



STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

at the opening of

**SOUTH-EASTERN ATLANTIC REGIONAL WORKSHOP TO FACILITATE THE
DESCRIPTION OF ECOLOGICALLY OR BIOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT MARINE
AREAS**

Swakopmund, Namibia

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**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend my warmest welcome and utmost thanks to all the experts from countries and organizations for participating in the South-Eastern Atlantic Regional Workshop on Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs), the sixth regional workshop on EBSAs being convened by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

My sincere thanks go to the Government of Namibia for hosting this important workshop. We greatly appreciate their warm welcome and kind hospitality in this beautiful beach area of Swakopmund.

My special thanks also go to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Abidjan Convention Secretariat, and the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organization (SEAFO) as well as the Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) of Australia and the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative for collaborating on the organization of this important workshop. I wish to emphasize the importance of our close collaboration with international and regional partners in successfully implementing the Convention's work on marine and coastal biodiversity.

I wish to acknowledge, with great appreciation, the kind financial support from the Governments of Norway, Japan (through Japan Biodiversity Fund), and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which enabled the convening of this regional workshop and the participation of experts from the region as well as the scientific preparation for the workshop.

In order to effectively prepare the participants for this workshop, the Secretariat also convened "the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Capacity-Building Workshop for West Africa", which was hosted by the Government of Senegal in Dakar, from 4 to 8 February 2013. The Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) workshop in Dakar was organized in collaboration with FAO, the Abidjan Convention Secretariat and many other global and regional partners who share the vision of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative, which aims at providing global platform for partnership and capacity development toward achieving Aichi Biodiversity Targets related to marine and coastal biodiversity. At the SOI workshop in Dakar, experts from coastal countries in West Africa were able to initiate scientific networking and partnerships to describe their marine areas against the scientific criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs). The present workshop in Namibia will draw upon such scientific collaboration and the capacities built in Dakar.

West Africa hosts a diverse and extensive range of marine ecosystems spanning three of the world's 12 marine realms. At its heart is one of the world's most diverse and economically important fishing zones upon which large coastal populations rely heavily for both food and foreign exchange. Sustainable development is at the core of the African Union's "2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy", and the continent is mindful of the implications of climate change, as indicated in the Arusha Declaration on Africa's Post Rio+20 Strategy for Sustainable Development. Such commitments build upon large scale, long-term, multidisciplinary and cooperative scientific research and data gathering projects initiated to understand West African marine ecosystems. Both bilateral and multi-lateral subregional projects have a long track record, from the Coastal Upwelling Ecosystems Analysis Project of the 1970s and 1980s, to the current FAO Fridtjoff Nansen project and three large marine ecosystem programmes.

At the Rio+20 meeting, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the global leaders recognized that oceans, seas and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the Earth system and are critical to sustaining it. They stressed the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and of their resources for sustainable development, while at the same time protecting biodiversity and the marine environment and addressing the impacts of climate change. The world then witnessed the commitment of global leaders to protect and restore the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems, and to maintain their biodiversity, enabling their conservation and sustainable use for present and future generations, and to effectively apply an ecosystem approach and the precautionary approach in the management of activities having an impact on the marine environment, so as to deliver on all three dimensions of sustainable development.

Likewise, the world leaders reaffirmed the importance of area-based conservation measures, including marine protected areas, as a tool for the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components. They noted Aichi Biodiversity Target 11, which states that by 2020, 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are to be conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.

In decision X/29 on marine and coastal biodiversity, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity noted that the application of the scientific criteria for the EBSAs presents a tool that Parties and competent intergovernmental organizations may choose to use to progress towards the implementation of ecosystem approaches in marine areas both within and beyond national jurisdiction.

Parties also noted that the application of the EBSA criteria is a scientific and technical exercise, that areas found to meet the criteria may require enhanced conservation and management measures, and that this can be achieved through a variety of means, including marine protected areas and impact assessments. Parties emphasized that the identification of EBSAs and the selection of conservation and management measures is a matter for States and competent intergovernmental organizations.

Upon the request of the Conference of the Parties at its tenth meeting in 2010, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has been convening a series of regional workshops to facilitate the description of EBSAs. The results of these workshops in the Western South Pacific region and the Wider Caribbean and Western Mid-Atlantic region were considered at the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties. COP-11 then requested the Executive Secretary to submit the summary report of these results to the United Nations General Assembly and its relevant processes, and requested also to include the results in the CBD EBSA repository. Similarly, the results of the present workshop will also be submitted to a forthcoming meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice prior to the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

The EBSA process undertaken since the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in partnership with various global and regional partners has facilitated the sharing of scientific information and data, networking of experts across disciplines at regional scale, and enhanced collaboration between various regional initiatives for marine conservation and sustainable use by providing a regional platform for a scientific assessment of the ecological or biological significance of marine areas.

Sustainable oceans can be achieved only through the building of a shared vision and strong commitments toward conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity. Combined with innovative approaches for linking science with policy development and implementation through multi-stakeholder partnerships, these efforts should ensure a sustainable future for the oceans of the world.

With this, I wish you a successful and fruitful workshop.

Thank you for your attention!