

Outcome of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies on Accelerating Progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, held in Seoul from 26 to 28 September 2016 (“Seoul Outcome”)

1. The Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies on Accelerating Progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets was convened by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Seoul from 26 to 28 September 2016. Financial support was provided by the Government of the Republic of Korea (through the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, the National Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea, the Korea Maritime Institute and the Korea Marine Environment Management Corporation), the Government of Japan (through the Japan Biodiversity Fund) and the European Commission. The meeting was organized in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Secretariat of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, the Secretariat of the Nairobi Convention, the IUCN-CEM-Fisheries Expert Group, and the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative.
2. Participants comprised representatives of regional seas organizations, regional fishery bodies and relevant United Nations /international organizations/initiatives as well as experts from national governments and agencies, and non-governmental organizations.
3. The meeting was aimed at facilitating the exchange of experiences and discussing specific tools and guidelines in order to enhance science-based, cross-sectoral and ecosystem-based approaches for addressing biodiversity and fisheries issues, and identifying options and opportunities to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration among regional seas organizations and regional fishery bodies, with a view to further strengthening their complementary roles in supporting national implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the relevant Sustainable Development Goals. Participants noted that this was the first time that such a global meeting had brought together regional seas conventions and action plans with regional fishery bodies.
4. Participants recognized that biodiversity, a healthy environment and resilient ecosystems underpin sustainable fisheries and food security, and that the ecosystem approach to fisheries contributes to sustained environmental functions and the provisioning of ecosystem services.
5. Participants recognized that the level of ambition posed by the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals necessitates action at multiple scales, including at the regional and national levels, and acknowledged the notable challenges facing the achievement of these global goals and targets, including gaps in capacity, issues related to governance, lack of cross-sectoral coordination, limited information base, and constraints related to monitoring, assessing and reporting progress in implementation.
6. Participants also affirmed the essential role played by regional organizations in supporting and facilitating actions by national governments for the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity and ecosystems, and in supporting and assessing progress towards global-level goals, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals.
7. Participants stressed the need for enhanced cooperation and collaboration at the regional level, supported by continual exchange of information and lessons learned, exploring of shared objectives, and addressing issues of common interest.
8. Participants acknowledged the diversity of experiences, challenges, priorities and capacities among countries and regional organizations in different ocean regions, and noted the respective mandates of various regional and global intergovernmental organizations.
9. Participants also noted that there are many ongoing initiatives to enhance cooperation between regional seas conventions and action plans and regional fishery bodies, including in the North-East Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Western Indian Ocean, the Western South Pacific, West

and Central Africa, and the ROPME/RECOFI¹ region, as presented during the meeting. For some regions, such cooperation is also facilitated by the regional scientific bodies and Large Marine Ecosystem projects, including through cross-sectoral ecosystem-based scientific assessment.

10. Participants noted that regional cooperation is at different stages of development in various regions, and, as such, that the appropriate next steps would vary among different regions, ranging from the establishment of dialogue to support cooperation where it does not exist, to strengthening this cooperation where it already exists.

11. In recognition of the above, participants highlighted various ways and means to further enhance cooperation and coordination among regional seas organizations and regional fishery bodies to facilitate implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 towards the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level through, among other things, scientific collaboration and cooperation as well as the use of tools, approaches and indicators in support of the application of the ecosystem approach and the precautionary approach, including:

(a) Interacting and exchanging information on the respective measures and activities of regional organizations to promote mutual understanding, build trust and ensure that they take their respective outputs into account, thereby complementing each other's work while respecting their different mandates;

(b) Developing joint regional-level strategies, memorandums of understanding, or other collaborative arrangements to identify common objectives, outline joint and/or complementary activities, and clarify roles and expectations of respective regional organizations;

(c) Identifying specific issues of common interest around which to structure cooperation and coordination on scientific and technical matters as well as management tools and approaches;

(d) Promoting harmonized approaches for collecting and accessing data, and exchanging scientific information produced by a wide range of entities, including governments, universities, research institutions/partnerships, non-governmental organizations, and United Nations agencies, e.g., information on ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) and vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) as well as from the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) and the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS);

(e) Using the above information for the production of complementary and holistic assessments of the status and trends of the marine environment, fisheries, biodiversity and ecosystems;

(f) Supporting national reporting through regional frameworks, including through compatible approaches for data and reporting formats, using, where possible, existing indicators, and aligning this with reporting on progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals.

12. Participants also stressed that cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination at the regional level is underpinned by national-level coordination, and that effective regional coordination on scientific as well as managerial aspects can also facilitate national-level coordination.

13. Participants affirmed that the meeting provided a valuable opportunity to share experiences from different regions, better understand the mandates and complementary roles of respective regional organizations/bodies in supporting national implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 for achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and Sustainable Development Goals, and engage in an interactive dialogue to identify ways and means to further strengthen synergies through collaboration and cooperation.

¹ ROPME = Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment
RECOFI = Regional Commission for Fisheries

14. In this regard, participants emphasized the need to continue global dialogues with regional seas organizations and regional fishery bodies on accelerating progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and welcomed the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Korea to make this global dialogue a regular forum, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, regional seas organizations, regional fishery bodies, and other interested donors. Such regular global dialogues could continue, perhaps on a biennial basis, to facilitate, promote and take stock of regional-level cooperation.

15. Similarly, participants emphasized the need for capacity-building activities in support of cooperation at the regional level.

16. In order to prepare for future global dialogues, participants suggested that an informal working group be formed, consisting of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and interested United Nations/international/regional organizations, to prepare substantive elements of the meeting programme of future global dialogues and maintain intersessional communication among participants.

17. Participants expressed their deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea for hosting the meeting and to the local organizers (the National Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea, the Korea Maritime Institute and the Korea Marine Environment Management Corporation) for successfully organizing the meeting and for their hospitality.
