

FAO Statement - Informal Session on ABMTs

10 September 2018

Thank you Madam Facilitator,

We wish to comment only on 4.3.1, the matter of process and criteria for identification of ABMT. At the outset, however, allow me to say that in terms of the general framework, the hybrid approach, referred to by Tonga, New Zealand and Chile among others, appears to be an interesting one in the context of the need to ensure that we stay true to the directive to the IGC in relevant Resolutions including 72/249, that we work with existing instruments and frameworks including existing sectoral mechanisms.

On the issue of process and criteria for identification of ABMTs, FAO has noted, in statements during Prep Com and in the general statement made at the plenary of IGC, that identification of ABMTs including MPAs, should draw, where appropriate, from the processes or elements of existing mechanisms. For example for Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem (VME) identification, the FAO Deep-sea Fisheries Guidelines provides criteria for identifying VMEs based on the following characteristics:

- i. Uniqueness or rarity
- ii. Functional significance of the habitat
- iii. Fragility
- iv. Life-history traits of component species that make recovery difficult
- v. Structural complexity

Valuable to this process too are the approaches and considerations taken into account and as can be observed from the practice of States Members of Sectoral bodies such as Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) including:

1. The precautionary approach, especially if ABMTs closures are being looked at;
2. Dedicated scientific surveys; and,
3. Encounter protocols with vulnerable marine ecosystems.

The criteria and considerations referred to are documented in the recent report of FAO entitled: **Vulnerable marine ecosystems - Processes and practices in the high seas** - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5952e.pdf>

I thank you for your attention.