

**United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans
and the Law of the Sea**
Twenty-Fifth meeting UN Headquarters, New York, USA
16 – 20 June 2025

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2025

Task 11.12.2

Maintain relationship with United Nations (UN) organizations based in New York, including the UN Division on Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea (UN-DOA-LOS)

High level summary:

- United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea is intended to identify specific issues where coordination and cooperation at the intergovernmental and inter-agency levels addressing UNCLOS issues should be enhanced.
- The aspirations of IHO's S-100 framework were presented as an offer for enhanced standardization of interoperable marine data streams embracing all aspects of the modelling of the statics and dynamics of the oceans navigable water.
- With the realistic expectation of the soon ratification of the BBNJ instruments, tools were presented to assist Coastal States in the planning and design process for the establishment of new Marine Protected Areas within or adjacent to their respective sea areas of jurisdiction.

Details:

In 1999, the UN General Assembly decided to establish the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (the Consultative Process) in order to facilitate the annual review by the General Assembly, in an effective and constructive manner, of developments in ocean affairs and the law of the sea by considering the report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea and by suggesting particular issues to be considered by it, with an emphasis on identifying areas where coordination and cooperation at the intergovernmental and inter-agency levels should be enhanced (resolution 54/33).

The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) of the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) has been providing an ongoing programme of assistance to States and intergovernmental organizations in the field of oceans and the law of the sea since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982. DOALOS is the designated body to conduct the annual meetings of the Informal Consultative Process. This year's meeting focused its discussions on the theme "**Capacity building and the transfer of marine technology: New developments, approaches and challenges**".

Around 30 UN Member States, the EU and a dozen IGOs and NGOs contributed to the deliberations. The IHO was represented by Secretary-General Dr Mathias Jonas. In his presentation titled "**Towards the digital twin of the navigable waters**" he showcased the latest achievements towards the digital twin of the navigable waters through IHO's S-100 standardization framework for customized data products addressing a wide range of marine geospatial data across domains.

Other presenters stressed that capacity building and the transfer of marine technology have long been recognised as key components in ensuring all States have an ability to better understand the marine environment and to develop a global common good to manage our seas and ocean responsibly. With

significant efforts being undertaken through multilateral agencies, international and regional frameworks and direct State contributions the provision of aid support is not insignificant. However, given the lack of visibility, coordination and mechanisms to ensure cohesion there are areas for improvement. Numerous discussions underscored the persistence of siloed working practices and the absence of standardized approaches necessary to ensure interoperability and seamless data exchange. Remote sensing was highlighted as great resource but still underused.

Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) provides States with an unprecedented opportunity to protect biological diversity in the High Seas Based on the reported status of ratifications (see the link: <https://highseasalliance.org/treaty-ratification/table-of-countries/>). It is expected that the Agreement will enter into force on 1st January 2027.

Area Based Management Tools, including Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), function as key pillars of the BBNJ Agreement. Successful MPA designation and implementation will require expertise and collaboration across a wide range of areas, from multilateral stakeholder management to social and economic analysis and the integration of traditional knowledge systems. In designating High Seas MPAs, States will need to engage deeply with scientific and detailed geospatial data in the process of robustly characterizing candidate areas for protection. With these elements of the proposal process in mind, the Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory presented an offer of in-kind support through no-cost data services to States engaged in MPA proposals under the BBNJ Agreement. The offered services are bespoke and at the direction of State MPA leadership, encompassing any combination of geospatial analysis, scientific networking and advisory services, and thought partnership and external review.

The yearly theme of the Informal Consultative Process is to be set every December by means of an UN General Assembly Resolution for the forthcoming year. The Secretariat will decide on future participation according to the relevance of the particular theme. The collection of all event materials including the panel programme, abstracts, presentations and biographies of the panellists can be found under: https://www.un.org/depts/los/consultative_process/consultative_process.htm

Photo

Common issues that have inhibited the uptake of satellite technologies

- Lack of understanding (AI and satellite data)
- Lack of permission to use open source data or platforms
- Mismatch in pace and ability to experiment
- Lack of resources and time to take part in codevelopment
- Lack of standardization in data format



Illustration: Courtesy of Global Fishing Watch

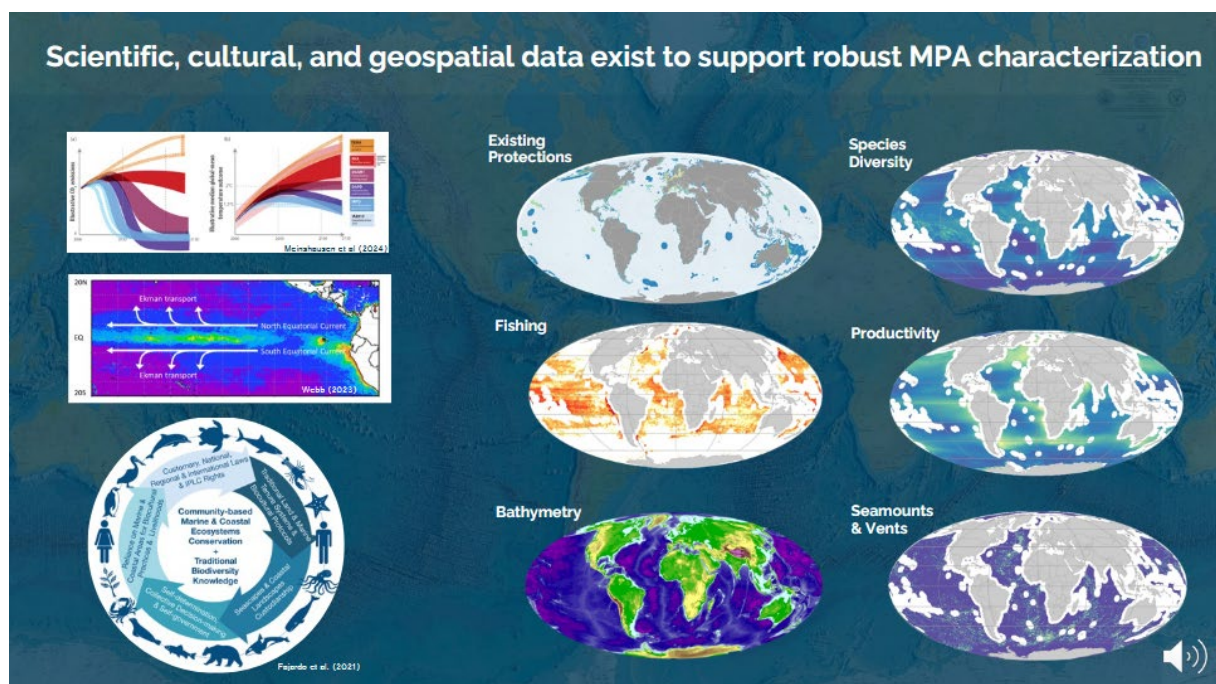


Illustration: Courtesy of Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory, University of California, Santa Barbara

Upcoming meetings:

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