

Statement delivered by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO

Tuesday 22 April 2025 17:40

D. Issues pertaining to the operation of the Clearing-House Mechanism under the BBNJ Agreement

Thank you Mme Co-Chair

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, as the only UN body mandated entirely on marine science, services, and capacity development, has cultivated extensive expertise over decades in designing, operating, and interconnecting a sophisticated network of data and information systems crucial for understanding and managing our oceans.

Central to this effort is the Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS). More than just a system, OBIS is a globally accessible and FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) data repository and a dynamic network comprising national and regional nodes, alongside a dedicated community of practice. This collaborative structure is designed to collectively consolidate and disseminate comprehensive marine biodiversity data, which importantly includes data pertaining to Marine Genetic Resources (MGR), thereby supporting transparency and equitable access in line with BBNJ objectives. To illustrate the wealth of information, OBIS already holds information on 2.7 million sampling events in ABNJ.

Operating under the overarching Ocean Data and Information System (ODIS), the IOC is actively enhancing the discoverability of ocean information. ODIS provides the technical framework for interoperability, fostering a globally connected and interoperable network of distributed information systems and data hubs. These interconnected hubs are being actively piloted at regional levels in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), and the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDs). This regional piloting ensures the systems are inclusive and built with the needs of developing states in mind, offering a practical pathway for supporting the BBNJ Clearing-House Mechanism's goals of fostering transparency and collaboration.

The IOC's commitment to free and open access and its dedication to strengthening marine science capacity in developing countries further underscore its potential to provide robust support for the BBNJ CHM.

As highlighted during the Side Event that IOC organised today with the missions of Norway and Maldives, the CHM needs to fully recognise the needs of SIDS in terms of capacity development and technology transfer, as well as provide tailored services co-designed end-users, such as matchmaking capacity building needs with existing opportunities. Within this, Regional bodies working at ocean basin scales, including our own IOC regional sub-commissions, can play a

critical role in supporting cooperative approaches in capacity development and awareness raising to ensure a dynamic and functional CHM.

As a competent intergovernmental organization, IOC will respond to requirements from UNCLOS and other international instruments. Furthermore, the IOC may act as a joint specialized mechanism of the organizations of the UN system that have agreed to use IOC for certain responsibilities in the fields of marine sciences and ocean services, allowing it to work across UN bodies and mechanisms, in synergy if not partnership.

In closing Mme CoChair, let me highlight that IOC is ready to contribute to the development of the CHM through its technical expertise to any feasibility study or expert groups the PrepCom may wish to initiate to inform its work on the CHM.

We heard the need for a mapping exercise, operational flowcharts to visualise the connections and action points, including data flows and identification of any potential bottlenecks as well as the suggestion of a phased approach starting with a pilot phase allowing prototyping parts of the system such as the cruise notification system and provision of the standard batch identifier.

The IOC Assembly will be meeting at the end of June to review the engagement of IOC in various UN processes, including the BBNJ agreement, and this would be an opportunity to convey to IOC Member States any request emanating from the Preparatory Commission.