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ABNJ Deep Seas Project Report to the SPRFMO SC

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**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



Project update to the
SPRFMO Scientific Committee

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ABNJ Deep Seas Project

**Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-sea Living Marine Resources
and Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction**



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SUMMARY

The ABNJ Deep Seas Project, in association with the other projects of the FAO Deep-seas fisheries Programme, has produced a range of publications that will be available in 2016; including a review of the international legal and policy instruments related to deep-sea fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ; technical papers on the biology and assessment of alfonso and orange roughy; the 2nd edition of the Worldwide Review of Bottom Fisheries in the High Seas; and a report on best practices in VME encounter protocols and impact assessments. Activities relevant to SPRFMO that will be undertaken over the next 12 months include: a review of traceability in deep sea fisheries; a review of rights based management; an examination of monitoring control and surveillance practices; and a characterization of decent work practices related to deep sea fisheries. The project will also trial the use of electronic monitoring systems on deep sea fishing vessels operating in the ABNJ to collect information on VMEs.

About the ABNJ Deep Seas Project

The “Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep Sea Living Resources in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Project (ABNJ Deep Seas Project for short) is a five year project designed to enhance sustainability in the use of deep-sea living resources and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ through the systematic application of an ecosystem approach.

This project has four major components:

- 1: Strengthening policy and legal frameworks for sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ deep seas;
- 2: Reducing adverse impacts on VMEs and enhanced conservation and management of components of EBSAs;
- 3: Improving planning and adaptive management for deep sea fisheries in ABNJ; and
- 4: Development and testing of methods for area-based planning.

The ABNJ Deep Seas Project started in September 2014 and is one of four projects under the Common Oceans Programme. Components 1, 2, and 3 are led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and Component 4 is led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through the World Conservation and Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC). The ABNJ Deep Seas Project is also an integral part of the FAO Deep-seas Fisheries programme, which currently consists of three other projects (Deep-sea Norway, Deep-sea Japan and SponGES), and many activities are implemented through or with support from these initiatives.

How SPRFMO is involved

SPRFMO is an important partner of the ABNJ Deep Seas Project. SPRFMO has been involved in the design and development of the Project and has agreed to contribute to activities that promote collaboration and sharing of experiences in deep-sea fisheries and associated biodiversity as well as specific activities on capacity building for developing countries. This contribution is coordinated by the SPRFMO Secretariat.

SPRFMO activities associated with the ABNJ Deep Seas Project will contribute an estimated USD 200,000 of project co-financing.

About this report

This report includes information on the current status of the Project and upcoming activities that are relevant to SPRFMO.

Current project activities, include:

- **The Project Steering Committee**

The first meeting of the Project Steering Committee was held in December 2015, and chaired by the Executive Secretary of NAFO. The PSC adopted the 2016 project work plan.

- **A review of the international legal and policy instruments related to deep-sea fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ**

This work focused on the international obligations relating to deep-sea fisheries and biodiversity conservation. It included an analysis of current policy and legal instruments, and identification of the challenges in the implementation of current management requirements. The review and a training guide (to improve implementation) were pre-released in August 2016 for the BBNJ Prepcom, and they are expected to be published in late 2016.

- **Updating the VME Portal and DataBase**

The VME Portal provides general information on VMEs and the VME DataBase contains information on VME-related measures in ABNJ for each regional fisheries body, including SPRFMO. The Project supports the ongoing maintenance and updating of the systems. (www.fao.org/in-action/vulnerable-marine-ecosystems/en/).

- **Global reviews and best practices for the assessment and management of key deep-sea species**

A global review of alfoncino (*Beryx spp.*), their fisheries, biology and management was published (www.fao.org/3/a-i5336e.pdf) in June 2016. A workshop of orange roughy experts was held in June 2016, and a review of orange roughy (*Hoplostethus atlanticus*) biology and assessment will be published in late 2016.

- **2nd edition of the Worldwide Review of Bottom Fisheries in the High Seas**

The 2009 Worldwide Review of Bottom Fisheries in the High Seas is being updated and expanded. A meeting of experts from the eight deep sea RFMOs was held in May 2016 to confirm the nature and extent of the work, and the review itself is expected to be published in late 2016.

- **Best practices in VME encounter protocols and impact assessments**

A workshop was held in May 2015, in collaboration with the Norwegian Institute of Marine Research (IMR), to facilitate the sharing of best practices and effective solutions on VME encounter protocols and impact assessments. Key messages on the challenges faced by the stakeholders in practicing these methods were identified, and a workshop report containing these has been drafted and will be published in late 2016. The main observations from the Workshop were presented at the BBNJ Preparatory Committee meeting and at the UNGA bottom fisheries review workshop.

A review of current practices and processes for VMEs: A regional review of current practices relating to VMEs is underway. Part of this work included an international workshop to review draft regional chapters (March 2015, Swakopmund, Namibia). Results from the review were presented at the BBNJ Preparatory Committee meeting in September, and the completed review will be published later this year.

- **Identification guide for deep-sea cartilaginous fishes of the south eastern Pacific Ocean**

Both a species catalogue and field identification guide dedicated to the identification of deep-sea cartilaginous fishes of the south eastern Pacific Ocean will be published in late 2016. The identification guide, available in both English and Spanish, will be tested during a training workshop, planned in November 2016 and supported by Norway, attended by scientists from countries facing the South and Central Eastern Pacific Ocean.

- **Data collection manual**
A biological data collection manual, based on the additional requirements for reporting on vulnerable marine ecosystems included in the FAO International Guidelines for Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas will be published in late 2016. The manual is structured into colour coded sections each corresponding to a taxonomic group and each including a set of explanatory and fully illustrated sheets describing the correct methodologies required to collect biological data from marine species in the field.
- **Review and synthesis of the values of the sectors operating in the ABNJ**
The project is undertaking a review of fishing, mining, oil and gas, waste disposal, cable laying, shipping and pharmaceuticals activities in the ABNJ. It will describe the nature and extent of the activities of these sectors; and where possible, quantitative/monetary valuation information.
- **Report on lessons learned on the scientific methods for describing EBSAs**
The CBD Secretariat has reported on practical options for further enhancing scientific methodologies and approaches on the description of areas meeting the EBSA criteria, based on experiences from 12 regional workshops.
- **Area based planning**
Reviews of institutional arrangements and legal instruments in the Southeast Pacific and Western Indian Ocean have been completed. Global marine datasets of biodiversity importance to these regions have been identified. A review of area-based planning tools and their applicability to deep sea ABNJ has been completed.

Up-coming project activities, include:

- Training to assist, where necessary, countries better integrate their **international obligations** relating to deep sea fishing in the ABNJ into national laws and policies.
- A review of **traceability** in deep sea fisheries, including an examination of catch documentation schemes and ecolabelling opportunities; and a value chain analysis.
- A review of **rights based management** in deep sea fisheries in the ABNJ.
- An examination of **monitoring control and surveillance** practices in deep sea fisheries in the ABNJ.
- A characterization of **decent work practices** related to deep sea fisheries.
- An analysis of **EAF practices** in the regional bodies with a mandate for the management and conservation of deep-sea fishing in the ABNJ.
- An electronic application for reporting at-sea observations from deep-sea fishing vessels is to be developed by the Information Technology Division of FAO. This application, **SmartForms**, will include an initial set of forms for VME reporting requirements. It will be available for testing by project partners interested in deploying the application in 2017.
- Trialing of **electronic monitoring systems** on deep sea fishing vessels operating in the ABNJ to collect information on VMEs.
- **Review of the implementation of the International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas.** FAO will host a second meeting on the International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas - challenges and ways forward. The first meeting was held in Busan in 2010 and reviewed the issues encountered by RFMOs and States in implementing the guidelines. The second meeting will review the challenges seven years on, and will take place in 2017.

- The Second **Project Steering Committee meeting** is scheduled for 7-8 February 2017 in Cambridge, England.

Find out more about the ABNJ Deep Seas Project

- Contact the ABNJ Deep Seas Project Coordinator (Dr Chris O'Brien) on chris.obrien@fao.org
- Visit the ABNJ Programme and the ABNJ Deep-seas Project website: www.commonoceans.org

The Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep Sea Living Resources in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Project (ABNJ Deep Seas Project for short) is a five year project supported by the Global Environment Facility, and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the United Nations Environment Programme. The UNEP project component is executed through the UNEP World Conservation and Monitoring Centre.

The Project is designed to enhance sustainability in the use of deep-sea living resources and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ through the systematic application of an ecosystem approach. It brings together over 20 partners who work on deep-sea fisheries and conservation issues in the ABNJ globally. The partnership includes regional organizations responsible for the management of deep-sea fisheries, Regional Seas Programmes, the fishing industry and international organizations. The Project aims to:

- strengthen policy and legal frameworks for sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ deep seas;
- reduce adverse impacts on VMEs and enhanced conservation and management of components of EBSAs;
- improve planning and adaptive management for deep sea fisheries in ABNJ; and
- develop and test methods for area-based planning.

The ABNJ Deep Seas Project started in September 2015 and is one of four projects under the GEF Common Oceans Programme. More information is available from www.commonoceans.org

