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UNOC3 Conference Side Event

Ocean observation for the governance of the High Seas

June 10th, 14:00 (CEST), Citadelle de Villefranche-sur-Mer

Organized by:

Colectivo Internacional Pelagos Okéanos

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS)

Sorbonne University

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto of Costa Rica

Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica

Mercator Ocean International

Lycée Albert 1er Monaco

High Seas Alliance

French Facility for Global Environment

Deep Ocean Observing Strategy

Deep-Ocean Stewardship Initiative

Fundación MarViva

Background on the event (one paragraph)

The event highlighted the role of ocean observation in the governance of the High Seas. Using the Thermal Dome off Central America as a case study, it illustrated how cutting-edge technologies like biogeochemical Argo floats and satellites can inform ABMTs under BBNJ. The dialogue was then elevated to a global scale, discussing how ocean observation could enhance conservation and equitable access. Speakers included scientists, diplomats, intergovernmental bodies, industry and NGOs. It fostered science-driven governance by addressing ocean observation as the backbone of ABMTs. Art and ocean literacy intervention by high school students was done to further complement the holistic vision of the approach, further strengthening SDG 14's call for awareness and education.

Key Issues discussed (5-8 bullet points)

- Comprehensive integration of high-resolution deep seafloor observations with water column measurements to enhance the scientific robustness of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Area-Based Management Tools (ABMTs), addressing the complex three-dimensional ecological dynamics under the BBNJ agreement.
- Deployment and advancement of sophisticated observational technologies including satellite remote sensing, autonomous underwater vehicles, and in-situ monitoring platforms (notably Argo floats and AUVs), crucial for high-quality data collection, analysis, and predictive modeling of ocean conditions.
- Imperative global coordination spearheaded by the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) to synthesize and help fragmented ocean observation programs into an integrated, cohesive, and scientifically rigorous framework that supports BBNJ governance mandates. BBNJ should channel funding through GOOS for this approach.
- Strategic development of innovative, long-term financing mechanisms aligned with Blue Economy principles, ensuring sustainable support for continuous, high-frequency, and spatially comprehensive ocean observations.
- Scientific and technical capacity-building coupled with systematic marine technology transfer, explicitly addressing and mitigating global disparities in observational capabilities between developed and developing nations.
- Leveraging philanthropic contributions to advance cutting-edge marine research, enhance technological innovations, and promote equitable access to marine observational data and methodologies.
- Exemplifying localized governance through initiatives like the ARGO DOME offshore Central America, functioning as an advanced proof of concept that informs adaptive governance strategies and serves as a replicable model for integrating science-driven observational practices.

Key recommendations for action / voluntary commitments (5-6 bullet points)

- Strengthen and institutionalize the scientific integration of deep seafloor and comprehensive water column observations into EIAs and ABMT processes, ensuring robust, evidence-based decision-making under the BBNJ agreement.
- Establish dedicated observational technology hubs within developing countries, focusing on the deployment and operationalization of Argo floats and related observational technologies, fostering regional capacity and autonomy in data generation and analysis.
- Facilitate systematic private-sector engagement in marine technology transfer initiatives, bolstering economic sustainability, accelerating data accessibility, and aligning technological advancements with BBNJ governance goals.
- Enhance science-driven outreach and educational programs aimed at deepening public and stakeholder understanding of the ocean's complexity, the importance of integrated observations, and participatory governance processes.
- Strategically utilize philanthropic funding to pioneer innovative observational methodologies, enhance capacity-building, and facilitate equitable, widespread technology deployment and transfer.
- Harmonize ocean governance frameworks with ongoing scientific advances and emerging observational practices, promoting adaptive, responsive management strategies tailored to complex ecological realities.