INPO Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Oceânicas

MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

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BBNJ2026

3rd SYMPOSIUM RIO DE JANEIRO

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Prepared by

Ana Vaz, Priscila Lange, Anna Scofano, Andrei Polejack, Murray Roberts and Catie Brown based on the event transcript and minutes from the 3rd BBNJ Symposium, Rio de Janeiro, March 2026.

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Summary

Held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from March 10–12, 2026, the 3rd BBNJ Symposium brought together more than 500 in-person and online participants to discuss the role of science and knowledge in the BBNJ.

The event presented implementation of the BBNJ Agreement as the defining challenge for the next phase of global ocean governance. Across the panels, a consistent message was that the treaty's success will depend on turning legal commitments into workable institutions, credible rules, and practical tools for decision-making. Science emerged as the central pillar of this effort: not only as the basis for understanding biodiversity in ABNJ, but also as the foundation for environmental impact assessments, area-based management tools, compliance, and adaptive governance in a rapidly changing ocean. Speakers repeatedly stressed that the science-policy interface must be continuous, inclusive, and operational, supported by interoperable data systems, the Clearing-House Mechanism, and a strong Scientific and Technical Body capable of linking knowledge to policy in transparent and policy-relevant ways.

The panels also highlighted that implementation cannot succeed without addressing structural inequalities in finance, scientific capacity, access to technology, and participation. A recurring theme was that equity must shape every dimension of the new regime, from marine genetic resources and benefit-sharing to the inclusion of developing countries, large ocean states, and Indigenous peoples and local communities as active participants in routine governance. Climate change, ecological connectivity, and weak data coverage were presented as major reasons why static or fragmented approaches will be insufficient. Instead, the symposium discussion pointed toward adaptive, ecosystem-based, and coordinated governance across institutions and scales. Taken together, the symposium's main message was that effective BBNJ implementation will require more than conservation ambition: it demands sustained investment in science, stronger institutional coherence, meaningful inclusion of diverse knowledge systems, and practical international cooperation capable of governing a dynamic and interconnected ocean.

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Photo: Hannes Klostermann / Ocean Image Bank

Acronyms

30x30	A central goal of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to protect and effectively manage at least 30% of the world's land and inland waters, and 30% of coastal and marine areas by 2030 to combat biodiversity loss
ABMT	Area-Based Management Tool
ABNJ	Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction
ABS	Access and Benefit-Sharing
AI	Artificial Intelligence
APEI	Area of Particular Environmental Interest
BBNJ	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction
CARE	Collective benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility, and Ethics. Guidelines that complement the FAIR principles by focusing on people and purpose in data management
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBTMT	Capacity-Building and Transfer of Marine Technology
CHM	Clearing-House Mechanism
CORDIO	Coastal Oceans Research and Development in the Indian Ocean
DOALOS	Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, United Nations
DOSI	Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative
DSI	Digital Sequence Information
CIL-NUS	Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore
COP	Conference of the Parties
EBSA	Ecologically or Biologically Significant marine Area
eDNA	Environmental DNA
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
FAIR	Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (of the United Nations)
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GBIF	Global Biodiversity Information Facility

GEF	Global Environment Facility
ICC	Implementation and Compliance Committee
ICES	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
IFBs	Instruments, Frameworks and Bodies
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisation
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INPO	National Institute for Ocean Research (Brazil)
IOC-UNESCO	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPLC	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
ISA	International Seabed Authority
MCTI	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Brazil)
MGR	Marine Genetic Resources
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OBIS	Ocean Biodiversity Information System
OBON	Ocean Biomolecular Observing Network
PSSA	Particularly Sensitive Sea Area
PrepCom	Preparatory Commission (body setting up implementation structures)
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organization
RFB	Regional Fishery Body
RNP	Rede Nacional de Ensino e Pesquisa (Brazil)
STB	Scientific and Technical Body
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VME	Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem

Photo: Noemi Merz / Ocean Image Bank

Opening Remarks

Andrea Latgé

Secretary for Strategic Policies and Programs (SEPPE), Brazilian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MCTI)

Amandine Chevé

Blue Ventures Manager, OceanPact

Ademilson Zamboni

Director, OCEANA Brazil

Julian Barbière

Head of the Marine Policy and Regional Coordination Section, IOC-UNESCO

J. Murray Roberts

Director, Mara Consultants

Segen Estefen

Director-General, National Institute for Ocean Research (INPO)

Over 230 participants from across the globe convened in Rio de Janeiro over the three days of the 3RD BBNJ SYMPOSIUM, 10–12 March 2026

Opening session with keynote speakers at the Museu do Amanhã, Rio de Janeiro

Photo: Marcio Quimbundo / Unsplash

A Historic Transition: From Agreement to Action

The entry into force of the legally-binding 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 Agreement), also called the High Seas Treaty, on 17 January 2026 marks a defining shift from decades of negotiation to the urgent phase of implementation. This moment carries both optimism and responsibility: while the Treaty represents a landmark achievement for ocean governance, its real impact will depend on how quickly and effectively it is translated into action. With areas beyond national jurisdiction covering 64% of the ocean surface, the coming years are critical for turning political commitments into tangible conservation and management outcomes.

Centering Science and Knowledge in Ocean Governance

In the BBNJ context, science emerges as the foundation for understanding ocean systems and guiding evidence-based decision-making. The best scientific knowledge to guide implementation must go beyond traditional scientific approaches. The Treaty innovates by calling for the integration of diverse knowledge systems, including Indigenous, traditional and local knowledge. The effectiveness of the Agreement will depend not only on generating knowledge, but on ensuring it is accessible, shared, and meaningfully connected to societal processes.

Connecting Science, Policy, and Innovation

Bridging the gaps between science, policy, and practice is a key priority. Strengthening the science–policy interface is essential to ensure that knowledge informs timely and effective decision-making. At the same time, technological innovation, such as remote sensing, autonomous systems, artificial intelligence and other emerging data tools, offers new opportunities to better observe and manage the high seas at the scale needed for implementation and compliance of the Agreement. Long-term data will allow the knowledge of natural variability and the effectiveness of management tools to protect biodiversity. However, these advances must be supported by collaborative frameworks, data-sharing mechanisms, and partnerships across sectors, including engagement with the private sector.

Building Capacity, Equity, and Global Collaboration

The implementation of the Agreement highlights persistent inequalities in access to scientific capacity, technology, and data. Addressing these gaps is essential to ensure equitable participation and shared benefits. Strengthening capacity, promoting technology transfer, and advancing open and interoperable data systems are key components of this effort. Global collaboration remains at the heart of this process, reflecting the interconnected nature of the ocean and the need for coordinated, inclusive approaches that bring together countries, institutions, and knowledge holders at all levels.

Photo: Dani Escayola / Ocean Image Bank

Keynote:

BBNJ PrepCom Co-chairs

H.E. Ambassador Janine Coye-Felson

Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations

H.E. Adam McCarthy

Chief Counsel and First Assistant Secretary at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia

> We stand at a moment of transition where that negotiated vision must now be translated into functioning institutions, practical cooperation and meaningful outcomes for the ocean.
>
> **Janine Coye-Felson**

Main takeaways

From Negotiation to Implementation: A Historic Turning Point

The BBNJ Agreement has entered a new phase, marking a long-awaited transition from negotiation to implementation. H.E. Janine Coye-Felson emphasized that this moment represents the realization of a global ambition to protect biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, noting that "the work of negotiation has given way to the work of implementation." Both speakers highlighted that the upcoming first Conference of the Parties (COP) will be critical in translating the treaty's vision into action. H.E. Adam McCarthy reinforced this by underscoring that while entry into force is a milestone, the real challenge lies in operationalizing the Agreement and delivering tangible outcomes for the ocean.

Building the Institutional Architecture of the Regime

The BBNJ regime will depend on the institutions currently being designed through the Preparatory Commission (PrepCom). This phase is foundational, with work underway on governance structures, financial mechanisms, and data systems that will determine how the Agreement will function in practice. These institutional arrangements are not abstract, but essential enablers of participation by states, scientists, and stakeholders. Adam McCarthy emphasized the need to create a "living, breathing regime" supported by robust governance, institutional, and financial frameworks. Both speakers stressed the urgency of completing this work ahead of the first COP to ensure the Agreement is fit for purpose from the outset.

> “The treaty is words on a page without the work done to build... a living breathing regime.
>
> **Adam McCarthy**

Science, Knowledge Systems, and the Science–Policy Interface

A strong emphasis was placed on the central role of science and knowledge in guiding implementation. The Agreement is explicitly grounded in the best available scientific information, alongside the traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local and traditional communities, which together will underpin all aspects of the new regime. The Scientific and Technical Body is thus a critical institution whose independence must be safeguarded and which must be equipped with the necessary, and multidiverse, expertise. Ambassador Janine Coye-Felson further underscored that one of the Agreement’s key innovations is its ability to integrate diverse knowledge systems, noting that success will depend on how effectively knowledge moves “from discovery to decision.” She also emphasized that science-policy interfaces must be inclusive, participatory, and designed to engage stakeholders beyond traditional scientific communities and that consultation processes must ensure effective communication to meaningfully engage all the stakeholders.

Multilateral Cooperation, Equity, and Shared Ocean Stewardship

The BBNJ Agreement is a milestone for multilateralism and a platform for more equitable global ocean governance. Ambassador Janine Coye-Felson highlighted how the Agreement enables collaboration across countries, disciplines, and knowledge systems, creating a shared community of ocean stewardship that transcends national boundaries. She pointed to provisions on marine genetic resources and benefit-sharing as key steps toward leveling inequalities and fostering more inclusive participation. Adam McCarthy broadened this perspective, noting that the success of the Agreement will not only impact ocean conservation but also serve as a test of the international community’s ability to cooperate effectively. Both speakers emphasized that achieving global goals will depend on the success of this collective effort.

Photo: Masayuki Agawa / Ocean Image Bank

Panel 1:

The Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction – ABNJ

J. Murray Roberts, Director
Mara Consultants Ltd and Professor, University of Edinburgh

Jose Angel Alvarez Perez
Professor, Universidade do Vale do Itajaí (UNIVALI)

Ana M.M. Sequeira
Research Director of MegaMove, The Australian National University

Alex Rogers
Professor, The National Oceanographic Centre (NOC)

Jesse Cleary
Geographer, Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab (MGEL), Duke University

Nátali Piccolo
Director of the Marine and Coastal Program, Conservation International Brazil

Panel 1: The Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction – ABNJ

Main takeaways

Biodiversity and Knowledge Gaps in the Deep and Open Ocean:

The deep and open ocean, which constitutes the vast majority of the planet, is characterized by extreme environmental gradients (e.g., light, pressure, temperature, and limited food availability), yet supports highly diverse and specialized ecosystems. Despite increasing scientific exploration, deep and open ocean ecosystems remain significantly unknown, as continued discoveries of new species and habitats reveal significant knowledge gaps.

Connectivity and Implications for Conservation Planning:

Ocean connectivity, spanning physical circulation, ecological interactions, and species movements, was identified as a central consideration for BBNJ implementation. Highly migratory species (e.g., whales, sharks, seabirds) traverse ocean basins, relying on a network of habitats for feeding, breeding, and migration. In addition, vertical connectivity processes, such as daily migrations that contribute to carbon sequestration, further complicate management. These dynamics challenge static conservation approaches, requiring ABMTs and MPAs to incorporate spatio-temporal variability and protect migratory corridors and key life-history areas.

Science, Data Systems, and the Precautionary Approach:

The panel emphasized the importance of strengthening the science-policy interface to ensure that knowledge effectively informs decision-making. Global data infrastructures, such as OBIS, play a key role in aggregating biodiversity data at scale, while emerging tools, including remote sensing, AI, eDNA, and predictive modeling, offer opportunities to address data gaps, particularly in areas beyond national jurisdiction. However, uneven data coverage and uncertainty remain significant challenges. In this context, the precautionary principle was highlighted as essential, though it must be complemented by continued scientific research and technological innovation to support robust and defensible conservation measures.

Governance, Inclusion, and Coordination Mechanisms:

Speakers stressed that effective implementation of the BBNJ Agreement will depend on inclusive, multi-level governance involving governments, scientists, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities. Integrating traditional knowledge, enhancing ocean literacy, and building public awareness were identified as critical to fostering political will and societal support. Stronger coordination among existing instruments and frameworks, including early and transparent consultation processes, will be necessary to avoid conflicts and enhance cooperation. The Clearing-House Mechanism will play a central role in facilitating data sharing, interoperability, and collaboration, supported by investments in capacity building and technology transfer to ensure equitable participation. Discussions also highlighted that area-based measures must be adaptive and evidence-based, noting that permanent closures may not always be effective, and should be complemented by monitoring, technology, and scenario modeling to ensure informed, precautionary yet data-driven decision-making.

Photo: Dani Escayola / Ocean Image Bank

Panel 2:

The Science–Policy Interface

Andrei Polejack
Director of Research and Innovation, INPO

Charlotte Salpin
Senior Legal Officer, DOALOS/United Nations

David Vousden
Chief Technical Officer, Sargasso Sea Commission

Marcel Jaspars
Professor, University of Aberdeen

Mariamalia Rodríguez Chaves
Ocean Program, Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA), High Seas Alliance

Luciana Fernandes Coelho
Consultant, visiting research fellow Ocean Voices

Sonia Angélica Jurado Caicedo
SARGADOM Project, Fundación MarViva

Panel 2: The Science-Policy Interface

Main takeaways

Science as a Core Pillar of the BBNJ Agreement:

Speakers highlighted a clear evolution of science throughout the BBNJ process, from an initial role justifying the need for an agreement to becoming embedded in its architecture and implementation. Scientific concepts such as connectivity, representativity, and resilience now underpin key provisions, while institutional mechanisms (e.g., scientific bodies, clearing-house mechanisms) ensure a continuous science-policy interface. At the same time, disparities in scientific capacity across states positioned science as both a technical and equity issue, reinforcing the importance of capacity building and the transfer of marine technology.

Operationalizing Science–Policy Interfaces in Practice:

Effective implementation will depend on embedding scientific knowledge into actionable policy through structured processes. Examples from the Sargasso Sea Commission demonstrate how science can inform governance through staged approaches: assessing ecosystems, identifying knowledge gaps, and developing strategic action programs with strong stakeholder engagement. Alignment with BBNJ provisions, particularly on ABMTs, consultation, and use of best available science, was emphasized, alongside the importance of early and continuous engagement with stakeholders, who must be appropriately mapped, including the private sector and other existing institutional frameworks.

Marine Genetic Resources and Realities for Implementation:

The panel underscored key scientific and operational realities of marine genetic resource (MGR) research that must inform policy. These include the high cost of deep-sea sampling, the continued importance of physical samples alongside digital sequence information (DSI), and significant knowledge gaps in gene function. Participants stressed the need to avoid creating administrative burdens that could hinder research, while promoting standardized data practices, the adoption of minimal data sets, and equitable access to resources and benefits through capacity building.

Equity, Participation, and Inclusive Governance:

Equity and environmental justice were identified as defining features of the BBNJ Agreement, requiring meaningful inclusion of diverse stakeholders in decision-making. Consultation processes, broader participation, and inclusive rules of procedure were highlighted as critical tools to ensure transparency, accountability, and incorporation of multiple knowledge systems, including traditional knowledge. Addressing barriers such as language, access to data, and uneven scientific capacity will be essential to ensure broad and effective participation, particularly for developing countries.

Photo: Renata Romeo / Ocean Image Bank

Coordination, Data Sharing, and Institutional Interoperability:

Speakers emphasized the importance of strong coordination across existing instruments, frameworks, and bodies (IFBs), in line with the "not undermining" principle. The clearing-house mechanism will be central to enabling data sharing, matchmaking, and collaboration, but must be accessible and interoperable with existing systems. Standardized data collection, common identifiers, and integration across scientific and policy platforms were identified as key priorities for effective implementation, including the potential use of commercial shipping platforms to enhance data collection efforts.

Ecosystem-Based and Connected Approaches to Management:

The need to account for ecological connectivity between areas within and beyond national jurisdiction was emphasized, particularly in regions where ecosystems span boundaries. Speakers advocated for hybrid networks of ABMTs and MPAs, dynamic ocean management approaches, and ecosystem-based planning that reflects full ecological processes rather than jurisdictional limits. Strengthened cooperation across scales, from global to local, will be critical to achieving coherent and effective conservation outcomes.

Addressing barriers such as language, access to data, and uneven scientific capacity will be essential to ensure broad and effective participation.

Photo: Richard Barnden / Ocean Image Bank

Panel 3:

Climate Change: Scientific and Governance Perspectives

Lisa Levin
Professor Emeritus, Scripps Institute of Oceanography

David Freestone
Executive Secretary, Sargasso Sea Commission

Regina R. Rodrigues
Professor, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)/WCRP

Juliano Palacios Abrantes
Marine Scientist, The University of British Columbia (UBC)

Marinez Scherer
Special Envoy for the Ocean, COP30

Panel 3: Climate Change: Scientific and Governance Perspectives

Main takeaways

Climate Change as a Core Driver of Ocean Biodiversity Loss

A central theme was that climate change is not just a background issue; it is a primary driver of biodiversity loss in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ). Panelists highlighted impacts such as ocean warming, acidification, deoxygenation, and extreme events like marine heatwaves, which can rapidly alter ecosystems and even permanently shift biological communities. These changes affect everything from phytoplankton to fisheries and carbon cycling. A key concern raised was that existing conservation planning struggles to keep pace with the speed and unpredictability of climate impacts, especially given increasing extreme events.

Governance Fragmentation and the Need for Integration

A major discussion point was the lack of alignment between global governance frameworks, particularly between the BBNJ Agreement, fisheries bodies (IFBs, RFMOs), and climate regime frameworks. Panelists emphasized that these systems currently operate siloed and in parallel, creating gaps in effective management. For example, shifting fish stocks due to climate change cross jurisdictional boundaries, yet governance remains fragmented. The panel stressed that integrated, cross-sectoral governance is essential, including better coordination between biodiversity conservation, fisheries management, and climate policy.

Dynamic Ocean Requires Adaptive and Flexible Management

Panelists repeatedly underscored that the ocean is dynamic, not static, which challenges traditional governance tools. Area-based management tools (ABMTs) and environmental impact assessments (EIAs) were described as necessary but limited, often "blunt instruments" in a changing system. Climate change introduces shifting baselines, altering species distributions, and evolving risks, underscoring the need for governance systems that are adaptive, flexible, and capable of managing uncertainty. Panelists also highlighted the importance of incorporating cumulative impacts into decision-making processes and ensuring that criteria and management approaches can be updated over time.

Gaps in Finance, Capacity, and Societal Engagement

The panel highlighted critical enabling challenges: insufficient funding, unequal capacity, and lack of public engagement. Only a small fraction of global climate finance currently supports ocean-related initiatives. There were calls for innovative funding mechanisms under BBNJ, including benefit-sharing from marine genetic resources, and better access for developing countries to scientific infrastructure. Equally important was the need to engage broader society beyond the "ocean community," as political action depends on public support. Panelists stressed communication, inclusivity, and stakeholder participation as essential for long-term success.

Panel 3: Climate Change: Scientific and Governance Perspectives

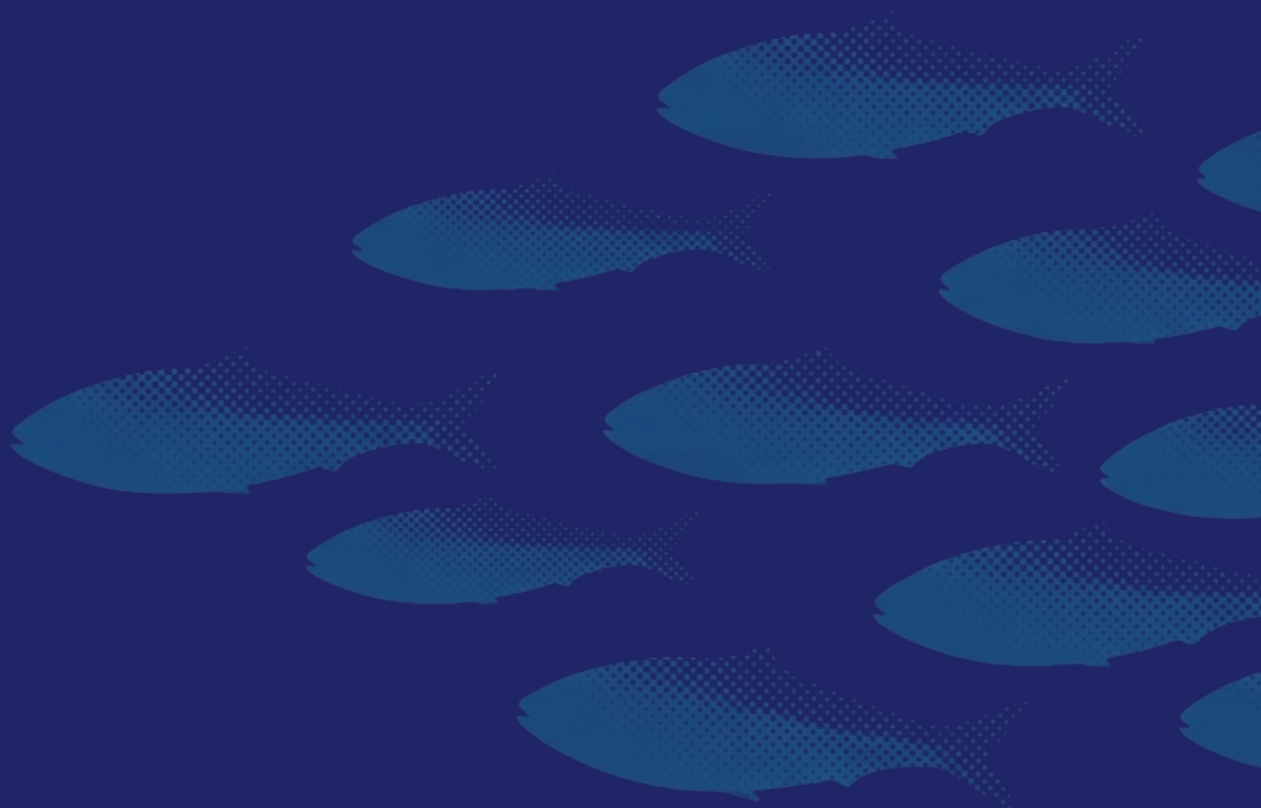
Photo: Renata Romeo / Ocean Image Bank

Keynote:

The importance of science and knowledge in the BBNJ Agreement

Alexander Turra

Professor, Instituto Oceanográfico - Universidade de São Paulo (IO/USP), Cátedra UNESCO para Sustentabilidade dos Oceanos



Keynote: "The Importance of Science and Knowledge in the BBNJ Agreement" — Alexander Turra

Main takeaways

Science as the Backbone of Ocean Governance

The keynote emphasized that science is not just supportive but foundational to the implementation of the BBNJ agreement. Scientific knowledge underpins every stage of decision-making from discovery and observation to modeling future scenarios and evaluating outcomes. Prof. Turra described a continuous cycle: observing the ocean, understanding socio-ecological systems, projecting futures, informing policy, and reassessing results, reinforcing that effective governance depends on sustained, iterative engagement between science and policy, rather than one-off inputs.

The Ocean as a Complex Socio-Ecological System

A central idea was that the ocean cannot be understood in isolation, it is a deeply interconnected socio-ecological system involving both natural processes and human interactions. The keynote highlighted persistent knowledge gaps, especially in the Global South, and the uneven distribution of data and research capacity. Addressing ocean challenges therefore requires integrating ecological, social, and economic dimensions, recognizing that human relationships with the ocean are as critical as the biological systems themselves.

From Knowledge to Action: Co-Production and Transformation

Prof. Turra stressed that producing knowledge is not enough, what matters is transforming it into action. This requires multiple types of knowledge: systems knowledge (how the ocean works), orientation knowledge (where we want to go), transformational knowledge (how to create change), and process knowledge (how to govern and implement change). Achieving this transformation depends on co-production between scientists, policymakers, private sector actors, and society, built on trust, communication, and collaboration. This shift represents a move from "science for understanding" to "science for change."

Enabling Conditions: Funding, Communication, and Collaboration

Finally, Prof. Turra highlighted the structural conditions needed to make this vision possible. These include diversified and increased funding (especially for applied and governance-related science), stronger global and regional collaboration, and significantly improved science communication. The speaker warned that science often remains confined within academic and policy circles, stressing the need to "break the bubble" and engage broader society. Communication itself was framed as a scientific field requiring investment, as it is essential for public support, policy uptake, and long-term impact.

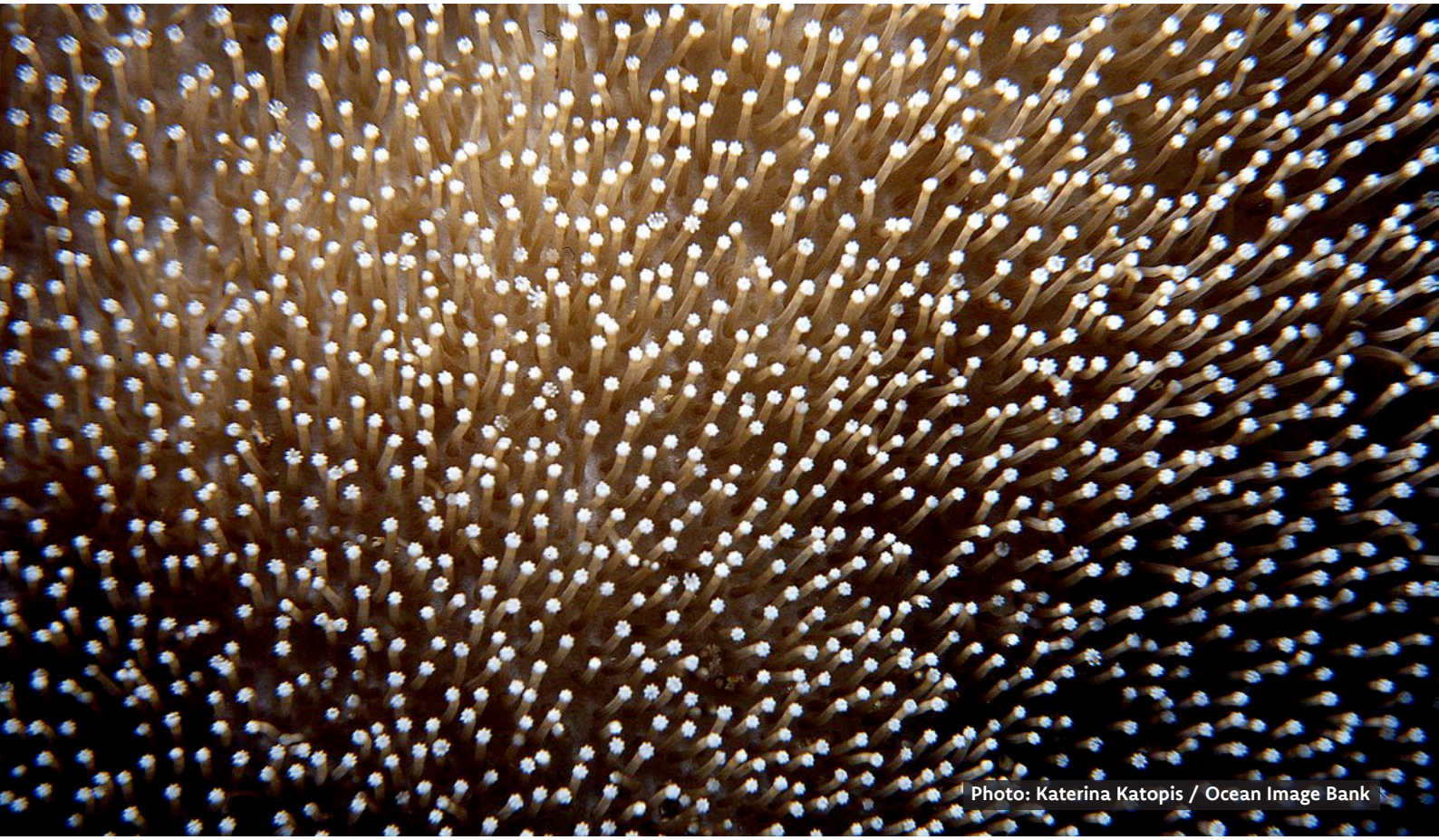


Photo: Katerina Katopis / Ocean Image Bank

Photo: Francois Baelen / Ocean Image Bank

Panel 4:

Implementation, Compliance and Enforcement

Carina Costa de Oliveira

Professor, Universidade de Brasília (UnB)

Catherine Tinker

Distinguished Fellow and Adjunct Professor, Seton Hall University/Tinker Institute

Maitê de Souza Schmitz

Diplomat, Brazilian Ministry of International Relations

Lowri Griffiths

Former Head of the UK's Ocean Policy Unit, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Pascale Ricard

Chargée de Recherche, French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS)

Nilufer Oral

Director, Centre of International Law, National University of Singapore

Viktoria Varga Lencses

Global Coordinator of the Common Oceans Program, FAO

Panel 4: Implementation, Compliance and Enforcement

Main takeaways

Science-Policy Integration as the Core of Implementation

A central theme across the panel was that the effectiveness of the BBNJ Agreement depends on a continuous and deeply integrated science-policy interface. Science is not only foundational during negotiations but becomes operationally critical when translating treaty obligations into domestic legislation, management measures, and decision-making processes. This requires governments to interpret complex and evolving scientific concepts, such as digital sequence information (DSI) or emerging technologies like autonomous vehicles, into clear, enforceable legal frameworks. Beyond legal drafting, science informs the design of area-based management tools (ABMTs), environmental impact assessments (EIAs), and responses to proposals from other states. Importantly, this is not a one-time interaction but an ongoing process, where scientific input must continuously inform adaptive governance. The discussion also highlighted that defining what constitutes "best available science," and how to incorporate traditional and local knowledge, remains an open and critical question for future institutional development.

Capacity Inequality and the Need for Long-Term Institutional Strengthening

A recurring concern was the uneven global landscape of scientific and institutional capacity, which directly affects countries' ability to implement the Agreement. While much attention has been given to enhancing scientific research capabilities in the Global South, the panel emphasized that governmental and institutional capacity is equally crucial. Effective participation requires not only access to data, but also trained personnel, administrative structures, and the ability to interpret and act on scientific evidence. Without sustained investment in both human and institutional capacity, the risk is that implementation will remain uneven, undermining the Agreement's effectiveness and equity goals.

Data, Technology, and Proactive Compliance Systems

The panel highlighted a shift toward data-driven, technology-enabled governance as essential for compliance and enforcement. Robust, transparent, and interoperable data systems are necessary to ensure that scientific information can support decision-making across jurisdictions. Digital platforms, AI, and large-scale data processing are increasingly important for transforming raw data into actionable insights, enabling countries to anticipate risks rather than react to them. These tools also help bridge capacity gaps by democratizing access to information, allowing less-resourced countries to engage in compliance processes more effectively.

Photo: Umeed Mistry / Ocean Image Bank

Audience at the 3rd BBNJ Symposium

However, the benefits of these technologies depend on standardization, transparency, and the ability of systems to communicate with one another, reinforcing the importance of coordinated global data infrastructures.

Adaptive Governance and the Unfinished Architecture of the Agreement

The BBNJ Agreement was deliberately designed with flexibility, leaving many decisions to be developed through future processes, particularly at the Conference of the Parties (COP). This reflects the reality that scientific knowledge evolves faster than legal frameworks, requiring adaptive governance mechanisms. Key elements still to be operationalized include the institutional architecture (such as the Secretariat and funding mechanisms), the Clearing-House Mechanism, and the roles of technical and scientific bodies. Significant work must be completed before the COP decisions, emphasizing that operationalization cannot be deferred entirely to future meetings. Additionally, science will play a decisive role throughout the lifecycle of management measures, the possibility that MPAs may be time-limited or ineffective introduces a necessary, though politically sensitive, dimension of adaptive management grounded in evidence.

Photo: Masayuki Agawa / Ocean Image Bank

Panel 5:

Scientific and Technical Body (STB) Q&A

Lea-Anne Henry

Director Mara Consultants Ltd and Associate Professor, University of Edinburgh

Segen Estefen

Director-General, INPO

David Obura

Director, CORDIO East Africa/Chair, IPBES

Christine Gaebel

Co-Lead, DOSI BBNJ Working Group

Carl O'Brien

President, ICES

Julian Barbière

Head, Marine Policy and Regional Coordination, IOC-UNESCO

Panel 5: Scientific and Technical Body (STB) Q&A

Main takeaways

Designing a Multidisciplinary and Representative STB

A central challenge is ensuring the STB includes the right mix of expertise while remaining equitable and representative. This goes beyond natural sciences to include social sciences, economics, and Indigenous, traditional and local knowledge, all treated as equally valuable. At the same time, the body must reflect gender balance and geographic diversity, which is complicated by existing global inequalities in ocean science capacity. This means that STB design cannot be separated from broader efforts in capacity building and marine technology transfer, which will shape who is able to participate over time.

Balancing a Small Core Body with Broad Access to Expertise

Given the STB will likely have a limited number of members, it cannot internally cover all required expertise. A key takeaway is the need for a hub-and-network model, where the core body is supported by external expert groups, thematic working groups and partnerships with existing scientific organizations. This approach allows the STB to remain efficient while still drawing on global knowledge systems, including emerging science and specialized technical fields when needed.

Ensuring Credibility Through Robust, Transparent Processes

Experiences from other bodies (e.g., ICES, IPBES) highlight that process design is as important as expertise. The STB must build legitimacy through: independent, peer-reviewed outputs, transparency in methods and decisions, clear rules on conflicts of interest and ethics, and strong science-policy translation mechanisms. Credibility also depends on early and continuous engagement with policymakers, ensuring the STB answers relevant questions and produces usable advice, not just scientifically rigorous outputs.

Making the STB Proactive, Adaptive, and Policy-Relevant

The STB should not be a passive advisory body but a dynamic science-policy interface. This includes: anticipating emerging issues (horizon scanning), leveraging new technologies (e.g., AI, eDNA, autonomous systems), connecting with global and regional scientific networks, and promoting open data and interoperability. At the same time, there is a need to bridge science and politics effectively. While the COP ultimately makes decisions, the STB can increase uptake of its advice through transparency, inclusiveness, and trust-building, reducing the risk of its recommendations being ignored or reworked.

The STB should not be a passive advisory body but a dynamic science-policy interface.

Photo: Emilie Ledwidge / Ocean Image Bank

Panel 6:

Traditional and Local Knowledge in the BBNJ Implementation

Leandra Gonçalves
Professor, Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP)

Marjo Vierros
Director, Coastal Policy and Humanities Research

Fran Humphries
Associate Professor, Griffith University Law School

Mariana Caldeira
Researcher, Ocean Voices/University of Edinburgh

Ghazali Ohorella
Co-Chair, International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC)

Yara Rodrigues
Executive Vogal, Directive Board, Instituto do Mar (IMar)

Panel 6: Traditional and Local Knowledge in the BBNJ Implementation

Main takeaways

From Recognition to Real Participation

A central theme was that Indigenous peoples and local communities must move beyond being acknowledged to being active decision-makers in BBNJ implementation. Across speakers, there was strong emphasis that communities do not want intermediaries speaking for them, they want a seat at the table as reflected by the saying "if I am not at the table, I am on the menu." This implies structural changes, such as advisory bodies, self-representation mechanisms, and participation embedded early in decision-making processes. Without this shift, inclusion risks becoming symbolic rather than impactful.

Knowledge as Governance

Traditional, local and Indigenous knowledge was consistently framed not as a dataset to complement science, but as a holistic system tied to identity, governance, and values. It includes cultural relationships with the ocean,

stewardship practices, and long-term ecological understanding. Treating it merely as "information" risks extraction and misinterpretation. Instead, it should be recognized as a parallel and equally valid knowledge system that can shape conservation, management, and policy outcomes.

Ethical Safeguards and Data Sovereignty

Speakers highlighted the urgent need for robust ethical frameworks governing how knowledge is accessed, shared, and used. Core principles include free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), community ownership, and context-specific permissions. Not all knowledge should be public, and governance systems must respect data sovereignty and cultural sensitivity. Mechanisms like CARE principles (Collective Benefit; Authority to Control; Responsibility, and Ethics), knowledge labels, and controlled access systems were suggested to prevent exploitation and ensure reciprocity.

Co-Production and Institutional Innovation

The implementation phase of BBNJ is seen as a unique opportunity to build new governance models rather than replicate existing hierarchies. This includes co-production of knowledge, participatory monitoring, regional knowledge hubs, and integration of communities into scientific and technical bodies. Effective implementation will depend on designing inclusive institutions, such as advisory mechanisms for Indigenous, traditional and local knowledge, that enable collaboration across scales and knowledge systems.

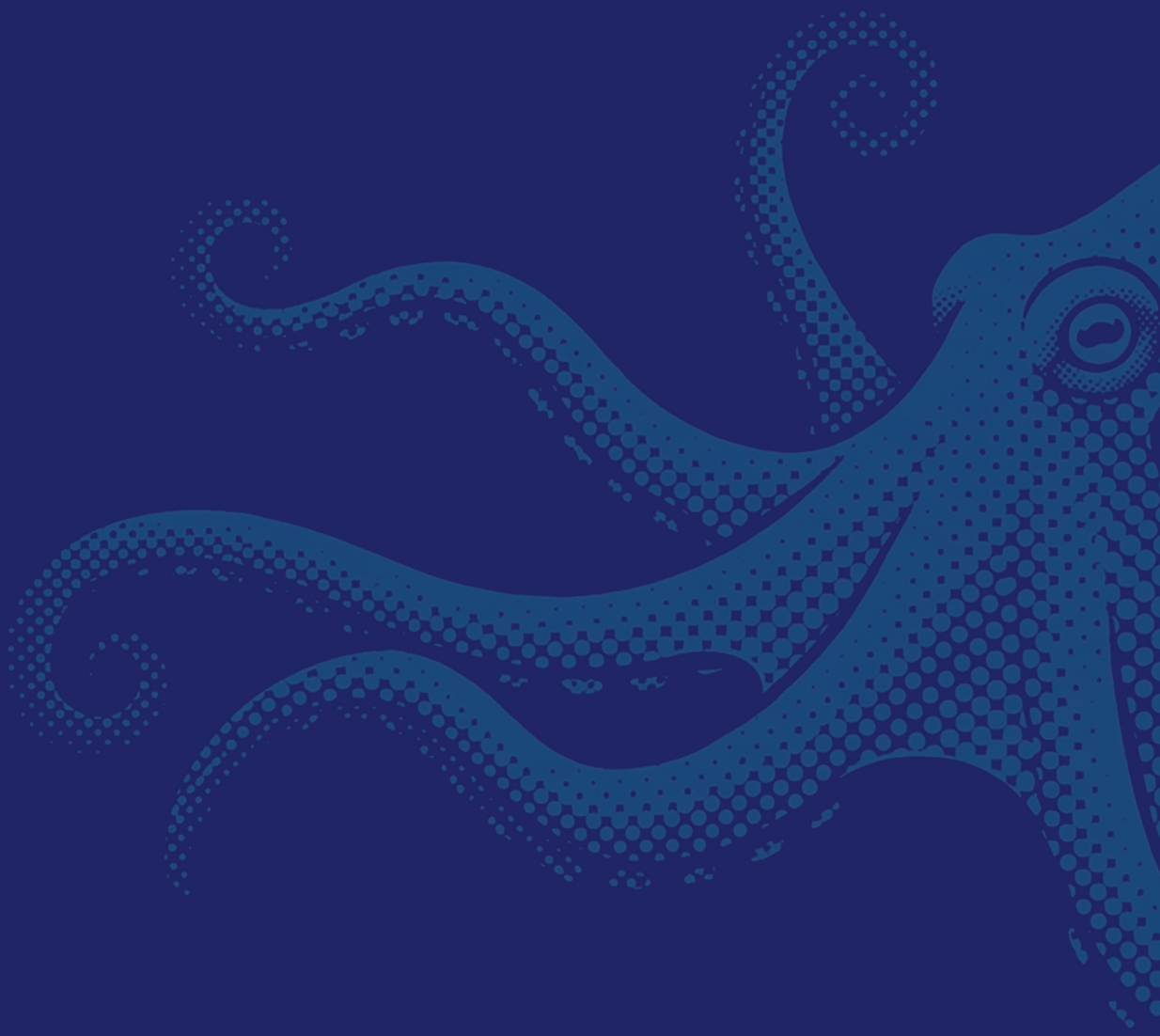
The implementation phase of BBNJ is seen as a unique opportunity to build new governance models rather than replicate existing hierarchies.

Photo: Dani Escayola / Ocean Image Bank

Keynote

The role of science into the BBNJ implementation

Margaret Leinen
Director Emeritus, Scripps Institute of Oceanography



Keynote: "The role of science into the BBNJ implementation" — Margaret Leinen

Main takeaways

A Critical Data Gap in the "Best Available Science"

A central message was that while the BBNJ Agreement relies heavily on "best available science," the reality is that such science is often extremely limited in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Large regions of the ocean, especially in the South Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Ocean, have little to no biodiversity data. Existing databases like OBIS contain only a small fraction of relevant observations, with most grid areas lacking sufficient records. This creates a fundamental challenge: decisions about conservation, environmental impact, and resource use are being made in contexts where empirical data is sparse, unevenly distributed, and difficult to access.

Structural Challenges in Data Systems and Governance

Prof. Leinen highlighted not just a lack of data, but systemic issues in how data are managed and used. Scientific information is fragmented across multiple, often non-interoperable databases, and significant amounts of data remain outside global repositories due to technical and administrative barriers. This complicates the work of scientific and technical bodies under BBNJ, which must set standards and evaluate proposals despite incomplete evidence. There is also a risk that weak data availability could be used politically to delay or challenge conservation measures. As a result, Prof. Leinen suggested the need for new institutional approaches, potentially akin to global assessment bodies, to synthesize and validate science for decision-making.

Transformative Potential of New Technologies (eDNA & Automation)

Despite these gaps, Prof. Leinen was optimistic about emerging tools, particularly environmental DNA (eDNA) and biomolecular observation systems. These technologies allow scientists to detect biodiversity by sampling genetic material directly from water, rather than relying on traditional methods like capturing or observing organisms. Combined with autonomous platforms, ship-of-opportunity sampling, and expanding global networks such as the Ocean Biomolecular Observing Network (OBON), these innovations are rapidly increasing the scale, speed, and accessibility of ocean monitoring. They represent a major shift toward more inclusive and cost-effective data generation, with strong potential to democratize access to marine science.

Building a Global, Equitable Observation System

Finally, Prof. Leinen emphasized the need to build a coordinated, global system for ocean biodiversity observation that is equitable and collaborative. This includes investing in shared infrastructure (such as high-capacity sequencing hubs), improving data standards and interoperability, and strengthening partnerships across public, private, and academic sectors, as well as philanthropy. She also stressed that equitable participation, especially for developing countries, should not rely on duplicating expensive infrastructure in every location, but on strategic collaboration and capacity sharing. Looking ahead, the vision is of a globally connected observing system, grounded in open data and common standards, that can support effective implementation of the BBNJ Agreement.

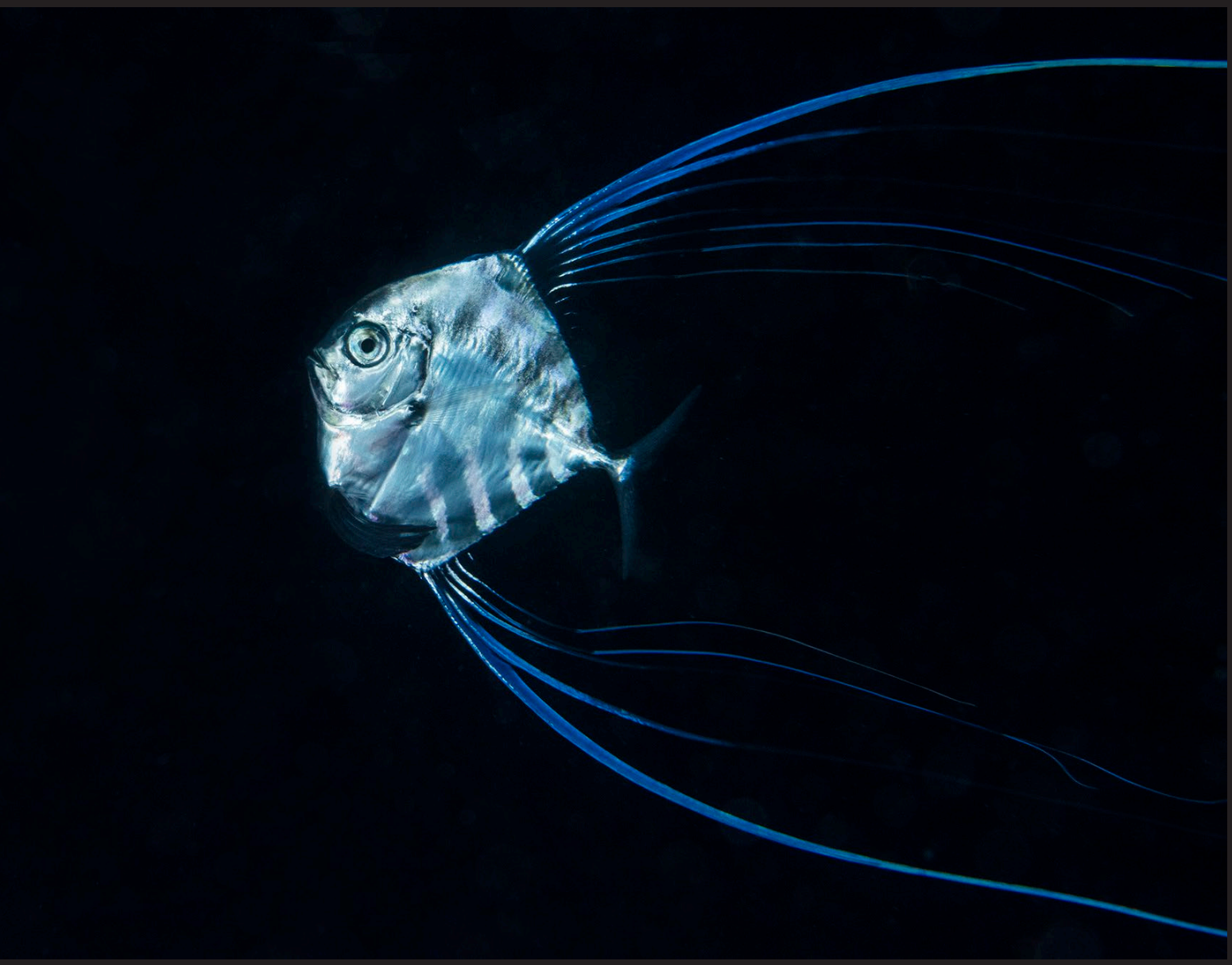


Photo: Richard Barnden / Ocean Image Bank

Panel 7:

Lessons Learned from Relevant Instruments, Frameworks, and Bodies (IFBs)

Júlia Schütz Veiga
Researcher, NOVA School of Law

Nicola Ferri
Senior Legal/Compliance Officer, General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean of the FAO (GFCM)

Daniela Diz
Professor, Heriot Watt University, International Environmental Lawyer

Brittany Croll
BBNJ/RFMO Coordinator, Pew Charitable Trusts

Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli
Independent International Expert, Director Emeritus of DOALOS/UN

Sahan Abeysekara
Environment Policy and Strategy, Lloyd's Register

Amber Hartman Scholz
Head, Science Policy & Internationalization Dept, Leibniz-Institut DSMZ

Panel 7: Lessons Learned from Relevant Instruments, Frameworks, and Bodies (IFBs)

Main takeaways

Mutual Supportiveness Depends on States, Trust, and Enabling Conditions

A central theme is that cooperation among instruments, frameworks and bodies (IFBs) ultimately depends on states - the primary actors - supported by their secretariats. Success is shaped by geopolitical dynamics, overlapping membership across bodies, and the ability of countries to coordinate internally through integrated ocean governance. Inclusiveness is critical, particularly ensuring that developing states can meaningfully participate despite financial constraints. Trust-building mechanisms such as transparency, early consultation, and regular information sharing are essential, as is engagement with a broad range of stakeholders including scientists, civil society, Indigenous peoples and local communities, and the private sector. Without these enabling conditions, even well-designed frameworks struggle to achieve effective collaboration.

Moving From Discussion to Practical Mechanisms and Mandates

Another key theme was the gap between general discussions on coordination and the need for concrete, operational mechanisms. Effective cooperation requires intentional design: formal agenda items, clear mandates for secretariats, and structured communication channels. The discussion highlighted that many institutions still lack dedicated spaces to engage with emerging agreements, which limits progress. Establishing feedback loops, defining responsibilities, and enabling secretariats to actively participate are practical steps that can immediately improve institutional readiness. Importantly, cooperation is not automatic, it must be actively built through decisions taken by members and embedded in institutional processes.

Leveraging Existing Knowledge, Tools, and Institutional Experience

The panel emphasized that IFBs already possess extensive scientific, technical, and governance expertise that can inform new frameworks. Fisheries bodies, shipping governance, and biodiversity agreements all offer tested tools, data systems, and regulatory practices that can be adapted. Learning from mature systems, such as multi-stakeholder participation models, public-private partnerships, and technical standard-setting, can help ensure that new agreements are not only legally sound but also implementable in practice. At the same time, collaboration across regimes requires recognizing their different mandates and finding synergies rather than forcing uniform approaches.

Coherence Across Regimes and Avoiding Fragmentation

A final theme is the importance of coherence across different international regimes, particularly in avoiding fragmentation and unintended consequences. The discussion highlighted how parallel systems, such as those governing biodiversity data, can create inefficiencies or disincentives if not aligned. Building mutually supportive mechanisms ensures that no single framework becomes less attractive or more burdensome to engage with. This requires learning from past processes, harmonizing approaches where possible, and recognizing that global ocean governance should operate as an interconnected system. Achieving this coherence is both a legal and practical challenge, but also a major opportunity to strengthen multilateralism and implementation.

Photo: Ron Watkins / Ocean Image Bank

Panel 8:

Finance for Science: A Facilitator for Capacity Building & Transfer of Marine Technologies

Janaína Bumbeer

Project Manager, Biodiversity Conservation, Fundação Grupo Boticário de Proteção à Natureza

Alberto Pacheco Capella

Head of the Regional Seas Unit, UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

Adnan Awad

Head of Water & Oceans Programme, UNDP

Angelique Pouponneau

Legal Expert and Ocean Lead, Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

Torsten Thiele

Founder, Global Ocean Trust

Claire Jolly

Head, Ocean Economy & Space Economy, OECD

Andrew Hume

Senior Environmental Specialist, GEF

Panel 8: Finance for Science: A Facilitator for Capacity Building & Transfer of Marine Technologies

Main takeaways

Financing Gaps and the Need for Scale

A central message across the panel was the massive gap between current ocean financing and what is actually required to meet global conservation and governance goals. It was highlighted that effective ocean conservation may require around $175 billion annually, while current investments are only a fraction of that. This gap becomes even more critical in the context of the BBNJ Agreement, which represents a historic shift in ocean governance, particularly for areas beyond national jurisdiction that make up two-thirds of the ocean by surface area but have very limited protection. The discussion emphasized that moving from ratification to implementation will require not only more funding, but also better alignment between financial flows and real needs on the ground. There was also recognition that public funding alone will not be sufficient, and that a combination of multilateral, domestic, and private finance, including philanthropy, will be necessary to reach the scale required.

Accessibility, Equity, and Structural Barriers

Beyond the quantity of funding, a major theme was the challenge of access, particularly for developing countries and small island developing states. Panelists stressed that available finance does not necessarily mean accessible finance. The burden of complex, bureaucratic application processes, limited institutional capacity, and long waiting times creates significant barriers, especially for countries with small administrations managing vast ocean territories. These challenges often result in fragmented, short-term, project-based funding that does not build sustained scientific or institutional capacity. Science itself is frequently treated as peripheral rather than central to funding priorities, further weakening long-term impact. The panel emphasized the need for more trust-based systems, simplified access, and programmatic approaches that move away from isolated projects toward coordinated, multi-country and multi-regional efforts.

Governance, Coordination, and the Role of Science

Another key theme was the importance of governance and coordination in making financing effective. Strong regional cooperation frameworks and existing mechanisms, such as regional seas conventions and multilateral environmental agreements, were highlighted as essential platforms for implementation. At the same time, the role of science was repeatedly emphasized as foundational, not optional. Scientific knowledge must inform decision-making, yet funding for science remains fragmented and insufficient. Panelists pointed to the importance of strengthening science-policy interfaces, such as global scientific panels, and ensuring that ocean science is fully integrated into governance systems. Without sustained investment in scientific capacity, infrastructure, and data, it will be difficult to implement the BBNJ Agreement effectively or to manage ocean resources sustainably.

The barrier is not the lack of funding. It is the lack of access to it.

Innovation, Partnerships, and New Financing Approaches

The discussion also focused on the need for innovation in financing mechanisms and partnerships. Blended finance, public-private partnerships, and new instruments such as blue bonds were highlighted as ways to mobilize additional resources and engage the private sector. However, this requires clear governance frameworks and predictable conditions to reduce risk and attract investment. There was also a strong call for more creative and collaborative approaches, including leveraging existing sectors such as shipping for data collection or working collectively to negotiate access to marine technology. Importantly, the narrative around ocean science and finance needs to shift, from being seen as a cost to being recognized as a strategic investment that supports economic value, reduces risks, and drives innovation. Measuring and communicating this value is essential to attracting broader and more diverse funding sources.

Photo: Amanda Cotton / Ocean Image Bank

Photo: Kimberly Jeffries / Ocean Image Bank

Panel 9:

Marine Genetic Resources – Science and Equity

Janice Trotte-Duhá

Director of Infrastructure & Operations, INPO

Robert Blasiak

Associate Professor, Stockholm Resilience Centre

Henry Novion

Head of the Genetic Heritage Dept., Ministry of Environment and Climate Change of Brazil (MMA)

Claudio Chiarolla

Legal Officer, CGIAR Genebank Accelerator

Bupe Mwambingu

Biodiversity Partnerships Manager, Basecamp Research

Arianna Broggiato

International Relations Officer, European Commission

Manoela Pessoa de Miranda

Secretary of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, FAO

Hugo Sarmento

Professor, Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCAR)

Panel 9: Marine Genetic Resources – Science and Equity

Main takeaways

Equity and Democratization of Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs)

A central theme throughout the panel was the need to ensure that access to and benefits from marine genetic resources are shared equitably, particularly with developing countries. Panelists emphasized that the BBNJ Agreement provides a framework not only for benefit-sharing but for enabling countries to actively conduct scientific research. This requires a shift away from extractive or top-down science toward more inclusive, collaborative approaches. Concepts such as “decolonizing science” and ensuring scientists from the Global South act as equal partners, including as principal investigators, were highlighted as essential. Equity was framed not only as an ethical imperative but as a practical necessity for effective and legitimate ocean governance.

Capacity Building as the Foundation for Implementation

Capacity building emerged as the backbone of successful implementation, extending far beyond access to technology. Panelists stressed that disparities in MGR research stem from a combination of limited infrastructure, insufficient training, weak institutional frameworks, and lack of financial resources. The Agreement's mechanisms, such as clearing-house platforms, funding provisions, and marine technology transfer, are designed to address these gaps, but must be operationalized through demand-driven, bottom-up approaches. Examples included investments in regional centers of excellence, development of national legislation, and training programs that build long-term scientific communities. Importantly, capacity building itself was framed as a form of non-monetary benefit sharing.

Science–Policy Interface and Emerging Technologies (eDNA & Genomics)

The panel underscored the critical role of science in informing policy, particularly through emerging tools such as environmental DNA (eDNA) and genomic sequencing. These technologies are transforming how scientists monitor biodiversity, assess ecosystem health, and define marine habitats, especially in the open ocean, where traditional observation is limited. eDNA was described as a "snapshot" tool capable of detecting recent biological presence, offering powerful applications for conservation and monitoring of marine protected areas. However, panelists also highlighted challenges, including the lack of genetic reference databases and limited expertise to analyze complex data. Strengthening the science–policy interface will require sustained engagement of scientists in governance processes and investment in both infrastructure and human capacity.

Global Coordination and Institutional Coherence

Another major theme was the need for coordination across international frameworks to avoid fragmentation. Panelists pointed to the growing complexity of global biodiversity governance, particularly interactions between the BBNJ Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity, especially regarding digital sequence information (DSI) and benefit-sharing mechanisms. Aligning financial instruments, reporting systems, and policy approaches was seen as critical to ensuring efficiency and maximizing impact. Rather than creating parallel systems, there is an opportunity to build a coherent, interoperable global architecture that supports both scientific progress and equitable benefit sharing.

Satellite Event Programme

Satellite events formed a key component of the Third BBNJ Symposium, complementing the main plenary programme by providing space for focused discussions. Held during the afternoons of the three Symposium days, these events were organised by a range of partners, including academic institutions, intergovernmental bodies, and non-governmental organisations, and offered participants the opportunity to explore specific thematic areas in greater depth and learn more about specific regional case studies.

The satellite event programme was formed of 8 open events and 2 invitation-only events:

- **BBNJ as a Catalyst: Scaling Up Marine Protected Areas through Global Integration**

  co-organised by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change of Brazil, Boticário Group Foundation and Greenpeace Brazil

- **From Agreement to Action: Emerging Science-to-Law Pathways for Implementing the BBNJ Agreement**

  organised by IPOS (International Platform for Ocean Sustainability)

- **How do fish talk? Establishing effective consultation processes for regional fisheries bodies under the BBNJ Agreement**

  organised by the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture of Brazil (MPA)

- **Sargasso Sea Commission Experiences from the first Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic for a High Seas Ecosystem: Navigating Policy for the BBNJ**

  organised by the Sargasso Sea Commission

- **Capacity Building and Transfer of Marine Technology within the scope of the BBNJ Agreement**

  organised by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation of Brazil (MCTI)

- **From science and knowledge to action: Lessons learned and opportunities from the Eastern Tropical Pacific Region for implementing the BBNJ Agreement**

  organised by the MarViva SARGADOM Project and Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA)

- **Towards Rio 2027: Mobilising the Ocean Decade for BBNJ Delivery**

  organised by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO)

- **A Climate-Smart Pathway for BBNJ**

  co-organised by: Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML); International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES); University of Queensland (UQ); and, Helmholtz Zentrum Hereon (Hereon), Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership (MCCIP)

- Two invitation-only events hosted by the Sargasso Sea Commission for engagement with an array of stakeholders

These sessions were designed to foster dialogue, showcase emerging research and practical initiatives, and encourage collaboration among diverse stakeholders. By creating a more informal and participatory setting, the satellite events contributed to the Symposium's broader objective of strengthening the science–policy interface and supporting the effective and inclusive implementation of the BBNJ Agreement.

The full programme along with all recordings and suplement material are available as a legacy output at bbnjsymposium.org/2026.

Speakers and participants gather for the Closing Ceremony of the 3rd BBNJ Symposium, Rio de Janeiro, March 2026.

Closing Remarks

The closing remarks of the 3rd BBNJ Symposium centered on the urgent transition from high-level dialogue to the practical implementation of the treaty. A recurring theme was the importance of the science–policy interface, with participants challenged to improve how knowledge travels from discovery to decision-making. As highlighted during the discussions, the ultimate value of the symposium will be measured by how effectively its outcomes are carried forward and translated into action. Speakers conveyed a shared sense of urgency and hope.

The breadth of discussions over the symposium, ranging from biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction and climate governance to finance, marine genetic resources, and traditional knowledge, was recognized as strengthening participants' understanding of the Agreement and generating new opportunities for collaboration. At the same time, speakers emphasized that the adoption of the BBNJ Agreement represents only a first step. Its success will depend on sustained cooperation, strong science-based decision-making, and alignment between international commitments and national-level implementation.

From a regional perspective, Brazil emerged as a key actor in advancing implementation. The Brazilian National Institute for Ocean Research (INPO) reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the BBNJ process, where its network of over 1,400 scientists can support scientific needs for the Treaty. National efforts are underway to integrate biodiversity, physical, and biogeochemical data, develop low-cost scientific technologies, and address critical knowledge gaps, particularly in the South Atlantic. These initiatives aim to democratize access to science and reinforce collaboration with partners across Latin America and Africa, while also incorporating traditional and Indigenous knowledge systems.

The symposium also highlighted the growing strength of a global "epistemic community" around BBNJ, one that continues to expand and deepen through dialogue, shared language, and collaboration. Participants were encouraged to carry forward the relationships, knowledge, and momentum built during the event into upcoming processes, including the Third PrepCom and the first Conference of the Parties (COP).

The ceremony concluded with a strong call for universal ratification of the BBNJ Agreement, framed not as a symbolic objective but as a practical imperative. By establishing a cohesive international legal framework, the Agreement provides the necessary "rules of the road" for governing biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Looking ahead, organizers emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum, producing accessible outputs from the symposium, and continuing to translate shared knowledge and dialogue into meaningful, collective action for the global ocean.

The ultimate value of the symposium will be measured by how effectively its outcomes are carried forward and translated into action.

THE 3RD BBNJ SYMPOSIUM RIO IN NUMBERS

The three-day symposium was attended by over 230 participants in person, with an additional 200+ following the discussions online, both via our Zoom platform and YouTube, where videos will be permanently available for viewing at *bbnjsymposium.org/2026*.

In-person participants of the Symposium represented more than 20 countries. Most significantly, the largest majority of in-person attendees were attending their first BBNJ Symposium (about 80%), demonstrating that a conference held in Latin America opened opportunities for new participants, strengthening the discussions and bringing in different points of view and expertise.

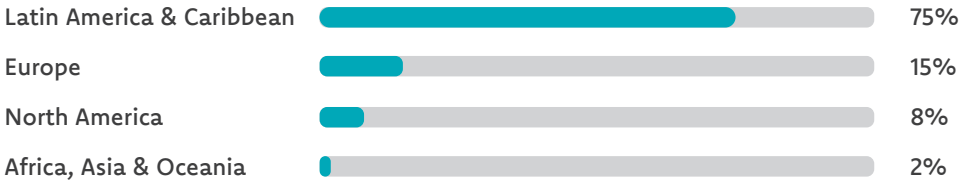
230+
in-person participants

200+
online participants

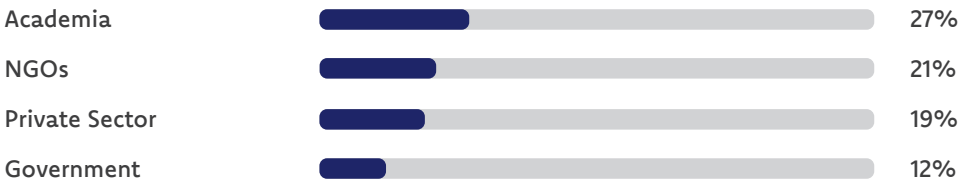
20+
countries represented

80%
first-time attendees

Regional Breakdown



Affiliation breakdown



Other attendees: Civil Society, Intergovernmental Organizations, Press, and Traditional or Indigenous Communities.

Slido Participation

80 questions received · 170 participants logged

The application Slido was used for iterative participation of both remote and in-person participants throughout the three days.

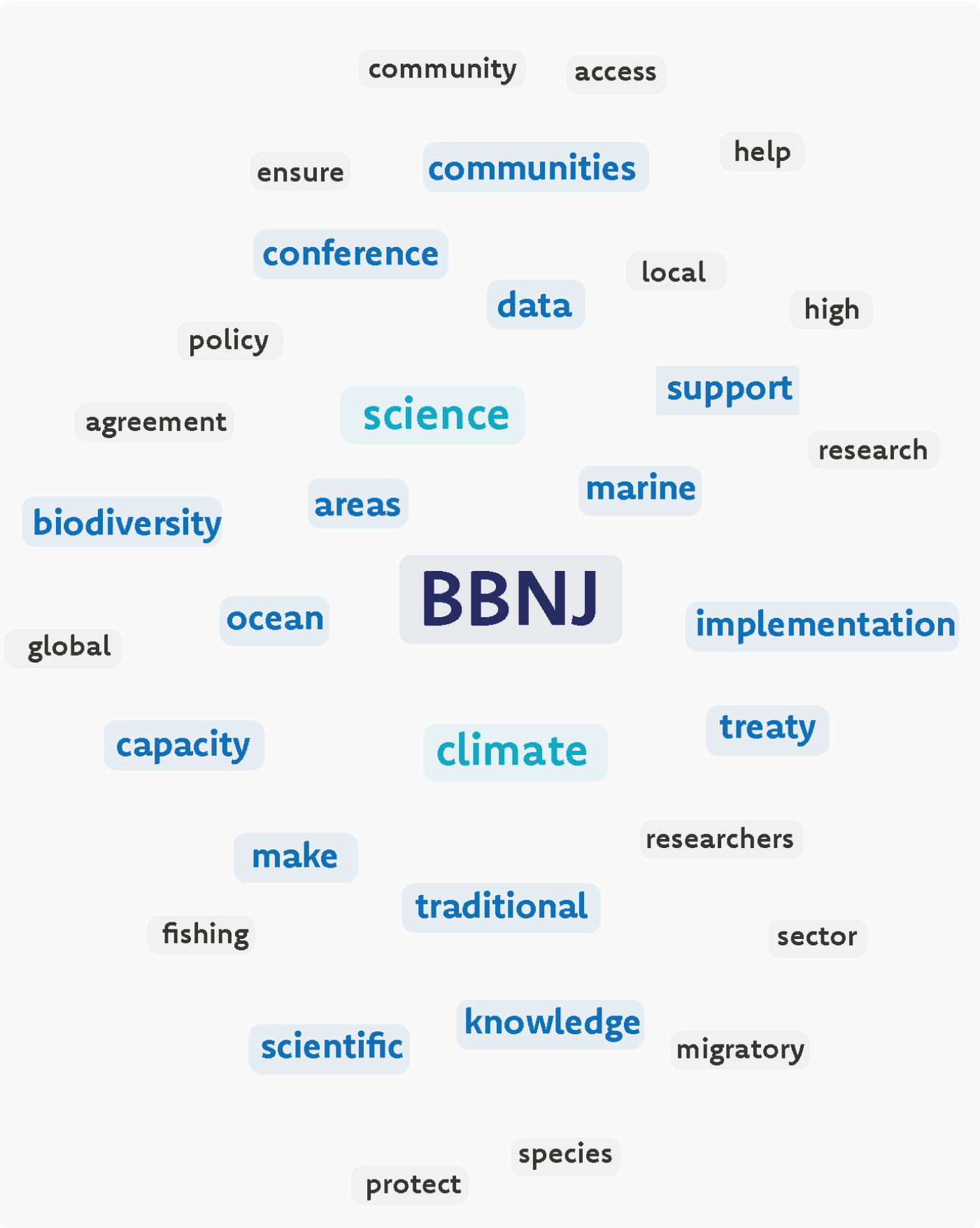


Figure 1. Word cloud of questions submitted to Slido during the Symposium.

Communication and outreach

The 3rd BBNJ Symposium was supported by a comprehensive communication and outreach strategy that significantly amplified its visibility at national and international levels (Figure 2). A total of 219 media pieces were published mentioning the event, including coverage in leading outlets such as ***Folha de S. Paulo, TV Globo, Veja***, and international media like ***Courthouse News Service***. Dedicated press engagement resulted in on-site coverage by major journalists, the publication of three feature articles in ***Folha de S. Paulo***, and wide syndication of content from ***Agência Brasil***, which alone generated over 125 republications across multiple platforms. The initiative also included opinion articles, exclusive media placements, and coordinated press releases, ensuring consistent visibility before, during, and after the event.

219

news pieces published in which INPO is mentioned

3

press releases distributed with follow-up

R$6,2M

in media value

10

publications in mainstream media, such as TV Globo and Folha de S. Paulo

Figure 2. Summary of communication and outreach achievements.

Digital outreach further strengthened engagement, with targeted content produced for INPO's website and social media channels (Figure 3). The campaign generated over 30,000 views pre-event and nearly 29,000 during the Symposium, alongside more than 2,500 interactions and hundreds of link clicks directing audiences to event information. A dedicated newsletter achieved an open rate of approximately 40%, while live streaming of the sessions reached over 1,600 viewers, with more than 22,000 impressions on YouTube. Overall, these efforts contributed to an estimated media value of BRL 6.2 million and reinforced the Symposium's role in promoting ocean literacy, policy dialogue, and public awareness on the BBNJ Agreement.

Views: 4,912
Interactions: 200

Views: 1,655
Interactions: 75

Views: 1,943
Interactions: 90

Views: 1,281
Interactions: 56

Figure 3. Summary of social media engagement and outreach metrics from INPO's Instagram account (@inpo.oceanos) during the 3rd BBNJ Symposium.

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INPO – Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Oceânicas

MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

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