

**Online Symposium
3-4 March 2021**

***For an active participation
in the international management of living marine species***

Concept Note

Background

Oceans and seas represent 97% of water on Earth, covering 70% of our planet. In addition to playing a vital role in the economic well-being of millions of people around the world by facilitating trade and creating jobs, the oceans and seas also guarantee food and oxygen, regulate the climate, and are home to a great diversity in terms of species.

However, as their unrestrained use going against the principle of sustainability, marine resources, ecosystems and habitats have become increasingly degraded. These are subject to major upheavals, resulting from the impact of human activities, carried out in the oceans and in the neighbouring areas. By increasing exponentially, they have worsened the consequences for the state of the marine environment and generate multiple pollution - wastewater, pesticides, hydrocarbons and even plastics. In many seas around the world, fish populations are overexploited by overfishing. The development of the blue economy, maritime traffic, the exploitation of offshore hydrocarbons and even aquaculture are creating new pressures on the marine environment.

Faced with this development, the conservation and exploitation of the oceans, seas and marine resources - which have become a priority for the international community - are now the subject of governance that is at the center of the global dialogue on development. This dialogue offers not only an opportunity to exchange ideas, but also to bring together stakeholders from the maritime sector from all countries and to agree on new principles to be followed, values to be respected, and priorities for a new governance of the oceans that would be more efficient and more beneficial for ecosystems, people and their livelihoods.

Thus, the management of marine resources, initially a community affair, then national within the limit of the exclusive economic zone, has passed to an "*international administration*" based on measures or rules enacted on a global scale. The development of conditions and standards for the exploitation of marine resources and marine ecosystems, consequences of international negotiations, is now the work of RFMOs or international Conventions whose provisions are binding on States, once adopted and ratified.

As a result, many developing countries are forced to apply measures for the exploitation and management of their own marine zones and aquatic resources, those measures that are decided within relevant international bodies and in which developing countries have not participated or not at all.

Even if nowadays, there is a real awareness of the developing countries, notably Africans, of the need to engage in the international management of the oceans, it is clear, that their involvement throughout the development of rules for the international management of marine resources process, remains low.

It is not enough to be represented in the final stages of international negotiations relating to the conservation and exploitation of the oceans, seas and marine resources. Developing countries must in fact not only ensure active participation by appointing their best specialists in these negotiations, but also by being present at the starting of the process, namely within scientific debates. In addition to provide the best possible diagnosis and advice, scientists will ultimately determine the conditions for the sustainable exploitation of marine resources and ecosystems.

Aware of this hindering factor which affects developing countries, many initiatives have been undertaken with a view to greater involvement of these countries in this process.

Whether it is a generous provision of funds to enable nationals of developing countries to participate in these international negotiations, or the organization of preparatory meetings aimed an efficient participation by the representatives of these countries, this had not a tangible improvement.

- *What are the reasons for the persistence of this limited participation of developing countries in the international management of the seas, despite the expressed will and the efforts made?*
- *What are the actions or solutions that could be proposed to strengthen the participation of developing countries in international negotiations on marine management?*

That are in substance the main questions to which the experts and the participants in this meeting should find the answers.

Presentation of the symposium:

The organization of this meeting is part of ATLAFCO's 2020 action plan and aims to translate the will expressed by the Ministers of ATLAFCO during the 10th Ministerial Conference held in 2018 in Abidjan, who confirmed in the final declaration of the Conference, their commitment to:

- ✓ Ensure active participation of member states in international bodies dealing with fisheries and aquaculture issues;
- ✓ Work for the harmonization of their positions in order to better reflect their interests;
- ✓ Strengthen the application of international regulations related to the fishing sector.

Objectives:

- **Main objective: More active participation in bodies dealing with fisheries issues**

The aim of the meeting will be to *identify and propose the necessary actions for a better participation by Members States in international bodies dealing with the management of living marine species.*

- **Specific objectives:**

- Raising awareness on the principles and issues of international governance of oceans and seas;
- Awareness of the value of participating in negotiations within international bodies on questions relating to the international management of living marine species;
- Assessing the current situation of the participation of Member States in the international governance of seas and oceans;
- Identification of ways and means to strengthen the participation of MS in these debates;

Expected results:

The symposium should enable participants:

- To grasp the importance of the participation of MS in the international management of seas, oceans, and marine resources.
- To identify the challenges and barriers faced by Member States with regard to their participation in these negotiations;
- To examine ways and means to strengthening such participation and make recommendations in terms of priorities for action at the regional level for a better involvement of the States of the region in the international governance of fisheries.
- To Inform MS about the principles, mandates and responsibilities of RFMOs, the rights and obligations of the parties as well as the benefits of effective participation in international fisheries negotiations;
- To define the modalities for strengthening existing mechanisms or those to be established for a coherent voice of the Member States in RFMOs and other relevant international forums.

Course of the Symposium

The symposium will take place over 2 days. It will be structured in 4 major sessions which successively address:

- Presentation of the legal and institutional framework for international governance of the oceans, seas and living marine resources;
- Presentation of examples of international organizations/conventions for the management of marine species in order to determine the interest for the States of ATLAFCO region to participate;
- Characterization and assessment of the participation of ATLAFCO MS in international negotiations on issues of marine living resources;
- Proposals for ways to strengthen the effective participation and representation of the interests of parties in international fisheries governance mechanisms.

First session: The legal and institutional framework for international governance of the oceans, seas and living marine resources

This section should make it possible to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of governance of the seas and oceans for sustainable growth and prosperity;
- Recall the history of the law of the sea, the main institutional and legal arrangements in force in ocean governance with an emphasis on international mechanisms on fisheries;
- Examine the current challenges and gaps at global, regional and national levels;
- Give an opinion on the measures that should be taken to ensure a better representation of the interests of stakeholders in the fisheries sector in ocean governance mechanisms.

Second session: The sustainable exploitation of living marine resources and the international management of the oceans

In this section the participants will debate the challenges of the exploitation and management of marine biological resources - especially fisheries - through themes such as food security, the adoption of the systemic approach, the creation of marine protected areas. (MPAs),..

Third session: The participation of the ATLAFCO MS in international negotiations on issues of living marine resources

This session will be devoted to:

- The characterization and the evaluation of the participation of African countries in international fisheries governance through the use of a questionnaire and the appreciation of the heads of international organizations present at the symposium;

- Identification of the specific difficulties/hurdles to the active participation of the ATLAFCO MS in international negotiations on fisheries.

Fourth session: Improving the performance of developing countries in international negotiations on the management of marine species

This session will be devoted to the presentation of:

- Proposals for measures/actions likely to significantly improve the performance of the participation of developing countries in international bodies responsible for the management of living marine resources.
- Summary of the main conclusions

Final session: Special communication

This session will be dedicated to the communication related to IWC/WG-OE (Working Group on Operational Effectiveness).