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Maritime Biodiversity from the French State's Perspective

National Conference of Ministère de la Transition écologique et solidaire
Ensemble, protéger la biodiversité marine! Connaître pour agir. Paris, France
(March 12, 2020), Ministère de la Transition écologique et solidaire,
Ifremer and OFB

Abstract: “Together, protecting marine biodiversity: know how to act” was the French governmental conference organized by three ministries in Paris on 12 March 2020. Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Ministry of Agriculture and Alimentation, and Ministry for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition along with two research think tanks, Ifremer and OFB have organized the “day of biodiversity”. Participants were mostly researchers, governmental and local officials, business leaders, fishermen, representatives of associations and foundations, all from France. Thus, the language of the conference was French. The conference took place in the 13th century Collège of Bernardins, a former Cistercian college of the historic University of Paris. Experts and audience shared reflections and discussions on major research issues on ocean change, as well as the French position towards global maritime policy in order to find proposals for sustainable management and protection of the ocean.

Keywords: *biodiversity, maritime, ocean, France, French territories, climate change, ocean change*

Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Ministry of Agriculture and Alimentation, and Ministry for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition along with two research think tanks, Ifremer and the French Office for Biodiversity have organized the national conference entitled *Ensemble, protéger la biodiversité marine! Connaître pour agir*, which can be trans-

lated into: “Together, protecting marine biodiversity: know how to act”. This governmental venue took place in the 13th century Collège of Bernardins, a former Cistercian college of the historic University of Paris on the day of 12th March 2020. Participants were mostly researchers, governmental and local officials, business leaders, fishermen, representatives of associations and foundations, all from France. Thus, the language of the conference was French. Experts and audience shared reflections and discussions on major research issues on ocean change, as well as the French position towards global maritime policy in order to find proposals for sustainable management and protection of the ocean.

Ministry for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition (fr. *Ministère de la Transition écologique et solidaire*) was the main hosting institution. It was created in 1971 as Ministry of the Environment (known now and then as Ministry of Ecology). While the two French research institutions, responsible for logistics were: Ifremer - Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (eng. French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea), and OFB - Office français de la biodiversité (eng. French Office for Biodiversity). Due to combating spreading the coronavirus (COVID-19), some participants did not make to participate in the venue, but yet the organizers decided not to cancel it. This decision was also made based on the official governmental statement of not closing the public places on that day. The author of this article was in Paris on her research grant by the Norwegian University Centre in Paris. She was a visiting researcher at two French institutions: Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques and Institut du Pacifique, both in Paris. Due to those connections, the author was able to get the access to the governmental venue, indeed of the restricted participation.

The words, which have been mentioned most frequently during the biodiversity day were ocean science and sustainable policy. The conference started with 7 welcoming speeches, which also expressed the high importance of the maritime policy for the French government, IGO and NGO based in Paris. The first welcome note was made by Hubert du Mesnil, director of Collège of Bernardins, who underlined the historic reputation of this place for the public debate. Next, Laetitia Vivard from Ifremer reminded all the audience of the hygiene issues in the context of spreading the coronavirus. She was also introducing every speaker. Denis Robin, representing the Ministry of Ecology, bearing the title of *secrétaire général de la mer*, stressed the need for finding answers not only for today's problems, but also those issues which might concern all of us in the nearest future. His colleague, Simone Saillant added that the next year, 2021, is understood by both the United Nation and the French government as the year which shall indeed be ground-breaking when it comes to the final and efficient ocean protection, along with its resources and its ability to absorb carbon dioxide. This thesis has also made a large refence point throughout the day. Then, the European Union Commission representative made his speech. Pascal Lamy, *Président du conseil de la mission “Océan”*, explained his work in the EU and made indeed clear comparison with the Apollo mission from 1961, when also the latest innovation had been used in order to find the best solution in a grand matter. Pierre Dubreuil, general director of OFB, underlined the urgent need for

sustainable policy not anymore only in the green economy, but also in the blue economy. Lastly, François Houllier general director of Ifremer reminded that the day of biodiversity was a part of the large international preparation process to the three climate change events in 2020: 2nd UN Ocean Conference on Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water in Lisbon, 2–6 June, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress in Marseille, 11–19 June, and the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (the end of the year in China).

The first keynote speaker was delivered by Axel Kahn, a geneticist, working in the Commission of Ethics in Ifremer. He underlined the key relevance of biodiversity for the food chain in the seas, but also to the whole globe. After this speech, the first panel took place. It was entitled: “Marine biodiversity: state of knowledge, research challenges” and was divided into two round tables: “What could be the solutions to preserve marine biodiversity?” and “What are the research challenges?”. They were preceded by the keynote made by Yunne Jai-Shin, representing various research institutions and being responsible for global report for the Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). She was also a moderator of the first-round table comprised of the following experts: Joachim Claudet, director of research in Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), Frida Lasram, from Université du Littoral, Hugo Bluet from the World-Wide Fund (WWF) and Marc Trousselier from CNRS, representing the Union of the French Researchers MARBEC - MARine Biodiversity, Exploitation and Conservation. The second-round table was also changed due to the absence of some of the experts and was composed of the following: Frédéric Ménard from Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD), Eric Fouilland from CNRS and MARBEC, Véronique Garçon, a oceanographer from Laboratoire d'études en géophysique et océanographie spatiales (LEGOS), Rémi Mongruel, an economist from Centre de Droit et d'économie de la Mer, and Françoise Gaill, vice-president of Plateforme Océan-Climat.

After the lunch break, the second panel began. “The Deep Ocean: biological and geological resources” was opened by two keynote speeches by Walter Roest, a geophysicist, 2012–2017 member of the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), an organ created by the power of the Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and Daniela Zeppilli, a biologist from Ifremer. Here the experts were more of the legal and political background unlike the scientists from the previous panel. Those were: Serge Segura, French Ambassador for the oceans, Alex Rogers from the organization Research and Expedition Vessel (REV) Ocean, Olivier Rouxel, a geochemist from Ifremer, Jean-Marc Sornin, director of a private exploitation company Abyssa, Charlotte Salpin, a lawyer working during the UN negotiations on sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), Ann Vanreusel from Université de Gand in Belgium, and Ann Dom from “Seas At Risk”, an organization working for protection and restoration of the marine environment.

Finally, after a short break, there was the third final panel entitled: “Fishing, research challenges and knowledge sharing”. It was preceded by the keynote speech by Phillippe

Curry from IRD and the Oceanographic Institute of Monaco. He moderated three round tables: “Presentation of the knowledge expectations”, “Functioning of socio-ecosystems” and “Scenarios on bio-socio-economic modelling and management strategies”. The first research table was made of Alexandre Mousseigne from France Filière Pêche, Rita Sahyoun from WWF and Ronan Lucas representing the Gironde estuary and Pertuis sea Marine Nature Park in western France. The socio-economic table was in turn made of Olivier Thébaud and Marie Savina-Rolland from Ifremer and Jean-Marc Fromentin from Ifremer’s Department of the Biological Resources and Environment. Lastly, the future scenarios were made by Mathieu Colleter representing a private maritime organization “Bloom”, Armand Quentel from Comité National des Pêches maritimes et des élevages marins (CNPMM), Olivier Maury from IRD and MARBEC, Frédéric Gueudar Delahaye representing Ministry of Agriculture and Alimentation.

The closure of the biodiversity day was held after 7 o’clock with the closing remarks by two general directors of the hosting institutions: the French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea and the French Office for Biodiversity, accordingly François Houllier and Pierre Dubreuil. They repeated three main topics, which were discussed throughout the day: the ocean, state of the contemporary knowledge, along with research challenges during the “ocean decade” announced by the UN for the years 2020–2030, fishing dilemmas, like exclusive economic zones (EEZs), the urgent and cross boundary knowledge sharing, and finally the deep ocean, according to the UNCLOS called “the Area”, along with its biological and geological resources, which create unique and maritime biodiversity.