

The relevance of biogeographic classification in areas beyond national jurisdiction

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The report on the biogeography of global open ocean and deep sea areas, outcome of the Scientific Experts Workshop on Biogeographic Classification Systems in Open Ocean and Deep Seabed Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, held from 22 to 24 January 2007, in Mexico City has been completed (GOODS report) with co-sponsoring received from the Government of the United States of America (USA) and the Government of Mexico (GO of Mexico).

The report provides recommendations on document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/13/4 and provided his nature, in the discussions and decision making in biogeographic classification of open ocean and deep seabed areas beyond national jurisdiction. The report was co-developed by the contracting Parties after the SBSTTA meeting so that a finalised version is available for the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Specifically, a global classification framework like this allows for the broad assessment of the status of our knowledge and an initial assessment of which habitats, communities and species may be subject to disproportionate impacts due to human activities. Such a framework can highlight possibly fragmented marine habitats, as well as the relative rarity and distribution of associated fauna. The regions that have been recognized and defined by the experts are considered the best system possible with the information available. The proposed regions are well sustained with the existing scientific knowledge and are available providing a powerful tool for decision making.

The GOODS report and associated maps are available for download at <http://www.ias.unu.edu/>. Although further refinements are expected in the development of new tools and advancement of scientific knowledge, in the precautionary approach, the major open ocean pelagic and deep sea benthic provinces in this report are considered a reasonable basis for progressing efforts towards the sustainable use of biodiversity in marine areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. It is important that any further refinement to biogeographical provinces not be undertaken towards this end, and that such action be supported by the best available information.

The work contained in this report is of vital importance.