



Executive Secretariat

## **ATLAFCO Workshop**

***"For a better understanding of the role of fishing and marine protected areas in the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) and its implementation in the ATLAFCO region"***  
*Casablanca, May 18-19, 2026*

### **Summary report and recommendations of the meeting**

#### **Introduction**

As part of the implementation of the declaration of the 11th Ordinary Session of the Conference of Ministers held in Abidjan on April 24, 2025, in particular the adherence to international legal instruments and giving the support to Member States for their implementation, ATLAFCO organized on May 18 and 19, 2026 in Casablanca, a capacity building workshop for its Member States in relation to the new BBNJ Agreement, which entered into force on January 17, 2026.

This important workshop aimed to: 1) better understand the scope and challenges of this new legal instrument and its implications for fisheries and marine protected areas, 2) identify the needs and priorities of the Member States that have ratified it for its implementation; 3) promote strengthened regional coordination and 4) put in place the appropriate mechanisms for the active participation of Member States in future governance processes and its implementation (Conferences of the Parties).

Led by international experts and eminent jurists in the Law of the Sea who recalled the legal, technical and strategic framework of this Agreement and its implications for ATLAFCO region, particularly in terms of fisheries governance, the representatives of the Member States exchanged and discussed practical and operational aspects, including: 1) the implementation process in ATLAFCO region; 2) area-based management tools; 3) marine protected areas; 4) national and regional priorities for its implementation; and 5) logistical next steps for active participation of ATLAFCO Member States in the Conference of the Parties CoP1 (January 2027).

#### **Summary of discussion results**

During this meeting, participants formulated relevant recommendations aimed at making the BBNJ Agreement a strategic lever for equitable and sustainable governance of the Area Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ).

They called for accelerating the ratification process of the Agreement for Member States that have not yet started or are in progress, for strengthening national legal and institutional frameworks and for consolidating a harmonized regional position in future international discussions and negotiations in order to preserve the interests of ATLAFCO Member States.

Participants also stressed the importance of coordinated implementation based on the operational regional cooperation, the complementarity with regional fisheries and fisheries management organizations and the active involvement of fisheries authorities at the national level.

They also stressed the need to strengthen the scientific, technical and legal capacities of States, particularly in the areas of environmental impact assessment, creation and management of marine protected areas.

The participants reaffirmed the central role of ATLAFCO as a regional framework for consultation and pooling of expertise, and expressed the wish that this organization continue: 1) to support its member states in strengthening their technical and legal capacities for its implementation, 2) to coordinate regional scientific and technical cooperation between member states; 3) to promote equitable, inclusive and sustainable ocean governance, capable of preserving marine resources and offering new prospects to present and future generations; and 4) to pursue its role as a unifying force for the adoption of common and united positions within the relevant international bodies, particularly during the upcoming discussions of the CoP.

Furthermore, the participants call upon national and regional fisheries authorities to fully engage in the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement. They reaffirm their commitment to effective, balanced, gradual, inclusive, and progressive implementation, based on regional cooperation, institutional coherence and African solidarity. They also emphasize the importance of considering, throughout all processes, the principle of the sustainable use of living marine resources, the conservation of marine biodiversity, and the protection of the legitimate interests of ATLAFCO member states.

They reaffirm that the success of this process will depend on the collective ability to coherently articulate the environmental, fisheries, scientific, legal, institutional and financial dimensions of the Agreement, while ensuring its complementarity with relevant regional and sub-regional fisheries management instruments, frameworks and bodies, as well as other regional and sub-regional fisheries bodies.

In conclusion, they call for continued efforts in consultation, capacity building, mobilization of partnerships and harmonization of positions in order to ensure effective and sustainable participation in the international governance of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

## **Recommendations and Conclusions of the Workshop**

The participants in the ATLAFCO regional workshop, convened in Casablanca on 18–19 May 2026 under the theme of the role of fisheries and Area Based Management Tool (ABMT) including marine protected areas in the BBNJ Agreement and its implementation in the ATLAFCO region, having examined the legal, institutional, scientific and operational issues related to the implementation of the said Agreement, adopt the following conclusions and recommendations:

### **PREAMBLE**

- Recalling that the BBNJ Agreement, adopted on 19 June 2023 and entered into force on 17 January 2026, constitutes an essential complement to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction;
- Considering the strategic importance of marine resources and the high seas for food security, ecological resilience, economic development and the legitimate interests of ATLAFCO Member States;
- Reaffirming the need for ocean governance based on cooperation, equity, science, sustainability and respect for the competences of relevant regional and international institutions;
- Recognizing the central role of regional fisheries management organizations, as well as the need to ensure complementarity between their mandates and the mechanisms provided for under the BBNJ Agreement;

- Emphasizing the importance of capacity building, transfer of marine technology, access to financing, sharing of scientific data and intersectoral coordination for the effective and balanced implementation of the Agreement;
- Recognizing the importance for the fisheries authorities to get fully involved in the implementation of the Agreement
- Noting the need for Member States to develop consolidated national positions and a harmonized regional voice within the decision-making processes of the Conference of the Parties;

The participants:

1. Express their willingness to accelerate the ratification of the BBNJ Agreement, adapt regional and national policy and legislation to its requirement as appropriate and establish the institutional and operational mechanisms necessary for its implementation;
2. Underline the need to strengthen regional coordination under the auspices of ATLAFCO to promote, within international negotiations and BBNJ governance bodies, a common, coherent, coordinated and proactive position of Member States;
3. Encourage, at both national and regional levels, the institutionalization of intersectoral coordination mechanisms involving relevant stakeholders, with a view to ensuring harmonized positions and effective monitoring of the implementation of the Agreement;
4. Recognize the central role of regional fisheries management organizations, as well as the need to ensure complementarity between their mandates and the mechanisms provided for under the BBNJ Agreement
5. State that the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement must be carried out in a coordinated manner with regional fisheries management organizations and other competent frameworks, while respecting their respective mandates and avoiding institutional overlap;
6. Emphasize that fisheries activities must be duly considered in the processes of designation, management, monitoring and evaluation of ABMT, including marine protected areas beyond national jurisdictions, in accordance with the general principles and approaches of the Agreement in particular, the precautionary and ecosystem approaches, and the sustainable use of living marine resources;
7. Call for the strengthening of the scientific, technical, legal and institutional capacities of Member States, particularly regarding participation in BBNJ mechanisms, environmental impact assessments, international negotiations and the Défense of regional and African interests;
8. Highlight the need to secure effective fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from marine genetic resources, transfer of marine technology and access to financing mechanisms under the scope of the Agreement for Member States;
9. Recommend strengthening through regional cooperation monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) systems for activities on the ABNJ, as well as improving mechanisms for the collection, exchange and sharing of scientific data and information among Member States;
10. Encourage the promotion of an integrated ecosystem-based approach founded on ecological connectivity between coastal marine protected areas and those located on the ABNJ, to ensure coherence in conservation efforts and sustainable management of shared marine resources;
11. Call upon ATLAFCO, with the support of relevant regional and international partners, to mobilize sustainable technical, institutional and financial assistance mechanisms to support the implementation of the Agreement and ensure active, structured, effective and sustained African participation in the BBNJ process.
12. Stress the need to expand capacity-building, awareness-raising, outreach and communication activities targeting the various relevant stakeholders.

**C asablanca (Morocco), May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026**