



PRESENTATION ON AREAS BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION (BBNJ) AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE SIERRA LEONE



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INTRODUCTION

- ▶ The United Nations Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) is a new international treaty under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea aimed at conserving and sustainably using marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (the high seas). The agreement was adopted in 2023 and is expected to influence global ocean governance significantly.
- ▶ For Sierra Leone, implementation of the BBNJ Agreement presents both opportunities and challenges. Although Sierra Leone is a coastal state with significant dependence on marine resources, the country still faces gaps in marine governance, scientific research, technical infrastructure, and institutional capacity. A gradual implementation approach is therefore necessary.

REGULATORY NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Regulatory Needs in Sierra Leone

❖ Review and Harmonisation of National Laws

Sierra Leone will need to review existing legislation related to:

- Fisheries
- Environmental protection
- Maritime governance
- Marine scientific research

❖ Development of National Policies

The country may require:

- A national BBNJ implementation strategy
- Policies on marine genetic resources (MGRs)
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures for marine activities
- Marine spatial planning frameworks

REGULATORY NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS CONT.

Institutional Coordination

Implementation will require stronger coordination among:

- ▶ Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
- ▶ Environmental Protection Agency Sierra Leone
- ▶ Maritime Administration
- ▶ Universities and research institutions
- ▶ Regional organizations

Expectations

Stakeholders in Sierra Leone are likely to expect:

- ▶ Clear legal guidance
- ▶ Transparent governance systems
- ▶ Protection of marine resources
- ▶ Fair benefit-sharing from marine genetic resources
- ▶ Stronger participation in international ocean governance

SCIENTIFIC NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Scientific Needs

Marine Biodiversity Data

Sierra Leone currently faces limited scientific data on:

- ▶ Marine species distribution
- ▶ Deep-sea biodiversity
- ▶ Ecosystem health
- ▶ Oceanographic conditions

There is a need for:

- ▶ Baseline marine biodiversity assessments
- ▶ Ocean mapping
- ▶ Long-term marine monitoring systems

SCIENTIFIC NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS CONT.

Research Capacity

The country requires:

- ▶ Increased marine scientific research
- ▶ Partnerships with regional and international institutions
- ▶ Access to marine laboratories and research vessels
- ▶ Improved data collection and analysis systems

Environmental Monitoring

Sierra Leone will need systems for:

- ▶ Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)
- ▶ Monitoring marine protected areas

Expectations

The scientific community expects:

- ▶ Greater investment in marine science
- ▶ Better access to scientific information
- ▶ Regional scientific collaboration
- ▶ Inclusion of local and traditional knowledge

TECHNICAL NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Technical Needs

Marine Technology and Equipment

Sierra Leone may require:

- ▶ Ocean observation equipment
- ▶ Surveillance and monitoring systems
- ▶ Research vessels and sampling tools

Digital Infrastructure

There is a need for:

- ▶ National marine databases
- ▶ Information-sharing platforms
- ▶ Satellite-based monitoring systems

Expectations

Sierra Leone expects:

- ▶ Affordable access to marine technologies
- ▶ Long-term technical support
- ▶ Training in the use of marine technologies

CAPACITY-BUILDING NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Capacity Needs

Human Capacity

There is a need for training of:

- ▶ Marine scientists
- ▶ Environmental lawyers
- ▶ GIS specialists
- ▶ Fisheries officers
- ▶ Marine enforcement personnel

Institutional Capacity

Strengthening of:

- ▶ Universities and research centres
- ▶ Government agencies
- ▶ Monitoring and enforcement institutions

CAPACITY-BUILDING NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS CONT.

Financial Capacity

Implementation requires:

- ▶ Sustainable funding
- ▶ International donor support
- ▶ Access to global environmental financing
- ▶ Partnerships with development agencies

Expectations

Sierra Leone expects:

- ▶ Equitable access to funding opportunities
- ▶ Continuous training programs
- ▶ Participation in international scientific initiatives
- ▶ Tailored support for developing coastal states

CHALLENGES FACING SIERRA LEONE

Major Challenges

Limited Financial Resources

- ▶ High costs of marine research and monitoring
- ▶ Competing national development priorities

Weak Scientific Infrastructure

- ▶ Limited marine laboratories
- ▶ Insufficient research equipment

Data Deficiencies

- ▶ Limited biodiversity assessments
- ▶ Inadequate ocean data systems

Enforcement Challenges

- ▶ Illegal fishing activities
- ▶ Limited maritime surveillance capacity
- ▶ Weak monitoring systems

Institutional Coordination Gaps

- ▶ Overlapping responsibilities
- ▶ Limited inter-agency collaboration

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SIERRA LEONE

Opportunities

Access to International Support

The BBNJ Agreement can help Sierra Leone access:

- ▶ Technical assistance
- ▶ Funding opportunities
- ▶ Marine technology transfer
- ▶ Scientific partnerships

Strengthened Ocean Governance

Implementation can support:

- ▶ Sustainable fisheries management
- ▶ Marine conservation
- ▶ Improved environmental governance

GRADUAL IMPLEMENTATION

STATUS OF THE AGREEMENT IN SIERRA LEONE

SL IS AMONG THE FIRST 4 AFRICAN MEMBER STATES THAT SIGNED THE AGREEMENT

MEMBER OF THE WEST AFRICA BBNJ COORDINATION COMMITTEE: RATIFICATION & IMPLEMENTATION

DEVELOPED WORKPLANS FOR RATIFICATION

SECURE FUNDING FOR INITIAL RATIFICATION ACTIVITIES & SENT APPLICATION FOR GEF FUNDING

DEMONSTRATE COUNTRY READINESS TO EFFECTIVELY COOPERATE & PARTICIPATE IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE AGREEMENT, INCLUDING ITS RATIFICATION & IMPLEMENTATION

STATUS OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Develop a national BBNJ implementation roadmap.
- ▶ Strengthen legal and institutional frameworks.
- ▶ Invest in marine scientific research and data systems.
- ▶ Build technical and human capacity.
- ▶ Promote regional and international cooperation.
- ▶ Ensure participation of local communities and stakeholders.
- ▶ Seek international funding and technical assistance.

CONCLUSION

The BBNJ Agreement provides Sierra Leone with an important opportunity to strengthen marine biodiversity conservation, sustainable ocean governance, and blue economy development.

Sierra Leone is committed to a sustainable future, and our ministry plays a pivotal role in this journey. We are dedicated to safeguarding our natural resources, preserving biodiversity, and promoting sustainable development practices across our continent.



► Mr Sheku Sei, Ag. Director of Fisheries

Thank you for your attention.

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