



**STATEMENT BY**  
**MR. BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS**  
**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**  
**CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**at the opening of**  
**THE FAO/GOF WORKSHOP ON LINKING GLOBAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS IN**  
**THE MANAGEMENT OF MARINE AREAS BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION**

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**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity  
United Nations Environment Programme  
413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800, Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9, Canada  
Tel : +1 514 288 2220 Fax : +1 514 288 6588  
[secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)



*Distinguished participants,*

*Ladies and gentleman,*

It is my great pleasure to address this workshop, which is being convened at the very opportune time. I would like to first extend my sincere appreciation to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Global Ocean Forum for inviting the CBD Secretariat to share the experiences from the Convention's relevant work and bring insights to the workshop discussion, together with many other distinguished participants.

This workshop comes just a few weeks after the good news from New York, that at its next session, the UN General Assembly will consider a recommendation to launch negotiations towards an international agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the able leadership of the FAO, together with the GEF Secretariat and the UNEP, in developing the Global Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) Program, which aims at promoting efficient and sustainable management of fisheries resources and biodiversity conservation in marine areas. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to Dr José Graziano da Silva and his team at FAO for their support to the Convention and for the close cooperation between FAO and the CBD Secretariat. We work together on a wide range of issues, for example addressing biodiversity considerations in sustainable fisheries management, and promoting capacity development within the framework of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative. Of particular relevance to this workshop are the close links between FAO's work on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs), and the CBD's work on ecological or biological significant areas (EBSAs).

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

Oceans, within or beyond national jurisdictions, are essential for supporting life on earth and human well-being. Three hundred million people are directly dependent on the seas and oceans for their livelihoods. Over 4 billion people rely on fish for a substantial share of their protein. Moreover, the oceans support essential biogeochemical processes, supplying for example, half of the oxygen we breathe. The oceans contain perhaps two million species, most yet undiscovered. These have the potential to provide a vast number of medicines and biochemicals.

The essential role of the oceans is reflected in the proposals for the Sustainable Development Goals: one proposed goal is devoted to the seas and oceans. In fact, protecting the seas and oceans is important for all the Sustainable Development Goals. In the outcome document of Rio+20, "The Future We Want", States stressed the importance of "the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and of their resources for sustainable development, including through their contributions to poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, food security and creation of sustainable livelihoods and decent work, while at the same time protecting biodiversity and the marine environment and addressing the impacts of climate change".

But marine biodiversity is under threat. More than ten years ago, at its seventh meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity raised concerns about the serious threats, resulting from processes and activities, to biodiversity in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, in particular in areas with seamounts, hydrothermal vents, cold-water corals and other vulnerable ecosystems. These areas are important not only for their potential utilizable genetic resources but also in keeping the ecological functions and integrity of the marine environment, thereby supporting the Earth's life support system on which we all depend and is essential to the welfare of current and future generations. Among the threats are unsustainable fishing, destructive fishing practices, and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing). The Conference of the Parties stressed the need for rapid action to address the threats resulting from processes and activities in such areas on the basis of the precautionary approach and the ecosystem approach.

As you know, the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity are the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits

arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. In areas beyond national jurisdiction, the Convention applies to processes and activities carried out under the jurisdiction or control of its Parties. The Convention now enjoys the participation of 194 Parties, soon to be 196.

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2010-2020, with its twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets, was adopted at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and has become a widely agreed framework for action on biodiversity, supported by the other biodiversity related conventions and the United Nations General Assembly. While all are important, two of the Aichi Targets are particularly relevant to the ABNJ Programme:

Aichi Target 6: to ensure, by 2020, all fish are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem-based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems, and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits.

Aichi Target 11: to achieve, by 2020, conservation, through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, in at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, and integration of these areas into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The Conference of the Parties to the Convention since its eighth meeting repeatedly recognized that the Convention on Biological Diversity has a key role in supporting the work of the United Nations General Assembly with regard to marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction, by focusing on the provision of scientific and, as appropriate, technical information and advice relating to marine biological diversity, the application of the ecosystem approach and the precautionary approach.

In the past five years the Parties to the Convention have worked in close collaboration with various global and regional organizations, including FAO, UNEP, IOC/UNESCO, regional seas organizations and regional fisheries management bodies, as facilitated by the Secretariat, to answer one simple question: *Where are the marine areas of particular ecological or biological significance?*

The CBD Secretariat has organized nine regional workshops thus far covered nearly 70% of world oceans, including within and beyond national jurisdictions and involving about 122 countries and 113 organizations (with some attending more than one workshop), and facilitated the scientific description of a total of 204 areas as meeting the EBSA criteria. The results of those workshops considered by the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties have been already submitted to the UN General Assembly and its relevant processes (UNGA Document A/67/838) and additional results considered by the twelfth meeting are being submitted this week to the General Assembly through the UN Secretary General.

As emphasized by the COP to the Convention, I wish to highlight that the application of the EBSA criteria is a scientific and technical exercise, while the identification of EBSAs and the selection of conservation and management measures are matters for States and competent intergovernmental organizations, in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

In addition to the Convention's scientific work on EBSAs, the Secretariat has facilitated various expert processes at the global scale regarding the impacts on marine biodiversity from the threats, such as marine debris, anthropogenic underwater noise, and ocean acidification. The results of these expert processes, such as CBD's Technical Series 75 on the Updated Synthesis on the Impacts of Ocean Acidification on Marine Biodiversity as well as reports of experts workshop in the impacts of marine debris (December 2014, Baltimore) and the impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise (February 2014, London), will contribute to addressing key challenges to conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction by providing adequate scientific and technical understanding, advice, and capacity to act in a timely and effective manner.

Technological advancements in accessing the once hidden resources of the open ocean and deep seas expose these valuable ecosystems to unprecedented pressures which call for environment assessments.

At its eighth meeting, the Conference of the Parties endorsed voluntary guidelines for the consideration of biodiversity in environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA). Given the particular features of the open ocean and deep sea areas with regards to scale and connectivity, and the different governance in areas beyond national jurisdiction, annotations of the EIA and SEA guidelines have been developed for marine and coastal areas. These were finalized by the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties which encouraged Parties and competent international organizations to make use of them.<sup>1</sup>

I am confident that all of this work will provide a solid scientific foundation for implementation of the ABNJ Program.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

While our knowledge on the complex inter-relationships between human activities and biodiversity can be further developed, it is not an exaggeration to say that we are already equipped with the tools and knowledge that enable us to take action now. If we delay and allow marine biodiversity to continue to decline, we will not achieve the proposed Sustainable Development Goal No 14 on oceans, and indeed nor will we meet the goals on poverty eradication, food security, human health, and so on. We will, in fact, undermine "*the Future We Want*".

Marine life and its habitats and ecosystems do not recognize the boundaries set by our societies, and neither do marine pollution and the impacts of unsustainable marine resources exploitation. Notwithstanding the governance arrangements being developed under the UN General Assembly for biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction, humanity should share the common goal of sustainable ocean development. We need action now to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits. I therefore call on your attention for the urgent need to join hands together and best use our collective wisdom, experiences and expertise thus far accumulated toward achieving humanity's shared and common vision in this blue planet.

Thank you for your attention!

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<sup>1</sup> Decision XI/18