



Intersessional Task Force on

the 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)

Wenxi Zhu, Intersessional Task Force on BBNJ

Sixteenth Intergovernmental Session of the
IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC-XVI)
Hangzhou, China, 10-12 November 2026

1. Establishment



*15th Intergovernmental Session
IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC)
11-13 March 2025, Tokyo, Japan*

Terms of Reference

Intersessional Task Force on BBNJ Agreement

1. Objective

The 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) is a legally binding treaty that will strengthen the international legal regime for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in the maritime areas beyond national jurisdiction.

The implementation of BBNJ Agreement relies heavily on ocean science. Strengthening ocean science capacity for BBNJ implementation—particularly in developing regions—will be essential for ensuring that the BBNJ Agreement leads to meaningful protection and sustainable use of marine resources beyond national jurisdiction.

The Intersessional Task Force is established to support Member States in developing and strengthening their ocean science capacity.

2. Terms of Reference

The Intersessional Task Force will be open-ended and composed of BBNJ experts recommended by Member States and relevant research communities. Members should have experience in the BBNJ process, with a good knowledge about BBNJ and its movements, a solid scientific background related to BBNJ provisions, and a commitment to promoting international cooperation.

The Task Force will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information on BBNJ developments at either national or international levels. It will also identify potential actions and/or opportunities for the Sub-Commission to support Member States in enhancing scientific knowledge, improving research capacity, and facilitating the transfer of ocean technology.

The Task Force will conduct its work mainly through correspondence and online meetings. In-person meetings may be organized if necessary.

1. Establishment

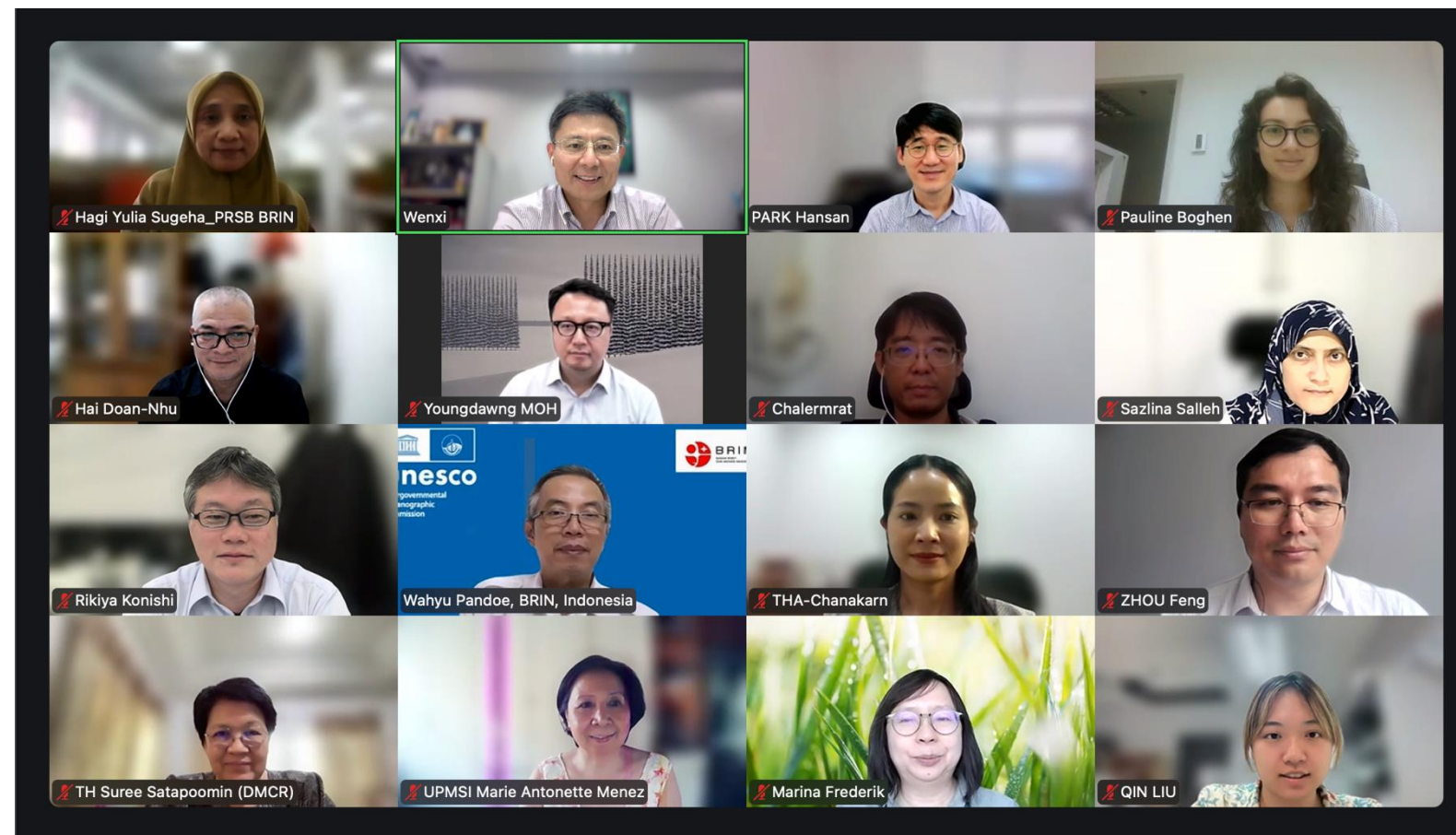
Open ended!

Feng Zhou	China	Second Institute of Oceanography, MNR
Song Sun	China	Second Institute of Oceanography, MNR
Shenghao Liu	China	First Institute of Oceanography, MNR
Rikiya Konishi	Japan	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)
Takayuki Izumi	Japan	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)
Amehr Hakim	Indonesia	Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries
Hagi Yulia Sugeha	Indonesia	National Research and Innovation Agency
Suree Satapoomin	Thailand	Department of Marine and Coastal Resources
Chanakarn Thammavichan	Thailand	Department of Marine and Coastal Resources
Chalermrat Sangmanee	Thailand	Department of Marine and Coastal Resources
Marie Antonette Juinio-Meñez	Philippines	Marine Science Institute, University of the Philippines
Hansan Pak	Korea	KIOST
Youngdawng Moh	Korea	Ocean Law and Policy Institute/KIOST
Abe Woo	Malaysia	CEMECS, USM
Tan Shau Hwai	Malaysia	CEMECS, USM
Dao Viet Ha	Vietnam	Institute of Oceanography
Hoang Xuan Ben	Vietnam	Institute of Oceanography
Doan Nhu Hai	Vietnam	Institute of Oceanography

*Extended WESTPAC Advisory Group Meeting 2026
IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC)
28-29 January 2026, Penang, Malaysia*



2. Capacity Development Needs



First meeting of the Intersessional Task Force, 15 May 2026, Online

1. Enhance scientific research, marine technology and regional cooperation for ABNJ

Scientific quality, research design, standardized methodologies, operational and safety standards, access to marine technologies, and effective use and sharing of samples and data. Regional cooperation could facilitate joint research, shared infrastructure and expertise, training, technology transfer and greater participation

2. Strengthen scientific capacity for MGRs, ABMTs, and EIAs in ABNJ

Identification, assessment and management of ecologically important areas in ABNJ. Priority activities could include the textual and scientific analysis and operationalization of the 22 indicative criteria in Annex I of the BBNJ Agreement, biodiversity mapping and assessment, and training on EIA processes, including screening, scoping, baseline assessment, impact prediction, cumulative and transboundary impact assessment, monitoring and review.

2. Capacity Development Needs

3. Strengthen ocean observations, biodiversity data and capacity to engage with the BBNJ Clearing-House Mechanism

This could include sampling protocols, metadata and data documentation, data quality assurance and interoperability, biodiversity databases, ocean observations and remote sensing, as well as technical capacity for contributing data and information to the BBNJ Clearing-House Mechanism.

4. Strengthen science–policy–law interface and national institutional readiness

Particular attention could be given to strengthening ocean science literacy among legal and policy experts

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3. Initial efforts in the Western Pacific



This IOC in-person training is a joint initiative aiming to enhance national and regional capacity for marine spatial planning (MSP) with tools applied to areas within and beyond national jurisdiction, including ecosystem-based and climate-resilient approaches, and area-based management methodologies and processes.

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

IN-PERSON TRAINING

BUILDING CAPACITY ON BIODIVERSITY-INCLUSIVE AND CLIMATE-SMART MSP AND AREA-BASED MANAGEMENT FOR ABNJ

OPEN TO CANDIDATES FROM THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

 DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS: 30 APRIL 2026

3. Initial efforts in the Western Pacific



**12th WESTPAC International Marine Science Conference
& 3rd UN Ocean Decade Regional Conference**

"From Knowledge to Action: Connecting Science, Policy, and Society for a Resilient Western Pacific"

Manila, the Philippines, 20–23 April 2027

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E1 WESTERN PACIFIC DEEP-SEA EXPLORATION, BIODIVERSITY, CONNECTIVITY, AND CAPACITY SHARING SUB-THEME E

Kayama WATANABE, Kailani Acosta, Se-Jong JU, Dongsheng ZHANG, Alexis Weinnig, Larissa Fruehe, Rizza Sacra-Dejucos, Leslie Smith, Jimmy Kalthier, Maizah Mohd Abdullah

LEARN MORE

E2 THE LIFE PROCESSES AND BIODIVERSITY OF COLD SEEP CHEMOSYNTHETIC ECOSYSTEMS SUB-THEME E

Glen Snyder, Pei-Yuan Qian, Yan Guoyong

LEARN MORE

E3 OCEAN SCIENCE FOR BBNJ IMPLEMENTATION (MGR/DSI, EIA, AND ABMT) SUB-THEME E

Hansan Park

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16th Intergovernmental Session

IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific

10–12 November 2026 | Hangzhou, China

Sessional Working Group on BBNJ ? To discuss the plan for 2027, 2028-2029

4. Workplan for 2027, 2028-2029?

