**The relevance of biogeographic classification in areas beyond national jurisdiction**

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The report on the biogeography of global open ocean and deep sea areas, outcome of the Scientific Experts Workshop on Biogeographic Classification Systems in Open Ocean and Deep Seabed Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, held from 22 to 24 January 2007, in Mexico City has been completed (GOODS report) with co-sponsoring received from diverse international sources. This biogeographic classification was compiled from the input of an expert group of scientists and managers during the workshop in Mexico, and has benefited from independent peer review.

The report, in its draft version, was included as an Information Document at the thirteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) last February where it addressed recommendations on document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/13/4 and provided help, in its scientific nature, in the discussions and decision making in biogeographic classification issues of open ocean and deep seabed areas beyond national jurisdiction. The report was commented upon by the contracting Parties after the SBSTTA meeting so that a finalised version has been prepared and is available for the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD.

Specifically, a global classification framework like this allows for the broad-scale evaluation of the status of our knowledge and an initial assessment of which habitats, communities and taxa may be subject to disproportionate impacts due to human activities. Such a framework can also highlight possibly fragmented marine habitats, as well as the relative rarity or limited extent of distribution of associated fauna. The regions that have been recognized and the maps generated by the experts are considered the best system possible with the information currently available. The proposed regions are well sustained with the existing scientific knowledge and data available providing a powerful tool for decision making.

The GOODS report and associated maps are available for download at **http://www.ias.unu.edu/**. Although further refinements are expected in the future with the development of new tools and advancement of scientific knowledge, in the context of the precautionary approach, the major open ocean pelagic and deep sea benthic zones presented in this report are considered a reasonable basis for progressing efforts towards the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in marine areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. It is important that any further refinement to biogeographical provinces not delay action to be undertaken towards this end, and that such action be supported by the best available scientific information.

The work contained in this report is of vital importance to the conservation and sustainable of use of biodiversity in marine areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, and thus the achievement of the 2010 target. Many governments in several policy fora requested this bioregionalization to assist their governments. Uses include further identifying where to focus efforts to safeguard marine biodiversity in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, supporting planning and implementation of ocean management measures including marine protected areas, and delineating ecological scales at which biological communities might be expected to share common threats and respond to conservation measures in coherent ways. This document is to elicit comments, to ensure the direction taken continues to meet the requirements of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in marine areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.