


PRAIA DECLARATION



Declaration of the Regional Workshop on the So-Called BBNJ Agreement and High Seas
Marine Protected Areas in the Eastern Tropical North Atlantic (West Africa)

15 MAI 2025

We, stakeholders and partners committed to conservation and participants in the Regional Workshop on the so-called BBNJ Agreement and high seas marine protected areas in the Eastern Tropical North Atlantic (West Africa), held from 13 to 15 May 2025 in Praia (Cabo Verde):

- RECALLING that the high seas represent half of the planet's surface and 65% of the ocean's surface, that the ocean produces 50% of the world's oxygen and absorbs 30% of CO₂ emissions;
 - RECALLING that marine biodiversity is the main source of protein for over one billion people, that more than three billion people depend on the ocean for their livelihoods, and that 50% of the global economy depends on the ocean—for food resources, transport, energy, genetic resources, tourism, among others;
 - CONSIDERING that all West African States are Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea;
 - RECALLING international community commitments on marine environmental protection, such as the Paris Agreement on climate adopted in 2015, which highlights the importance of preserving the ocean, and the adoption of the Global Biodiversity Framework in 2022 during COP 15 of the CBD (known as Kunming–Montreal), whose Target 3 is to protect 30% of the planet's marine areas by 2030;
 - CONSIDERING that currently only 8% of the ocean is protected and less than 1% of the high seas are under full or strict protection, and that the ecological connectivity of marine protected area networks enhances marine ecosystems' resilience and productivity;
 - COMMITTED to the implementation of the 2023 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);
 - CONSIDERING that the BBNJ Agreement provides that Parties collaborate with stakeholders including civil society and communities in the development of proposals for high seas marine protected areas;
 - CONCERNED about the state of degradation of the ocean in the West African marine and coastal zone, its impact on ecosystems, and the vulnerability of coastal communities;
 - AWARE that signing the BBNJ Agreement before the deadline (20 September 2025) will allow West African States to fully participate in preparing for the implementation of the Agreement, and that by ratifying it, they will become Parties and benefit from capacity-building, participation in decision-making, and access to funding for implementation;
 - CONSIDERING the current progress in the signing and ratification of the BBNJ Agreement (to date, 113 countries have signed and 21 have ratified), and that a minimum of 60 ratifications is required for the Agreement to enter into force;
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- WORKING toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 14 on the ocean, and the African Integrated Maritime Strategy – Horizon 2050 (AIMS);
- RECOGNIZING the role of the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region (Abidjan Convention) and the relevance of its additional protocols in protecting West African marine and coastal zones;
- RECOGNIZING that the BBNJ Agreement establishes a governance framework for area-based management tools, including marine protected areas, in cooperation with existing intergovernmental organizations and other area-based management tools, including for areas adjacent to exclusive economic zones and the high seas;
- CONSIDERING that the organization of the 6th International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC6) in 2027 in Dakar—the first time in Africa—will be an opportunity to stimulate the nomination of marine protected areas under the BBNJ Agreement.

We declare our commitment to work for the conservation and sustainable management of the West African coastal and marine zone and its natural resources.

To this end, WE ENCOURAGE West African States to:

- Sign the BBNJ Agreement before 20 September 2025 and ratify it as soon as possible;
- Adopt national roadmaps and a common roadmap for the implementation of the Agreement;
- Develop a shared vision for establishing high seas marine protected areas in line with sustainable ocean governance principles;
- Establish the necessary processes for identifying, designating, and managing high seas marine protected areas under the Agreement;
- Establish an inclusive consultation process with all components of civil society and communities to ensure that diverse interests are taken into account in implementing the Agreement;
- Set up mechanisms for facilitation, regional coordination, and mobilization of expertise during negotiations and implementation of the Agreement, using existing frameworks (ECOWAS, WAEMU, Abidjan Convention, PRCM, among others)

Likewise, WE ENCOURAGE:

- Research institutes and universities to implement research programs on the various components of high seas ecosystems, in line with the mechanisms established under the Agreement;
- Technical and financial partners to support efforts by States and stakeholders to acquire the necessary knowledge and implement the Agreement;
- Education and communication stakeholders to promote awareness, outreach, and education—particularly for youth—on the importance of the ocean and the high seas;

- Stakeholders to support and promote indigenous knowledge and nature-based solutions aimed at restoring high seas ecosystems, while building the capacity of both state and non-state actors.

Done in Praia, 15 May 2025

The Participants

