



2021 United Nations Decade
2030 of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development



Office of Legal Affairs
Division for Ocean Affairs
and the Law of the Sea



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Commission

2024 Ocean Decade Conference Satellite Event

The BBNJ Agreement and its linkages with the Ocean Decade

A panel discussion co-organized by
UN-OLA/DOALOS and IOC-UNESCO

12 April 2024, 8:30 am – 9:45 am

Centro de Convenciones Internacionales Barcelona (CCIB)
Atlantic Ocean Room (Area 06), Level P0

Objective

After nearly 20 years of intensive work, the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) opened for signature on 20 September 2023. The Agreement has nearly 90 signatories to date, including two signatories that have also become parties to the Agreement. The Agreement will enter into force after 60 States or regional economic integration organizations have become parties thereto.

As the first cross-sectoral ocean governance treaty in decades, the Agreement is pivotal in restoring the ocean's health, resilience, and productivity. It addresses a package of four issues: marine genetic resources (MGRs), including the fair and equitable sharing of benefits; measures such as area-based management tools (ABMTs), including marine protected areas; environmental impact assessments (EIAs); and capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology (CB&TMT). The Agreement also addresses a number of cross-cutting issues.

The BBNJ Agreement is grounded in science. The use of the best available science and scientific information is among the general principles and approaches that would guide Parties to the Agreement in its implementation. Science is fundamental in provisions on decision-making for ABMTs and EIAs. The promotion of marine scientific research and technology development and transfer are key objectives of the parts on MGRs and CB&TMT. Traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities is prominently referenced, and a Scientific and Technical Body is established.

The effective implementation of the Agreement will contribute to addressing many Ocean Decade challenges, including challenges 2, 4, 5, 8 and 9. But the relationship is symbiotic: progress under the Ocean Decade – and specifically the science and knowledge generated by Decade Actions - will equally contribute to enhancing the scientific and technological basis for the Agreement's successful functioning, including as supported by the World Ocean Assessments which are the

outputs of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (Regular Process).

This event aims to raise awareness of the synergies between the Ocean Decade and the BBNJ Agreement, identify priority actions needed to support their harmonious implementation, and inspire new partnerships and initiatives amongst diverse stakeholders.

Expected outcome

- A better understanding of the BBNJ Agreement and its linkages with the Ocean Decade among the Ocean Decade communities, in particular on (a) how the BBNJ Agreement can contribute to the implementation of the Ocean Decade and (b) how the Ocean Decade can support the swift entry into force and effective implementation of the BBNJ Agreement, including via targeted future Calls for Decade Actions to fill key science, knowledge and capacity gaps.
- Helping inform the generation of consensus on priorities across the science-policy-society nexus for the Ocean Decade over the next 3 to 5 years in supporting the entry into force and implementation of the BBNJ Agreement, in particular in relation to the development of scientific basis for and pathways for the uptake of science in the future implementation of the Agreement, including in various decision-making processes thereunder, thus helping inform discussions on the initial outcomes of the Vision 2030 process.
- Increased awareness and recognition of the achievements of the Ocean Decade thus far, in particular of the ways in which existing Ocean Decade actions are supporting or will support the early entry into force and implementation of the BBNJ Agreement.
- A timely opportunity for networking amongst diverse stakeholder groups that are envisaged by the BBNJ Agreement to play a role in its implementation, including States, relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies, civil society, the scientific community, the private sector, funding partners, and Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who can provide critical contributions to preparing for the entry into force of the Agreement.

Targeted audience

The target audience includes all relevant stakeholders across all sectors, in particular those which are actively engaged in the implementation of the Ocean Decade and those which are envisaged by the BBNJ Agreement to play a role in its implementation, including States, relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies, civil society, the scientific community, the private sector, and Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Format

This on-site event will be 75 minutes long.

Programme

1. Opening (10 min)

- Jose Sousa, Director of Multilateral Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal
- Vidar Helgesen, Executive Secretary, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO)

2. Overview of the BBNJ Agreement, including prospect for supporting the implementation of the Ocean Decade (8 min)

- Bingzhuo Li, Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations (UN-OLA/DOALOS)

3. Decade Action Showcase through flash talks from a set of Decade Programmes that are contributing to BBNJ knowledge enhancement (12 min)

- Steve Hall, Nippon Foundation-GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project
- Margaret Leinen, Ocean Biomolecular Observing Network (OBON)
- Lisa Levin, Deep Ocean Observing Strategy (DOOS)
- Lucy Scott, An Ocean Data and Information System supporting the UN Ocean Decade (OceanData 2030)

4. Panel discussion (40 min)

Guiding questions:

- *How can the BBNJ Agreement contribute to the implementation of the Ocean Decade?*
- *How can the Ocean Decade contribute to the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement?*
- *What science is needed for the effective implementation of the BBNJ Agreement?*
- *What further priority actions are needed to support the synergies between the Ocean Decade and the BBNJ Agreement, including to address existing gaps in science needed for the effective implementation of the BBNJ Agreement?*
- *What are the potential ways forward to support further priority actions?*

Moderators

- Bingzhuo Li, UN-OLA/DOALOS
- Karen Evans, Co-Chair of GOOS Biology & Ecosystems Panel and Co-Chair of the Group of Experts of the Regular Process

Panellists

- François Houllier, President and CEO, Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (Ifremer)
- Vera Agostini, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations
- Jose Dallo Moros, International Seabed Authority
- Ward Appeltans, IOC-UNESCO/Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS)
- Mariamalia Rodriguez Chaves, Member of the Group of Experts of the Regular Process
- Jean Aude, Alcatel Submarine Networks (ASN)
- Eric King, Schmidt Ocean Institute

5. Moderators' concluding remarks (5 min)