

OceanCare Statement

**Biological Diversity beyond National Jurisdiction Preparatory Committee I
United Nations Headquarters, New York
28th March – 8th April 2016**

Distinguished Co-Chairs and Delegates,

I have the honour to address you on behalf of OceanCare, an organization that has strongly and consistently supported the BBNJ Working Group. We at OceanCare believe that the Working Group has provided an excellent forum for the exchange of views among States and stakeholders. We see that a consensus has now emerged within the international community for a commitment toward the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity beyond national jurisdiction. We are pleased to participate in this next important step.

OceanCare envisions the BBNJ process as an opportunity to advance the management of human-generated underwater noise pollution in the ocean.

OceanCare recognizes the urgent need for **environmental impact assessments** (EIAs) to be required for all activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Assessments must be comprehensive and mandatory; at a minimum they should collect baseline biological and environmental data, model sound propagation and areas of likely impact, assess cumulative and synergistic effects, describe monitoring measures, and consider the risks from the proposed activities as compared with other alternatives. This regulatory transparency will require industries to build noise mitigation measures into their plans starting from a project's inception.

OceanCare supports spatial and temporal restrictions such as **marine protected areas** (MPAs) that are known to be effective in protecting wildlife from the impacts of human-generated underwater noise pollution. Marine protected areas outside national jurisdiction must either be large enough to provide a buffer from the effects of noise or must trigger limitations on activities outside protected areas to prevent noise from spreading into them. 'Quiet zones' should be established in key regions to create areas where noise does not rise above ambient sound levels.

OceanCare is concerned that the exploration and harvesting of **marine genetic resources** (MGRs) must require environmental impact assessments that consider the effects of underwater noise pollution generated by the associated activities. It must also be recognized that harvested marine genetic resources will be eliminated from the food web, affecting the delicate balance of biological diversity and making ocean ecosystems more vulnerable to the cumulative and synergistic impacts that include noise pollution.

OceanCare would endorse **capacity building** workshops for international bodies and developing nations on the effects of human-generated underwater noise pollution and how to include them in environmental impact assessments. Some international bodies have made a start on managing the industrial noise for their sectors, but dedicated capacity would increase the consistency and breadth of these efforts. Also training on how noise from activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction impacts the species and ecosystems in MPAs within State waters would enhance the management capacity of those nationally protected areas.

The **regulation of human-generated underwater noise pollution** in the ocean is necessary to preserve marine biological diversity in areas outside national jurisdiction. Individual States cannot adequately manage noise because of its cross-boundary nature, and existing international bodies and instruments have neither the capacity nor the competence to effectively address the challenges.

OceanCare therefore calls upon the international community to regulate human-generated underwater noise pollution through the BBNJ instrument and to require the use of the best available science, the application of best practice standards, and the enforcement of mandatory quieting measures.

We thank you for your attention.

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