandate for science and services in all of the planet's oceans. IOC oversees the coordination of the Global Ocean Observing System, or GOOS, which monitors the state of the ocean. GOOS data are shared through IOC's International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange program, IODE.

We are very excited that the data integration component of the Census, the Ocean Biogeographic Information System, OBIS, will become part of this global network. OBIS is the largest archive of data about marine species. For the first time scientists are able to reveal global patterns of diversity, distribution and abundance. By providing this first global baseline of ocean life, OBIS will strengthen the biological component of the Ocean Observing System, and allow oceanographers to better account for how the physical and chemical changes affect marine life around the world.

OBIS and IODE have been working together already – on capacity building issues in Africa, for example, and on developing and documenting standards for biological data management. Now that OBIS will become a component of IODE, this integration will go further, and will ensure that biodiversity is an integral part of the operations of IODE and the IOC.

The IOC recognises the efforts that went into building OBIS – of the Census, and also of the many partners and data custodians contributing to OBIS. We are honoured that the Census leadership wishes to entrust this valuable scientific infrastructure to us. We'll make sure it will live and flourish. .

In 2011 the World Conference on Marine Biodiversity in Aberdeen Scotland will discuss how a second Census might take shape. We fervently hope a second Census evolves, as it is critical in continuing the efforts to assess and monitor the health of the Ocean.



Let me conclude by once again congratulating the Sloan Foundation, the Census, its leadership and the thousands of scientists. You have demonstrated clearly that the whole can be more than the sum of its parts. Thank you for your contribution to science, and for providing us with the wherewithal to base the management of our oceans on a sound scientific basis. Bravo!

Contact information for the press:

Edward Vanden Berghe  
Executive Director of OBIS  
1-732-932-6555 ext 565  
evberghe@iobis.org

Links:

[www.iobis.org](http://www.iobis.org)  
[www.iode.org](http://www.iode.org)  
[www.ioc-unesco.org](http://www.ioc-unesco.org)