

SS010: Implementing the BBNJ Agreement in the Western Indian Ocean: Science, Conservation, and Regional Collaboration

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The Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement represents a landmark advance in global ocean governance, offering a legal framework to conserve and sustainably use marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ), which encompass nearly two-thirds of the global ocean. For the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region, the Agreement provides a critical opportunity to strengthen scientific collaboration, policy alignment, and high-seas conservation efforts. This special session will explore how WIO countries and institutions can engage with BBNJ implementation to address regional challenges such as limited access to data, fragmented monitoring systems, and knowledge gaps on deep-sea and transboundary ecosystems. Key tools under the Agreement—including area-based management measures, environmental impact assessments, and marine scientific research cooperation—will be examined through a regional lens. The session will foster dialogue among scientists, policymakers, NGOs, and other stakeholders to align BBNJ objectives with ongoing coastal and EEZ conservation efforts, creating a more coherent and connected approach to marine biodiversity protection. Anchored in the outcomes of Nairobi Convention COP 11 and the WIO Science-Policy Dialogue, the session aims to identify priority capacity and data needs, promote WIO-led contributions to high-seas governance, and advance inclusive, evidence-based strategies that support SDG 14 and the UN Ocean Decade.