

A global vision for the ocean

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A new scientific article published in *Frontiers in Marine Science* calls attention to the need for a global vision for the ocean in the Implementation Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, being prepared within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the

Law of the Sea. The Fifth session of the Intergovernmental conference on the Agreement is currently taking place in New York, 15-26 August 2022.

"The Need for a Global Ocean Vision Within Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction: A Key Role for Strategic Environmental Assessment" is authored by Maria Adelaide Ferreira, Francisco Andrade—both professors at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon (Portugal) and researchers at the Center for Marine and Environmental Sciences (MARE)—and by David Edward Johnson, Director of Seascope Consultants Ltd., UK.

As part of the ongoing negotiations, under way at the United Nations, of a new international agreement for the conservation and sustainable use of marine [biodiversity](#) in areas outside national jurisdiction, known as the BBNJ Agreement (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction), the authors of this scientific article defend the importance of a holistic, ecosystem-based global vision for the [ocean](#) that guides any and all future ocean policies, plans and programs. The authors propose that the text of the Agreement includes provisions for this vision to be developed through a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

SEA is a process for strategic, holistic and prospective thinking, which aims to guide political decision-making towards sustainable development. However, Maria Adelaide Ferreira explains: "This is not the most common practice of the SEA, which is mainly used a posteriori, resembling an environmental impact assessment process, thus losing its strategic value."

Maria Adelaide Ferreira says that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, developed in the 1970s, which constitutes the [legal](#)

[framework](#) for this Agreement, "does not fully respond to current scientific knowledge and governance needs, namely in terms of the protection of marine biodiversity, particularly in areas outside national jurisdiction."

What the authors propose in this article is that the text of the Agreement specifically articulates the need for a global vision for the ocean, which stems from a strategically based SEA. To support this idea, the article details the essential elements in the construction of this global vision; discusses the potential of a SEA within the framework of the Agreement and the key elements it should include; and emphasizes the timeliness of the proposal, published ahead of the current meeting and aligned with a growing number of proposals defending the importance of a global vision for the ocean.

More information: Maria Adelaide Ferreira et al, The Need for a Global Ocean Vision Within Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction: A Key Role for Strategic Environmental Assessment, *Frontiers in Marine Science* (2022). [DOI: 10.3389/fmars.2022.878077](https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2022.878077)

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