

Annex

Information on developments within the Convention on Biological Diversity relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea

Executive Summary

This note summarizes recent work under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) relevant to ocean affairs and the law of the sea that have taken place, or will take place, between September 2024 and August 2025.

A number of important decisions were taken during the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, including on ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), and on conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity and of island biodiversity, which included a call for continued cooperation with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the United Nations Secretariat. The establishment of a subsidiary body on Article 8(j) and other provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity related to indigenous peoples and local communities, the Cali Fund, Mechanisms for planning, monitoring, reporting and review and biodiversity and climate change are also discussed below.

The Secretariat has also continued its capacity-building and partnership efforts under the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI). This included the convening of an intersessional meeting of the SOI Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fishery Bodies, an initiative that provides an opportunity for regional seas organizations and regional fishery bodies to share experiences and to identify opportunities for coordination and collaboration.

Finally, the Secretariat also continued to engage in various intergovernmental processes throughout this period, including the third United Nations Ocean Conference.

INTRODUCTION

This note consists of brief descriptions of the work carried out under the CBD in the following areas related to ocean affairs and the law of the sea, in addition to outlining the major meetings and intersessional work carried out since the completion of the last report. The note includes content on:

- Developments during the Sixteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP 16)
- Capacity-building and partnership activities (activities of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative, including the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue); and
- Engagement in other intergovernmental processes.

SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CBD

The sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (CBD COP 16) was held in Cali, Colombia, on 21 October–1 November 2024. A resumed session of the meeting was held in Rome, Italy, on 25–27 February 2025. Several important decisions were made by the COP at this meeting that are relevant to ocean affairs and the law of the sea.

Decision 16/16 on Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas

Since 2010, the CBD Secretariat has coordinated a process to facilitate the description of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), which are areas of the ocean recognized for their unique or special ecological and/or biological features, such as essential habitats, food sources or breeding grounds. Pursuant to decision X/29, between 2011 and 2019, the Secretariat convened 15 regional workshops to facilitate the description of EBSAs through the application of the scientific criteria given [in decision IX/20, annex I](#). Organized in collaboration with Parties, other Governments and international organizations,

including RSOs and RFBs, and with significant input from experts from around the world, these workshops facilitated the description of 338 areas meeting the criteria.

At its sixteenth meeting, through [decision 16/16](#), the COP adopted new modalities for describing EBSAs and for modifying the description of EBSAs, and requested the Executive Secretary to facilitate the implementation of the modalities. In the same decision, the COP recognized that the description of EBSAs is an important scientific and technical process that can make a crucial contribution to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and 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.

The COP also decided to extend the term of the informal advisory group (IAG) on EBSAs and requested the Executive Secretary to revise its terms of reference to align them with the newly adopted EBSA modalities. These modalities build on previous experience in describing EBSAs and also entail important changes to the process. Since the adoption of this decision, work is underway to enhance understanding of the new modalities and to facilitate their implementation, including:

- **Notification and information webinars:** On 17 March, the Secretariat disseminated a [notification](#) informing Parties and other Governments that the Secretariat was now able to receive submissions of new EBSA descriptions and modifications of existing EBSA descriptions, in line with the modalities provided in the annex to decision 16/6. The Secretariat organized two information webinars to provide an overview of the modalities for the modification of existing descriptions of EBSAs or the description of new EBSAs.
- **EBSA Handbook:** In addition, the Secretariat has recently produced a handbook on the modalities for the modification of existing EBSA descriptions and the description of new EBSAs that is intended to provide clarity and understanding regarding the steps and procedures involved in this process (available at: <https://www.cbd.int/marine/ebsa/ebsa-handbook-en.pdf>). Please note, however, that this handbook has no formal status and is not intended to be a substitute for the text contained in **decision 16/16**.
- **Revamped EBSA repository and information-sharing mechanism:** In line with decision 16/16, paragraphs 6 and 7, the EBSA repository and information-sharing mechanism, www.cbd.int/ebsa, were redesigned to make clearer the distinction between the two, thereby preparing them both to receive submission under the new modalities.

Decision 16/17 on conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity and of island biodiversity

At its sixteenth meeting, the COP also adopted [decision 16/17](#) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity and of island biodiversity that addresses a wide range of issues. The COP considered the outcomes of a strategic review and analysis of the CBD programme of work on marine and coastal biodiversity and the CBD programme of work on island biodiversity. In paragraph 5 of [decision 16/17](#), the COP noted that there are certain elements of the targets of the Framework for which limited guidance or tools are available under the programmes of work on marine and coastal biodiversity and on island biodiversity and that those elements may require enhanced action and attention to implement the Framework. These elements were listed in the annex to decision 16/17. The COP noted that those elements may require enhanced action and attention, in the form of new guidance, the synthesis of best practice practices and experiences, and capacity-building and development. The COP also requested that the

Executive Secretary enhance cooperation and collaboration with competent international organizations with regard to those issues.

The COP also acknowledged the adoption of 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. In paragraph 11 of the same decision, the Conference of the Parties requested that the Executive Secretary continue to cooperate with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the United Nations Secretariat and organizations with competence in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, and convene an expert workshop on opportunities for specific areas of scientific and technical work conducted under the Convention to contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Planning for this workshop is currently underway.

Decision 16/5 on institutional arrangements for the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in the work undertaken under the Convention on Biological Diversity

Recognizing the need for the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities through a permanent subsidiary body, the Conference of the Parties decided to establish a subsidiary body on Article 8(j) and other provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity related to indigenous peoples and local communities. Its mandate is to provide advice to the Conference of the Parties, other subsidiary bodies and, subject to their request, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization on matters of relevance to indigenous peoples and local communities that are within the scope of the Convention and its Protocols. The first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) and Other Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity Related to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities will be held in Panama City, from 27-30 October 2025. One of the key agenda items to be addressed during the first meeting will be to adopt a modus operandi for its operation. This process provides a valuable opportunity to enhance and better support the important work of indigenous peoples and local communities in the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity.

Decision 16/2, Cali Fund for the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits from the Use of Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources

The Cali Fund for the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits from the use of Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources (DSI), “the Cali Fund”, set up to receive contributions from private sector entities making commercial use of DSI, was launched on 24 February 2025 on the margins of the resumed session of COP 16 at the Headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in Rome. The Cali Fund is intended to mobilize new streams of funding for biodiversity action worldwide, in support of the three objectives of the CBD: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. Recognizing their role and contributions as custodians of biodiversity, at least 50 per cent of the resources of the Cali Fund should be allocated to the self-identified needs of indigenous peoples and local communities, including women and youth.

The disbursements of the Fund will also serve to boost the implementation of the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(KMGBF\)](#), notably by supporting the delivery of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) by developing country Parties, and by bolstering scientific research on biodiversity and bridging existing gaps in the way countries generate, access, use, analyze and store DSI. The Cali Fund is hosted by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO) in a partnership between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity hosts the Cali Fund Secretariat.

Decision 16/32 on mechanisms for planning, monitoring, reporting and review, including the global review of collective progress in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to be conducted at the seventeenth and nineteenth meetings of the Conference of the Parties

The Conference of the Parties, through its [decision 16/32](#), adopted mechanisms for planning, monitoring, reporting and review, including the global review of collective progress in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Based on that decision, the Conference of the Parties is expected to undertake a global review of collective progress in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at its seventeenth meeting (COP-17).

To support the discussions at COP-17, the Conference of the Parties requested the preparation of a global report on collective progress in the implementation of the Framework. The primary sources of information for the preparation of this report are national reports. In decision 16/32, the Conference of the Parties endorsed revisions to the national report template for the seventh and eighth national reports. The indicators for the monitoring framework for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted through decision 15/5 and then updated through decision 16/31, are a key element of the national reporting template. The Secretariat, in collaboration with numerous partners, has been organizing various capacity-building activities to support Parties in submitting their seventh national reports by the deadline of 28 February 2026. The Secretariat has also developed an online reporting tool to facilitate the reporting process. The preparation of the global report on collective progress is being overseen and guided by [an Ad Hoc Scientific and Technical Advisory Group](#), established in April 2025. An annotated outline for the global report will be made available in July for peer review, and the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice will be invited to provide advice on scientific inputs on it during its twenty-seventh meeting, in October 2025.

Decision 16/22 on biodiversity and climate change

Decision 16/22 on biodiversity and climate change recognized the crucial role and capacity of the ocean in regulating the climate as well as the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus and requested the Executive Secretary to explore opportunities for addressing it in an integrated manner in order to achieve the goals of the Framework, in collaboration with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the United Nations Secretariat as well as with the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as the coordinator of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. The Executive Secretary was also requested in this decision to promote synergies and closer cooperation with the biodiversity-relevant multilateral environmental agreements, organizations and processes, and integrated approaches to addressing biodiversity loss, climate change and land and ocean degradation.

Ocean Day at COP 16, 27 October 2024

During COP 16, the Secretariat, in partnership with a wide range of organizations, organized Ocean Day, which featured sessions organized around the central theme of the “Ocean as the Great Connector”. It was co-organized together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Fisheries Expert Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, CoopeSoliDar R. L. / International Collective in Support of Fishworkers, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative, International Whaling Commission, Convention on Migratory Species, Global Island Partnership, World Wildlife Fund, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Ocean & Climate Platform, World Resources Institute, United Nations Environment Programme, International Seabed Authority, GIZ, Global Network of MPA Manager Networks, World Economic Forum, DOALOS, GOA, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Global Fund for Coral Reefs, Global Youth Biodiversity Network. Financial support was provided by the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea and the French Biodiversity Agency (Government of France).

It brought together actors from across the world and across the spectrum of those who are doing important work on research, planning, conservation and sustainable use of the ocean at all scales, from local to global. It connected stakeholders from governments, international organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities, civil society, the private sector and the science community. Following a high-level opening session, the day comprised the following themes, which were explored through innovative and engaging approaches rather than the traditional panel presentation format: people and the ocean: fishers as stewards of biodiversity; the connected ocean; the great ocean-climate talk show; science and technology for action; synergies and partnerships for action; crafting a better future: key messages from youth and looking ahead to the UN Ocean Conference. Closing remarks were provided by representatives of the Governments of France and Costa Rica, co-hosts of the Third UN Ocean Conference.

CAPACITY-BUILDING AND PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

The Executive Secretary has continued the capacity-building and partnership activities under the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) convening a series of capacity-building workshops at the regional, subregional and national levels, in addition to the SOI Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fishery Bodies. SOI is a global platform that aims to build partnerships and enhance capacity to achieve global goals and targets on marine and coastal biodiversity. Its implementation is coordinated by the CBD Secretariat in collaboration with various partners. SOI was created on the margins of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to respond to the need for capacity-building of developing country Parties with regard to the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity, and its implementation is being further enhanced within the context of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which was adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its fifteenth meeting in December 2022.

Sustainable Ocean Initiative regional capacity-building workshop for States of the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of Africa, 10 to 13 February 2025, Dakar, Senegal

In response to decision 15/24, in which the Conference of the Parties requested the Secretariat of the Convention to continue to facilitate capacity-building activities under the Sustainable Ocean Initiative in order to support the implementation of the Framework, including its monitoring framework, with respect to marine, coastal and island biodiversity, the Secretariat convened the Sustainable Ocean Initiative regional capacity-building workshop for States of the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of Africa, in collaboration with various regional organizations and initiatives. The workshop was held in Dakar from 10 to 13 February 2025. It was organized with the organizational support of the University of Brest, and with financial support from the Governments of France (French Biodiversity Agency) and the Republic of Korea (Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries). The workshop focused on the capacity needs of developing countries in the region, in the context of the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. It focused specifically on opportunities to improve the coverage, effectiveness and representativity of area-based conservation through the use of marine protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures. The workshop was attended by experts from 21 Parties to the CBD, three major groups, 22 international and non-governmental organizations and three local observers. Workshop participants primarily comprised experts, managers, officers and specialists in marine biodiversity conservation from Parties, relevant global and regional organizations and indigenous peoples and local communities. The workshop was organized in plenary and breakout group sessions and included thematic presentations with question-and-answer sessions, plenary and moderated discussions, breakout group exercises and discussions.

Intersessional workshop of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fishery Bodies, 7-9 June 2025, Théoule-sur-Mer, France

The SOI Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fishery Bodies provides a regular global platform to exchange experiences among regional and global organizations, and to identify tangible means and opportunities to improve cross-sectoral collaboration in addressing issues related to

sustainable fisheries and the conservation of marine biodiversity. Formal meetings of the SOI Global Dialogue are generally held every two years, and intersessional workshops are convened between the formal meetings. With a view to advancing the discussion on timely issues prior to the next meeting of the SOI Global Dialogue with with Regional Seas Organizations (RSOs) and Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs), to take place in 2026, the Executive Secretary convened the Intersessional workshop of the SOI Global Dialogue with RSOs and RFBs, in collaboration with the French Office for Biodiversity, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the United Nations Environment Programme. The organization of this workshop was financially supported by the Government of the Republic of Korea (through the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries). This workshop was convened on the margins of the third UN Ocean Conference, taking advantage of the presence of many partners. The workshop aimed to provide regional updates on cross-sectoral regional cooperation and coordination activities undertaken since the fourth meeting of the SOI Global Dialogue, in June 2024 with respect to regional collaboration in the context of implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and 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), including the role of regional organizations. Planning, approaches and potential outcomes for the fifth meeting of the SOI Global Dialogue were also discussed. Participants in the workshop comprised experts from regional seas organizations and regional fishery bodies, various other regional organizations and initiatives, selected government representatives, global intergovernmental organizations, and other relevant organizations.

ENGAGEMENT IN OTHER INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES

The Secretariat engages in a range of intergovernmental processes to facilitate the mainstreaming of biodiversity and to facilitate coherence and complementarity among various processes relevant to ocean affairs and the law of the sea.

In the period under focus, this included engagement in the:

10th Our Ocean Conference (28-30 April 2025, Busan Republic of Korea)

The Secretariat participated actively in the 10th Our Ocean Conference, hosted by the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea. The Executive Secretary spoke as a panellist in the high-level Conference Panel on Marine Protected Areas. The Secretariat organized a side event marking the 15th anniversary of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative, and Secretariat staff spoke in other events organized by partners. Finally, the Executive Secretary signed an extension of our Memorandum of Understanding with the Republic of Korea for the Sustainable Ocean Initiative.

First Session of the Preparatory Commission for the Entry into Force of the Agreement on Marine Biodiversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), 14 – 25 April 2025, New York City

The Secretariat actively participated in the Preparatory Commission for the Entry into Force of the Agreement on Marine Biodiversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, in particular by providing input on arrangements and experiences under the CBD that can be instructive to the issues under discussion by the Preparatory Commission, such as on institutional arrangements, rules of procedure, financial arrangements, clearinghouse mechanisms, and cooperation with other international bodies and processes.

3rd United Nations Oceans Conference, 9-13 June 2025, Nice, France

The Executive Secretary and CBD staff participated in the third United Nations Ocean Conference. This involved speaking on Ocean Action Panel 7: Ocean, Climate and Biodiversity; delivering a formal statement during the Conference plenary; organizing/co-organizing and speaking in four side events; speaking in an additional nine side events organized by partners; holding 19 bilateral meetings with Parties and key organizations; and convening a press conference on CBD COP 17.

The Secretariat also engaged in the preparatory process for the Conference, including by serving as co-lead for two of the Informal Preparatory Working Groups ((i) Marine and Coastal Ecosystems, and (ii) Ocean, Climate and Biodiversity)

Marine Environment Protection Committee of the International Maritime Organization

The Secretariat actively engaged in the 82nd meeting of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), including by submitting a document on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and engaging in the MEPC deliberations on issues of relevance. At this meeting, IMO MEPC formally recognized the importance of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework for international shipping and requested the IMO Secretariat to enhance collaboration with the CBD Secretariat on areas of mutual interest.

62nd meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 16-26 June 2025, Bonn, Germany

Engagement with UNFCCC during this period included continued contributions to the Ocean and Climate Dialogue process, including the 2025 Dialogue (17-18 June 2025), with a contribution during the plenary panel session on "ocean-climate-biodiversity synergies" and moderating a breakout group on the same topic. The SCBD also engaged in Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and National Adaptation Plan (NAP)-related guidance development, emphasising linkages with National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), and the development of indicators on the Global Goal on Adaptation, emphasizing the importance of marine and coastal biodiversity considerations, among other concerns.

20th session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, 8-10 July 2025, Montego Bay, Jamaica

The Secretariat is engaging in the 20th session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC), building on the strong engagement of WECAFC in the SOI Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fishery Bodies. This engagement includes submitting a meeting document on the SOI Global Dialogue and delivering a presentation during the meeting.