

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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AU WORKSHOP TO REVIEW OUTCOMES OF THE FIFTH ROUND OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE ON MARINE BIODIVERSITY NEGOTIATIONS (IGC5-BBNJ) AND TO COORDINATE FINAL POSITIONS FOR THE RESUMED IGC5 (18-19 FEBRUARY 2023, NEW YORK, USA)

The African Union Commission through the Office of the Legal Counsel and the African Union Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations in New York facilitated the convening of an in person two-days' workshop for the African Group representatives/ delegates to the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) on an international legally binding instrument (ILBI) 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). It was organized to debrief and assess the work done during the first part IGC-5 held in August 2022 pursuant to General Assembly decision 76/564 and coordinate common African position(s) for the resumed IGC-5.



The African Union (AU) has identified the potential of the African Maritime domain, which could further support economic and sustainable development, in its policy and legal instruments, namely the 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy), the African Charter on Maritime Security, Safety, and Development (Lomé Charter), and the concept of blue economy. In this regard, the Office of the Legal Counsel (OLC), in collaboration with the African

Union Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations in New York, facilitated the coordination of the activities of the African Group in New York as part of its mandate to assist and coordinate the implementation of the 2050 AIM Strategy within AU Commission departments as well as to represent the Union in all legal meetings.

More importantly, the resumption of IGC-5 on BBNJ had significant implications for Africa, which has a long coastline and is heavily reliant on ocean resources for food security, income, and other benefits under the umbrella of the blue economy. In particular, proposals advocated on behalf of the African Group on marine genetic resources and fair and equitable benefit-sharing, capacity-building and transfer of marine technology g are legitimate claims of developing countries.

The workshop therefore provided as an avenue for identifying and addressing African concerns collectively, as well as consolidating and promoting African positions before to the resumed IGC-5 negotiations, which were held from February 27 to March 3 of 2023. Moreover, the workshop covered a wide range of topics including African priorities such as stressing the importance of preserving and ensuring equitable distribution of the benefits of the exploitation of the ABNJ while ensuring its sustainability; ensuring environmentally sound management of biodiversity of the ABNJ based on scientific knowledge, including the adoption of measures for the conservation of biodiversity; and meaningful engagement on capacity building and the transfer of marine technology.

In light of the above, the African Group of Leads and Experts in various thematic areas concluded a successful workshop in which they reaffirmed the interests of the continent and addressed to achieve a fair, equitable, and universal treaty with the core objectives of marine biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Lead Experts on the BBNJ package during the workshop include: The Coordinator of the African Group and Lead on MGRs; Amb. Michael Imran Kanu (Sierra Leone); Ms. Marie-May Jeremie (Seychelles), Mr. Mamadou Diallo (Senegal) and Ms. Tamara Thomas (Seychelles) on ABMTs and MPAs, Ms. Vreeshini Raojee (Mauritius) and Mr. Jean Kenfack (Cameroon) on EIAs; Ms. Aahde Lahmiri (Morocco) and Amb. James Waweru (Kenya) on CBTMT; and Advocate Thembile Joyini (South Africa) on the cross-cutting issues as well as representatives of African Member States and key partners were in attendance. The workshop reviewed the outcomes of the first part of BBNJ IGC-5 in order to coordinate and debrief for the final African positions in preparation for the Resumed BBNJ IGC- 5.

The conference concluded negotiations on the BBNJ Treaty to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction on March 4, 2023, following nearly two decades of work. A later conference will formally adopt the Treaty.

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