

## PRESS RELEASE

### Turning BBNJ into action with RFMOs

*Early consultation, data clarity and stronger coordination emerge at high-level conference in Brussels*

**Brussels, 10 June 2026** — A high-level conference convened by the European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD), in partnership with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and with the support of the Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Fisheries (PECH), outlined key opportunities for greater cooperation between Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement to improve the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity.

The conference, “**Navigating the RFMO-BBNJ Interface – Dialogue on Cooperation and Coherence**”, which took place on **Tuesday 2 June 2026 in Brussels**, was held at a key moment between the third session of the BBNJ Preparatory Commission in March 2026 and the first Conference of the Parties (COP1) – planned to take place from 11 to 22 January 2027. It brought together the EU's Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans Costas Kadis, the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE), Members of the European Parliament, the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UN DOALOS), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), several RFMOs, national governments, the scientific community, civil society and the fishing industry.

Speakers and panellists all agreed that they **want the BBNJ Agreement to succeed** in its objectives yet recognised that successful implementation will depend on cooperation, complementarity and practical arrangements that work across existing institutions and processes. Several concrete suggestions were highlighted during the discussions:

- **A scoping or inventory exercise** should be undertaken to map existing RFMO measures, tools, processes and gaps, so that BBNJ implementation can build on what already exists and identify where further action may be needed.
- **Regular and early consultation** between the BBNJ process and RFMOs should be built into the process, rather than only once proposals for area-based measures are already advanced.
- **Data-sharing arrangements and contact points** need to be clarified, including what data is available, what data needs to be provided, what remains confidential, who provides it and for what purpose it is needed. Data gaps need to be identified and addressed.
- **RFMO scientific bodies should be recognised as key providers of expertise and data** in areas and for species falling within their competence, while also contributing to a broader understanding of wider ecosystem interactions.

- **National and EU-level fisheries and environment authorities must engage in more systematic dialogue** so that government positions are coherent across BBNJ and RFMO processes.
- **Cooperation arrangements should be practical, responsive and tailored**, taking into account different mandates, timelines, capacities and resources.
- **The BBNJ should be used as an opportunity for reflection and improvement**, with RFMOs looking at where they can strengthen best practice.

The conference also highlighted that RFMOs are already delivering biodiversity outcomes in areas beyond national jurisdiction through **spatial measures, including Other Effective areas-based Conservation Measures (OECMs), scientific review processes, monitoring, control and surveillance systems** and other conservation and management measures. Participants stressed that making these contributions more visible will be important for strengthening shared understanding and supporting more effective cooperation under the BBNJ framework.

At the same time, the discussion recognised that effective cooperation will require **clarity on roles, better communication** across institutions and continued **efforts to bridge** fisheries and environment communities at national, regional and global level.

The conference provided an opportunity for direct exchange among actors who will need to work together as the BBNJ Agreement moves from negotiation to implementation. It also helped identify areas where practical cooperation can begin now, including on consultation modalities, interoperability of systems, scientific exchange and national-level coordination.

As preparations continue ahead of COP1, the conference underlined that **the priority is now to turn broad support for cooperation into workable arrangements in practice.**

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The European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD) is a non-profit organisation based in Brussels, Belgium, specialising in maritime affairs, fisheries, aquaculture and oceans governance, across the EU and international levels. Towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14, we aim to promote dialogue and build bridges between various stakeholders from the private sector to the research community and policymakers to achieve compromise on the way to sustainably manage the oceans and all activities related to aquatic food and marine biodiversity.

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