

INFORMATION PAPER

CCSBT CONSIDERATION ON CONSERVATION AREA FOR SOUTHERN BLUEFIN TUNA AND THE BBNJ AGREEMENT

Submitted by Indonesia

1. Background

Indonesia is a coastal State with a strategic role in the Indian Ocean and a strong interest in the sustainable management of Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT), other tuna species, and marine biodiversity. The spawning grounds of SBT overlap with Indonesian fishing areas, giving Indonesia a particular ecological connection and a legitimate interest in the long-term health of the stock and associated ecosystems, as regulated by UNCLOS. Indonesia's tuna fisheries, primarily longline and purse seine fleets, mainly target Yellowfin (YFT), Bigeye (BET), and Albacore (ALB), with SBT generally taken as bycatch.

At the global level, there is a growing momentum for stronger ocean governance. The Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF- CBD) sets a collective commitment to conserve at least 30 percent of marine and coastal areas by 2030 (“30x30”). Indonesia supports this global commitment through its national aspiration to protect 30 percent of its waters, including its Exclusive Economic Zone, by 2045. This commitment has been documented in the Indonesian Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (IBSAP) 2025-2045.

Another important development is the **Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement)**, adopted in 2023 as the third implementing agreement under UNCLOS. Most CCSBT Members have signed the BBNJ Agreement, with Indonesia having ratified it.

The BBNJ Agreement introduces mechanisms to conserve and sustainably use marine biodiversity in the areas beyond national jurisdiction through establishing Area-Based Management Tools (ABMTs), conducting environmental impact assessments, and developing a Clearing-House Mechanism. An important principle in the Agreement is that measures adopted under the BBNJ Agreement must not undermine the mandates of existing regional bodies, including Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).

With the Agreement set to enter into force on 17 January 2026, the first Conference of the Parties (COP) must be convened within one year of that date. The Agreement mandated the COP to determine the establishment of the ABMT Committee and its Rules

of Procedure (ROP). Indonesia views the crucial role of the CCSBT during the meetings of the Preparatory Commission, especially how ABMT/MPA under the BBNJ Agreement should be established under the consultation with CCSBT and how states can ensure that such measures do not undermine the CCSBT mandate for SBT management. To this end, Indonesia suggests that the CCSBT begins to exchange views on this matter.

2. Rationale

Indonesia considers that **biodiversity conservation is fundamental to effective ocean management**. Protecting habitats and ecologically related species (ERS), including seabirds, endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species, and deep-sea ecosystems will support the productivity and resilience of the Indian Ocean and benefit tuna fisheries.

Recent scientific findings indicate that **Large-Scale Marine Protected Areas (LSMPAs)** with well-enforced no-take zones can produce measurable spill-over effects, including **increases in catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) of tuna species near their boundaries by approximately 12–18 percent over one to two decades**¹. Although outcomes vary by location and species, these findings show that carefully designed conservation measures can generate both biodiversity and fisheries benefits.

CCSBT's mandate to manage SBT stock is relevant to the objective of ABMT under the BBNJ Agreement. Besides, emerging challenges such as climate change, changing oceanographic conditions, and other human-driven impacts could affect the distribution and productivity of the stock. Initial consideration of ABMT role on SBT management would help CCSBT to maintain the progress in rebuilding SBT and strengthen resilience to these emerging challenges.

The interplay of the objectives and functions of the CCSBT and BBNJ Agreement makes early dialogue among CCSBT Members even more important, especially in ensuring that tuna management considerations are reflected in future BBNJ processes and that CCSBT's scientific and management work remains effective. The same view has been shared by Australia in its *Report on the BBNJ Agreement (EC31-Info02)* presented at the 31st CCSBT Annual Meeting.²

This view also aligns with **Indonesia's Blue Economy framework**, which places **protection and conservation of marine ecosystems as the first and foundational platform** for sustainable ocean-based development. Indonesia recognises that long-

¹ Lynham J. and Villaseñor-Derbez J.C. 2024. Evidence of spillover benefits from large-scale marine protected areas to purse seine fisheries. *Science*. 386(6727):1276-1281. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adn1146>

² The Report explained that the treaty introduces global mechanisms such as ABMTs, environmental impact assessments, and a Clearing-House Mechanism. It also confirms that these measures must not undermine the mandates of existing RFMOs.

term food security, economic growth, and sustainable fisheries depend on safeguarding biodiversity and ecosystem functions.

Equity and fairness are also important considerations. Any conservation measures that contribute to global biodiversity and SBT recovery should acknowledge the ecological role of spawning-ground States and ensure that benefits are shared in a balanced and inclusive manner among all CCSBT Members, including developing States.

3. Objectives

Through this paper, Indonesia seeks to:

1. **Invite Members to initiate discussions within CCSBT** on the potential role of conservation areas, including ABMTs, in supporting biodiversity and contributing to the recovery and long-term sustainability of SBT stocks.
2. **Encourage consideration of CCSBT's engagement** with global frameworks, such as the BBNJ Agreement, the KMGB-CBD (30x30), and the FAO Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries, in order to ensure that CCSBT's mandate is appropriately reflected in future high seas governance.
3. **Promote exchange of views and technical understanding** on how potential conservation measures, including ABMT, could be designed to complement existing CCSBT management without imposing disproportionate burdens on Members nor undermining the mandate of CCSBT.
4. **Foster fairness and collaboration**, ensuring that any dialogue on conservation takes into account the interests of all Members, including developing States, and respects CCSBT's decision-making processes.

4. Initiative

Indonesia has already taken significant steps at the national level to strengthen marine conservation and fisheries management. These efforts include the expansion of marine protected areas with the target of achieving 30 percent coverage by 2045, in line with the KMGBF-CBD framework, as well as the ratification of the BBNJ Agreement. Building upon these national commitments, Indonesia proposes to initiate a structured dialogue within CCSBT to explore potential additional conservation measures aimed at stock rebuilding. The possible elements of this dialogue could include:

- **Exploration of science-based spatial or seasonal management options** that are consistent with CCSBT's mandate and informed by the best available data.

- **Updated scientific research** on SBT spawning grounds, noting that major biological studies are decades old³. Opportunities include collaborative research among Members, and improved information on ETP species and habitat–ecosystem interactions.
- **Engagement with mechanisms established under the BBNJ Agreement**, including, but not limited to, the coordination between the Secretariat of CCSBT and the Secretariat of the BBNJ Agreement, the representation of CCSBT in the Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings, the involvement of CCSBT representative in the Informal Advisory Group for the Clearing-House Mechanism, the consultation mechanism in considering ABMT proposals within the ABMT Committee, as well as other forms of engagement in other subsidiary bodies, including ad-hoc bodies, established under the BBNJ Agreement. Such engagement is aimed at harmonizing scientific information and reporting and ensuring efficient information sharing. Indonesia encourages CCSBT Members to also look at the best practices in other RFMOs, such as dedicating a specific agenda on BBNJ Agreement implementation in its annual meeting, as necessary.

5. Conclusion

Indonesia offers this paper to encourage constructive discussion within CCSBT on how conservation concepts might relate to the organisation’s objectives. By linking CCSBT’s mandate to the global 30x30 agenda as stipulated in KMGBF-CBD, the BBNJ Agreement, and Indonesia’s Blue Economy framework, Members have an opportunity to share perspectives, explore synergies, and consider how future international processes could complement the ongoing conservation and sustainable use of SBT stocks.

Indonesia is open to the views of other Members and is committed to collaborating in exploring options that balance biodiversity protection, tuna stock sustainability, and equitable outcomes for all.

³ The distribution of southern bluefin tuna (hatched) and the spawning ground (shaded) were documented in earlier studies by Collette and Nauen (1983), and Nishikawa et al. (1985).