

The Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties  
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MoP6-INFO-11

ABNJ Deep Seas Project Update

*Relates to agenda item: 14.3*

Proposal ☐ Working Paper ☐ Information Paper ☒ Other Document ☐

FAO ABNJ Deep Seas Project

**SUMMARY**

*The Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep Sea Living Resources in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction* Project (ABNJ Deep Seas Project for short) is a five-year project supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and implemented jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment). The UN Environment project component is executed through the UN Environment World Conservation and Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).

The Project is designed to enhance sustainability in the use of deep-sea living resources and biodiversity conservation in the areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) through the systematic application of an ecosystem approach. It brings together over 20 partners who work on deep-sea fisheries and conservation issues in the ABNJ globally. The Project aims to:

1. strengthen policy and legal frameworks for sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ deep seas;
2. reduce adverse impacts on VMEs and enhance conservation and management of components of EBSAs;
3. improve planning and adaptive management for deep-sea fisheries in the ABNJ; and
4. develop and test methods for area-based planning.

Project components 1, 2, and 3 are led by the FAO, and Component 4 is led by UNEP-WCMC.

The ABNJ Deep-Seas Project is a five-year project. The total budget for the Project is USD 87 million, of which USD 7 million is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The remaining USD 79 million represent the co-financing from the project's 20 main stakeholders.

More information is available from <http://www.fao.org/in-action/commonoceans/en/>.





MoP6-INFO-11

**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations**



## **Project update to The 6<sup>th</sup> SIOFA Meeting of Parties**

**1-5 July 2019**

### **ABNJ Deep Seas Project**

**Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-sea Living Marine  
Resources and Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction**



**GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY**  
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

## About the ABNJ Deep Seas Project

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Within FAO, the ABNJ Deep Seas Project is an integral part of the Deep-sea Fisheries Programme and many of the activities have contributed to or benefited from co-financing with other projects under the programme. Some of these projects are now phased out, and follow-up activities are managed through the ABNJ Deep Seas Project.

## How SIOFA is involved

SIOFA is an important partner of the ABNJ Deep Seas Project. SIOFA has been involved in the implementation of the Project and has agreed to contribute to activities that promote collaboration and sharing of experiences in deep-sea fisheries and associated biodiversity as well as specific activities on capacity building for developing countries. This contribution is coordinated by the SIOFA Secretariat.

SIOFA activities associated with the ABNJ Deep Seas Project contributed an estimated USD 8 778 of project co-financing at the Project's midterm.

## Recent project activities, include:

### The Project Steering Committee

The fourth meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) was held in January 2019, and chaired by Darius Campbell from NEAFC. The PSC reviewed the project's progress, preparations for the project's closure and options for a second phase to the project. The project will close in December 2019.

### Global review of Orange roughy their fisheries, biology, and management

The Project supported a workshop to collate data and information on orange roughy. The Workshop results are available in the report *Global Review of Orange Roughy (Hoplostethus atlanticus), their fisheries, biology, and management* (FAO Technical Paper 622, 2018)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/ca1870en/CA1870EN.pdf>

## **Side events at the First BBNJ Inter-Governmental Conference in New York**

FAO organized two side events at the First BBNJ Inter-Governmental Conference in New York. The first side event reviewed deep-seas sponges and other biodiversity, and highlighted results from an ongoing Horizon 2020 Project on deep-sea sponges. A second side event was organized to showcase 10 years of the FAO Deep-sea Fisheries Guidelines.

## **2nd edition of the Worldwide Review of Bottom Fisheries in the High Seas**

The 2009 Worldwide Review of Bottom Fisheries in the High Seas is being updated and expanded. A meeting of experts from the eight deep-sea RFMOs was held in May 2016 to confirm the nature and extent of the work, and the review itself is expected to be published in 2019. The preliminary findings were presented at a side event during the Workshop to Review the implementation of the United General Assembly Resolutions on Deep-sea fishing<sup>2</sup> (New York, 1-2 August 2016). A brochure highlighting these findings is available (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6619e.pdf>).

## **Updating the FAO VME Portal and DataBase**

The VME Portal provides general information on VMEs, and the VME DataBase contains information on VME-related measures in ABNJ for each regional fisheries body, including SIOFA. The Project supports the ongoing maintenance and updating of the systems ([www.fao.org/in-action/vulnerable-marine-ecosystems/en/](http://www.fao.org/in-action/vulnerable-marine-ecosystems/en/)).

## **Regional VME processes and experiences with their application**

In late 2016, the report *Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems – processes and practices in the high seas* was published (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5952e.pdf>) and summarizes the regional processes and practices in place for VMEs and their management.

## **Deep-sea fisheries and VME regional workshops**

The ABNJ Deep Seas Project collaborated with SIOFA to organize a VME Workshop on 19-20 March 2019. The workshop was attended by SIOFA and international experts and included sessions on VME mapping, VME indicator taxa, encounter protocols, protected area protocols and selection of protected areas.

The ABNJ Deep Seas Project has also collaborated on the organization of two vulnerable marine ecosystem (VME) regional workshops in 2016. The first was for the Mediterranean region, held in collaboration with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) in July, and the second was held for the eastern central Atlantic region, in collaboration with the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) in November. Workshop reports can be found here:

Indian Ocean 2012 - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3311e.pdf>

Southeast Atlantic 2013 - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4923e.pdf>

North Pacific 2014 – <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5319e.pdf>

Western Central Atlantic 2014 - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4329e.pdf>

Mediterranean Sea 2016 - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6685e.pdf>

Eastern Central Atlantic 2016 – <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7609b.pdf>

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations General Assembly Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) Workshop to Discuss Implementation of Paragraphs 113, 117 and 119 to 124 of resolution 64/72 and paragraphs 121, 126, 129, 130 and 132 of resolution 66/68 on Sustainable Fisheries

## **Climate change and deep-sea ecosystems**

The ABNJ Deep Seas Project partnered with the Deep-Ocean Stewardship Initiative and its working group of climate change experts to better understanding the consequences of climate change for deep sea ecosystems and deep-sea fisheries. The working group met on 25-26 August in Woods Hole, USA to discuss questions including: What are the major climate change features affecting the deep ocean and its associated biodiversity? What impacts might these features have on the functioning of deep-sea ecosystems? How might climate impacts affect deep-sea fish and fisheries? Which regions and fisheries might be most vulnerable? Which other species are vulnerable? What essential ocean variables are important to monitor in order to assess the risks to deep sea species and communities due to climate change?

The project supported scientists and experts from the regional bodies managing deep-sea fisheries to participate in the workshop and contribute their expert knowledge. The project also supported the participation of a deep-sea coral and sponge expert from the SponGES project to cover the non-fish species that might also be vulnerable to climate change. A technical paper from the meeting has been published: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca2528en/ca2528en.pdf>.

## **Catch documentation schemes for deep-sea fisheries**

A report on catch documentation schemes (CDS) for deep-sea fisheries has been published as FAO Technical Report 629 (2018)<sup>3</sup>. The report considers options available for catch documentation schemes applied to deep-sea fisheries, taking into account the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Catch Documentation Schemes. The report explores and makes recommendations on the organisational and institutional modalities that could be applied to deep sea-fisheries CDS.

## **Rights-based management in deep-sea fisheries**

A workshop on the application of rights-based management (RBM) to ABNJ deep-seas fisheries met on 10-12 April 2019. The workshop evaluated the potential contribution of rights-based management to deep seas fisheries in areas beyond national jurisdiction. A summary of the workshop's conclusions is available as an Information Paper.

## **Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance for deep-sea fisheries**

A workshop on ABNJ deep sea MCS met on 10-12 December 2018. The Workshop was attended by selected SIOFA and SEAFO members. SEAFO and SIOFA members were invited to review their MCS frameworks in light of their regional obligations, to identify gaps in their MCS frameworks and develop plans of actions to address the gaps. The workshop was informed by a review of regional and international MCS frameworks and requirements for deep-sea RFMO/As that has been undertaken by the ABNJ Deep Sea Project.

## **DEEP-FLIP training on international instruments relevant to deep-sea fisheries and associated biodiversity**

The project has partnered with legal consultants to develop a step-wise guide for the integration of international legal instruments related to deep-sea fisheries and biodiversity in the ABNJ into national legislation of selected pilot countries. The first DEEP-FLIP (Fisheries Law in Practice) training workshop took place on 22-24 October 2018, with participants selected countries from the SIOFA and SEAFO regions. Training was conducted on the use and application of the step-wise guide. A follow-up assessment of the implementation of international legal instruments in national legislation is being undertaken with selected countries from SIOFA and SEAFO.

## **Deep Sea meeting**

A Deep Sea meeting on 7-9 May 2019 highlighted project results. The meeting included sessions on governance and policy, deep sea science and monitoring, and deep sea management. Approximately 60 participants from government, academia and industry represented multiple

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/CA2401EN/ca2401en.pdf>

sectors within the ABNJ. The meeting reviewed opportunities and challenges to support sustainable deep-sea fisheries management and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ.

### Area-based planning

Reviews of institutional arrangements and legal instruments in the Southeast Pacific and Western Indian Ocean have been completed (<http://wcmc.io/WIOdata> and <http://wcmc.io/SEPdata>). Global marine datasets of biodiversity importance to these regions have been identified and published. Area based planning workshops were held in Southeast Pacific (with CPPS countries) and Western Indian Ocean (with Nairobi convention countries) resulting in capacity development assessments.

### Deep-sea sponges in the North Atlantic

FAO is collaborating with the Horizon 2020 SponGES project, which aims to develop an integrated ecosystem-based approach to preserve and sustainably use deep-sea sponge ecosystems of the North Atlantic. The ABNJ Deep Seas Project is assisting the SponGES Project by identifying the types of information needed to improve understanding of the economic elements of the sponge resources in the North Atlantic region, and devising a draft methodology to estimate the value of sponges (this will be reviewed with experts from the SponGES Project to understand the practical limitations of the methodology). Furthermore, the ABNJ Deep Seas Project supports exchange between SponGES and fisheries experts. Information materials from this project are available and science-policy dialogues, initiated by FAO, are ongoing and to which SIOFA or SIOFA experts are invited to contribute.

### Ongoing activities of interest to SIOFA stakeholders:

- An electronic application for reporting at-sea observations from deep-sea fishing vessels is being developed by the Information Technology Division of FAO. This application, **SmartForms**, will include an initial set of forms for VME reporting requirements, developed in consultation with regional partners.
- Support for the **trialing of electronic monitoring systems** on deep-sea fishing vessels operating in the ABNJ to collect information on VMEs. In collaboration with the Cook Islands (Ministry of Marine resources), a feasibility study on the use of electronic monitoring systems on deep-sea fishing vessels is being undertaken.
- An analysis of the **EAF practices** implemented by regional bodies with a mandate for the management and conservation of deep-sea fishing in the ABNJ is underway.

### Find out more about the ABNJ Deep Seas Project

- Contact: William Emerson ([William.emerson@fao.org](mailto:William.emerson@fao.org)) and Jessica Fuller ([Jessica.fuller@fao.org](mailto:Jessica.fuller@fao.org))
- Visit the ABNJ Programme and the ABNJ Deep-seas Project website: <http://www.fao.org/in-action/commonoceans/en/>



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- strengthen policy and legal frameworks for sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ deep seas;
- reduce adverse impacts on VMEs and enhanced conservation and management of components of EBSAs;
- improve planning and adaptive management for deep sea fisheries in ABNJ; and
- develop and test methods for area-based planning.

The ABNJ Deep Seas Project started in September 2015 and is one of four projects under the GEF Common Oceans Programme. More information is available from <http://www.fao.org/in-action/commonoceans/en/>

