

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BBNJ AGREEMENT IN THE ATLAFCO REGION CURRENT STATUS IN THE GAMBIA

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What is the BBNJ Agreement?

- ▶ It is a Global treaty adopted in 2023 under United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)
- ▶ It Focuses on biodiversity in the high seas
- ▶ It Covers areas beyond national jurisdiction / out of the Economic Exclusive Zone EEZ of countries)
- ▶ It Ensures conservation and sustainable use of Marine Resources

Why the High Seas Matter

- ▶ Support fish stocks and biodiversity: The high seas act as a massive nursery and migratory corridor that replenishes fish populations worldwide.
- ▶ Influence climate regulation: The open ocean absorbs significant amounts of heat and CO_2 , playing a critical role in stabilizing the Earth's climate.
- ▶ Impact coastal countries like The Gambia: Changes in the high seas directly affect the health of local coastal waters
- ▶ Poor management leads to overfishing and biodiversity loss: unregulated fishing can deplete species and permanently damage marine ecosystems.

The 4 Key Pillars of BBNJ

- ▶ Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs)
- ▶ Area-Based Management Tools (ABMTs)
- ▶ Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)
- ▶ Capacity Building & Technology Transfer

Regional Context - ATLAFCO

- ▶ Shared marine ecosystems: The Ecosystem in Some Atlafoo member countries have similar characteristics
- ▶ Need for cooperation: There is a need for corporation between member countries for sustainable management of the living marine resources
- ▶ The convention will Supports sustainable fisheries
- ▶ It Strengthens regional collaboration between countries

The Gambia's Context

- ▶ The Gambia is a Coastal country along Atlantic Ocean
- ▶ It is Part of Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem (CCLME)
- ▶ Fisheries is critical for livelihoods
- ▶ Fish stocks are transboundary (shared with neighboring countries)

Why BBNJ is Important for The Gambia

- ▶ The Gambia is Affected by high seas activities
- ▶ Requires Access to funding and training
- ▶ Technology transfer opportunities
- ▶ Supports sustainable fisheries and resilience

Current Status in The Gambia

- ▶ The process in the Gambia is still in an Early but active stage
- ▶ The Stakeholder engagement plan has been developed by NEA
- ▶ The Capacity needs assessment completed and the results have been validated by stakeholders
- ▶ There is an Increasing institutional involvement

Stakeholder Engagement

- ▶ Government, civil society, academia are involved in the current preparatory stage of the BBNJ
- ▶ Workshops and policy dialogues have been conducted
- ▶ Awareness campaigns are ongoing to encourage national ownership of the Agreement

Key Challenges

- ▶ Limited awareness: Low understanding of the "High Seas" treaty and its direct impact on local coastal health.
- ▶ Legal gaps: Current national legislation, such as the Fisheries Act and Regulations, may need significant revisions to align with the new international standards for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) in areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- ▶ Weak coordination: Difficulty aligning efforts across government departments and international fisheries bodies.
- ▶ Limited technical capacity: A need for specialized training in biological sampling and digital monitoring for deep-sea compliance.

Opportunities

- ▶ Access to funding: New international financial mechanisms designed to support developing nations in implementing marine conservation projects.
- ▶ Scientific partnerships: Collaboration with global research institutions to improve data collection and knowledge of deep-sea ecosystems.
- ▶ Technology transfer: Gaining access to advanced equipment and digital tools for better monitoring and management of marine resources.
- ▶ Stronger ocean governance: A more unified framework that empowers coastal nations to have a greater voice in the management of international waters.

Next Steps

- ▶ Ratification of BBNJ
- ▶ National coordination mechanism
- ▶ Legal alignment
- ▶ Implementation roadmap

COP1 Process

- ▶ Defines implementation rules
- ▶ Establishes financing mechanisms
- ▶ Guides benefit-sharing
- ▶ Seek Supports available for the participation of developing countries

Conclusion

- ▶ Early progress made: The Gambia has made some progress in the early stage of the implementation of the BBNJ agreement
- ▶ Capacity gaps remain: There is still some capacity Gaps and a need to strengthen the capacity of scientist in member countries
- ▶ Opportunity to strengthen governance: there are opportunities to support policy and governance frameworks
- ▶ Supports livelihoods and sustainability

Thank You

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