



RESOLUTION ON THE BBNJ AGREEMENT (UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA ON THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF MARINE BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OF AREAS BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION)

March 2025

Preface:

The Agreement on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) was completed in June 2023. It has been signed by 110 countries and ratified by 17 signatories. It will enter into force once 60 signatories ratify the Agreement into their respective legal systems. In anticipation of the BBNJ Agreement coming into force, the UN has established a Preparatory Commission (PrepCom) to prepare for the convening of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement. The PrepCom will make recommendations to the Conference of the Parties regarding governance that will impact how the Agreement is implemented.

The International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (ICFA) notes that:

The sustainable use of fish is essential to food security and economic benefits for coastal communities. Managing fisheries effectively is the strongest tool for protecting ocean health while ensuring human development. Conservation efforts need to integrate the sustainable use of marine resources to benefit both people and the planet.

Fisheries in the high seas is strictly regulated through a wide range of instruments, frameworks and relevant bodies, including through numerous RFMOs, the UN Fish Stock Agreement and the FAO Port State Measures Agreement, among many others. Fisheries management is a living discipline in continuous improvement, where conservation and sustainable use are of essence. Implementing the BBNJ Agreement in cooperation with RFMOs can complement existing efforts by RFMOs and other instruments, frameworks and relevant bodies.

The Agreement recognizes the important role of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) play in facilitating international cooperation and enhancing the implementation of the Agreement's objectives. With particular focus on area-based management tools, there are four specific references in Part III:

1. Article 19, paragraph 2: Parties are encouraged to collaborate and consult with relevant stakeholders, including RFMOs, in the development of proposals for area-based management tools.
2. Article 21, paragraph 2(b): RFMOs are invited to submit views on the merits of proposals for area-based management tools, provide relevant scientific input, information on existing measures adopted by them for the relevant area or adjacent areas, and views on what falls within their competence.
3. Article 22, paragraph 1(b): The Conference of the Parties may take decisions on measures compatible with those adopted by RFMOs, in cooperation and coordination with these organizations.

4. Article 22, paragraph 3: The conference of the Parties shall make arrangements for regular consultations to enhance cooperation and coordination with and among RFMOs regarding area-based management tools, but also with regard to related measures adopted by RFMOs.

The recently held BBNJ Symposium included a panel on *Cooperation with Relevant Instruments, Frameworks and Bodies (IFBs) under the BBNJ Agreement* but failed to include a representative from a RFMO. This was an unfortunate oversight.

Therefore, ICFA calls for:

- All signatories to ratify the Agreement to bring it into force and provide comprehensive implementation across the world's oceans.
- PrepCom members to intentionally consult and engage fisheries experts and RFMO representatives as it develops recommendations to the Conference of the Parties.
- Signatories and Parties to include representatives of Fisheries Agencies and Ministries of Fisheries in their respective delegations for the Conference of the Parties.
- Signatories and Parties to recall that seafood is part of the solution to global food security, climate change and the socioeconomic well-being of coastal communities around the world.
- RFMOs to proactively engage with Signatories and Parties to ensure effective fisheries management is supported and complemented by Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs), which will promote cross-sector collaboration between fisheries and conservation.