



DSCC BRIEFING

DSCC priorities for the protection of seamounts and other topographical features in areas beyond national jurisdiction in the Southern Indian Ocean

July 2023

In anticipation of the the tenth Meeting of the Parties of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA MoP10) in BalACLava, Mauritius, in July 2023, the DSCC wishes to draw your attention to the following priorities for action as a part of our collective responsibility for the protection and preservation of deep sea ecosystems:

1. A prohibition on all bottom trawling on seamounts and other similar topographical features in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) in the SIOFA region.
2. Recognition of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) as the ecosystems themselves, including the totality of the populations and species associated with each VMEs, rather than simply the species or groups of species which have been designated as VME 'indicator taxa'.
3. Acceptance of 100% VME protection strategy based on spatial closures of all known and projected VMEs,, in conjunction with move-on rules and closures to protect unexpected encounters with VMEs.
4. The immediate adoption of a Bottom Fishing Footprint, and associated exploratory fisheries Measures to ensure no new fishing is initiated on VMEs .
5. The immediate adoption of strict Shark Bycatch measures.

Background

In 2004 the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) first committed to “take action urgently, and consider...the interim prohibition of destructive fishing practices, including bottom trawling that has adverse impacts on VMEs, including seamounts, hydrothermal vents and cold water corals located beyond national jurisdiction” in UNGA resolution 59/25. Since that time, the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC) has been working with governments, scientists, NGOs and intergovernmental organizations to protect the biodiversity associated with seamounts and other deep-sea topographical features from damage and loss caused by bottom trawling in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

The 2022 UNGA Sustainable Fisheries resolution 77/181 again highlighted the importance of protecting deep-sea biodiversity by protecting VMEs and called for the assessment of the potential impacts on all species that constitute a VME “including their associated and dependent species” and not simply VME indicator taxa.

The SIOFA Convention specifically requires that members ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fishery resources in the Convention Area, and, in so doing, safeguard the marine ecosystems in which these resources occur on the basis of the best scientific evidence available and the application of the precautionary approach and an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. SIOFA Mop10 has an opportunity to adopt measures that will significantly contribute to halting marine biodiversity loss in the region, through immediate adoption of a prohibition of bottom trawling on all seamounts and a measure agreeing to 100% VME protection.

More information

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