BBNJ IGC4 (14 March 2022)

Agenda item 6: Informal informals on cross-cutting issues

Article 51

Submitted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

This short paper is intended as a Note on the experience of the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture division in Clearing House Mechanisms.

In the BBNJ context, we note that key functionalities of a Clearing House Mechanism include:

a) a capacity building portal which provides access to publications, training workshops, courses, funding opportunities, online forums, workspaces, toolkits, webinars and targeted technical support, a way for countries to register their capacity building needs and priorities, and access to a human network of experts;

b) access to relevant principles and guidelines developed under the new instrument;

and finally, considering that Data is vital for evidence based decision making in BBNJ, that data is primarily generated within sectors, and 'data sharing' is a key issue to support multidisciplinary analysis across fisheries, transports, mining, biodiversity sectors:

c) provide an information system sharing capacity which provides compatibility with other data repositories of relevance to BBNJ, provide searchable access to resources in multiple languages, and keep information current and users actively engaged. From FAO's perspective, such information system sharing capacity is to facilitate access to data and information in particular for:

- Area-based management on the high seas: role and assessment of ABM tools is central to the discussions surrounding the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in ABNJ.
- RFMOs role in: management of fishery resources in the ABNJ, including straddling stocks and highly migratory species, maintaining a sustainable utilization of the resources, and combatting (IUU); coordinating / conserving high seas biodiversity through ABM.
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EAI): Joint databases of information and data of relevance to EIAs/ SEAs or separate databases that can be accessed through a common portal.
- Marine Genetic Resources: promoting transparency in the use of marine genetic resources, disseminate data and scientific information.
- Capacity Building and technology transfer: libraries of guidelines, rosters of expert, use of information technologies for eLearning.

Experience of FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Division on this topic

- Capacity building Portals: under agreements with Partners, FAO has tools and material to support capacity building and technology transfer. These include for example EAFNet, the FAO academy with the eLearning courses on SDG14.4.1 and SDG 14.b1, the Cloud-based platforms for scientific collaboration (iMarine) and the current BlueCloud project in the context of the

European Open Science Cloud (EOSC); o The dissemination through FAO's website of International Agreements such as the Compliance Agreement, the Port States Measures Agreement, International Plans of Actions, International Guidelines, etc.

- FAO/fisheries has very significant information systems assets relevant to BBNJ, relevant information sharing experience in particular with RFMOs, and an extensive experience of collaboration with other international organizations for systems' interoperability (e.g. with the IMO for vessels' data, or iMarine platform for science for EAF). FAO Fisheries information systems relevant to the high seas amount to 23 databases, and up to 30 through collaborations and partnerships. These traverse a range of topics including Regulations, Fishing activity, Fishery resources, biology, Biodiversity.

- FAO information systems and sharing agreements developed with RFMOs address:
  - o the management and monitoring of fishery resources in the ABNJ (RFBs, FIRMS/GRSF; FIRMS Tuna Atlas), and combatting IUU (CLAV, GR),
  - o databases of Information and data relevant to Environmental Impact Assessments (VME-DB, Database of measures on conservation and management of sharks).

- FAO's collaborations for systems interoperability inform how Area Based Management can be supported by cross-institutions decision making tool (e.g. iMarine data access and sharing policies; PAIMS - Protected Areas Information Management System).

- FAO is developing a new information system on Aquatic Genetic Resources (AqGR), which will contribute to promote transparency in the use of marine genetic resources.

- Under various programs, and notably under the cross-agencies action "Digital innovation Hand-in-Hand with fisheries and ecosystems scientific monitoring" of the UN decade of Ocean Science, FAO has collaborations on innovative digital technologies, including e.g. for Vessels Transmitted Information, or Remote sensing automated detection of Aquaculture Cages.

Challenges and opportunities

Challenges:

- Clearing/sharing information in context where i) such info stems from multiple sectors, ii) big data and other emerging technologies1 make irruption from both public and private investments without clear processes.

- New technologies can infringe on privacy, run the risk of breaking established monitoring and management frameworks, may not automatically result in efficient controls on activities.

Opportunities:

- BBNJ offer prospect to expand on existing fisheries information sharing mechanisms, adding topics on new and emerging technologies for fisheries monitoring.

- BBNJ offers opportunity of setting-up governance mechanism for clearing/sharing data or information under BBNJ.

- Discuss pros and cons of various approaches:

    o CHM: if there is a well-defined objective, a CHM can be effective for a while, unfortunately these objectives are often not well defined and the topics are too broad and require too much info.

In which case it might be more straightforward to add BBNJ issues to existing platform discussions.

o other approaches, e.g. information sharing partnerships such as FIRMS or VME-DB that promote data sharing principles for a fair and equitable use of information across domains; e.g. a multisectoral decision support system platform such as iMarine with a public-private business model enabling data access, sharing and use, supported with established data access and sharing policies.

- BBNJ can foster international collaboration on data management, equity and privacy challenges posed by emerging technologies; on promotion of standards; on development of appropriate regulations, guidelines and best practices for information systems.