

High-Level Conference: Navigating the RFMO-BBNJ Interface – Dialogue on Cooperation and Coherence

This high-level event will be organised by EBCD in partnership with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and with the support of the European Parliament Committee on Fisheries (PECH) Chair MEP Crespo Diaz.

Date: Tuesday 2 June 2026, 09:00 – 17:30 CEST

Location: European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Room VMA 22, Rue Van Maerlant / Van Maerlantstraat 2, Brussels, Belgium

Context and Rationale

The entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement marks a new phase in ocean governance and raises important questions about its interaction with existing international frameworks and bodies (IFBs), including RFMOs. As discussions progressed through PrepCom III and ahead of COP1, there is growing recognition that early dialogue is essential to identify opportunities for cooperation and anticipate potential challenges in implementation, highlighting the need for practical exchange and shared understanding at this stage.

RFMOs have long-established mandates, scientific processes, and monitoring in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Whilst the BBNJ Agreement recognises the importance of cooperation and complementarity with them, practical questions remain regarding how interaction between the BBNJ and RFMOs may evolve around consultation, data-sharing, environmental impact assessments and area-based measures.

This event provides a platform for dialogue among RFMOs, the European Commission, the European Parliament, Member States, UN bodies, and the fisheries sector at a key moment between PrepCom III and COP1. By bringing together fisheries and environment communities, the event seeks to build trust and address how early cooperation can contribute to coherence and create opportunities across ocean governance frameworks, facilitating successful implementation.

Objectives

- **Encourage informal exchange and provide a platform for dialogue** on how RFMOs can/should interact with various elements of the BBNJ Agreement.
- **Explore opportunities and challenges for cooperation** between fisheries governance bodies, UN institutions, Member States and the BBNJ.
- **Strengthen shared understanding between fisheries and environment communities** on where and how RFMOs may interface with the BBNJ Agreement.
- **Provide an opportunity for RFMOs to showcase existing contributions** that will support the objectives of the BBNJ Agreement.
- **Contribute to negotiations following PrepCom III and ahead of COP1** building on the discussions on cooperation with IFBs.

Expected Outcomes

- **A concise post-event press release** capturing key insights, identified synergies and emerging challenges for cooperation.
- **Increased visibility of existing RFMO measures and contributions** that are relevant to broader BBNJ objectives.
- **Stronger informal networks and channels for exchange** across fisheries, environment and multilateral communities to support ongoing dialogue.