



**2023/0353(NLE)**

23.1.2024

# DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Fisheries

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on the proposal for a Council decision conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ)  
(COM(2023)580 – C9-xxxx/20xx – 2023/0353(NLE))

Rapporteur for opinion: Predrag Fred Matić

PA\_Leg\_Consent

## SHORT JUSTIFICATION

### Background of the Proposal

The European Union is actively engaged in addressing the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond national jurisdiction through the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), known as the “BBNJ Agreement”.

Initiated in 2004, the EU, authorized by the Council, conducted negotiations from 2016 to 2023, resulting in the adoption of the BBNJ Agreement on 19 June 2023. The EU signed this pivotal agreement on 20 September 2023.

The BBNJ Agreement focuses on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in nearly two-thirds of the world's oceans, thereby contributing to a healthier marine environment and to maintaining the long-term profitability of the fisheries sector. It addresses marine genetic resources, benefit-sharing, area-based management tools, environmental impact assessments, and capacity-building.

As the third implementing agreement under UNCLOS for the EU, this agreement modernizes UNCLOS to align with developments in marine biodiversity since 1982. It supports the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Goal 14, and contributes to the Global Biodiversity Framework's target of conserving 30% of the world's lands and oceans by 2030. Additionally, it aids in implementing the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, emphasizing the synergy in addressing global challenges.

### Content of the Proposal

The BBNJ Agreement tackles the challenges posed by approximately two-thirds of the world's oceans, which are collectively owned but lack specific ownership by any individual entity. This global common good is conserved through binding and voluntary measures, focusing on better cooperation and coordination among stakeholders. It aims to combat biological diversity loss, ecosystem degradation, and climate change impacts on marine ecosystems in areas beyond national jurisdiction, covering issues such as warming, ocean deoxygenation, acidification, pollution (including plastic pollution), and unsustainable use.

The BBNJ Agreement further emphasizes advancing global scientific research, ensuring compatibility with existing stakeholder responsibilities, and addressing inequalities, particularly for developing countries. It strives to increase collaboration among regional seas organisations and regional fisheries management organisations.

The BBNJ Agreement aims to align UNCLOS with contemporary issues and promote sustainable practices on a global scale.

### Opinion of the Rapporteur

The Rapporteur commends the timely and effective measures agreed on the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Conference. He is of the opinion that the international legally binding instrument represents a crucial step forward in addressing the complex challenges faced by marine ecosystems on a global scale. A healthy marine environment with healthy fish stocks and rich biodiversity is crucial to ensuring a prosperous future for fisheries communities.

The Rapporteur welcomes the swift transposition of the agreed-upon general obligations laid out in the Agreement, ensuring the effective implementation of measures that promote coherence and coordination, without undermining existing instruments, frameworks, or the work of global, regional, subregional, and sectoral bodies. This commitment to alignment and collaboration is vital for the success of the Agreement and its overarching goal of conserving and sustainably using marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction.

In conclusion, the Rapporteur stands in support of the Agreement under UNCLOS and endorses its swift adoption, emphasizing the importance of cooperative efforts in safeguarding the health and resilience of marine ecosystems in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

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The Committee on Fisheries calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to recommend approval of the proposal for a Council decision conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ).