Shipping and the BBNJ Agreement (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction): Exploring issues for the Caribbean

Importance of the Shipping Sector

The shipping industry supports economies worldwide by transporting raw materials, oil and gas and other products to industries, businesses and homes. Within the Caribbean, maritime transport remains the most feasible mode of transport for goods for export and import such as petroleum products, bauxite, cement and other raw materials. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) reports that Caribbean’s level of foreign trade amounts to as much as 78% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as compared to 25% for Latin America. The shipping industry is instrumental for economic development and facilitates the continuous growth of trade and improvement of living standards.

Relevance of the BBNJ Agreement to the Shipping Sector

In the context of the BBNJ Agreement, there is need to ensure that the establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Areas Beyond Natural Jurisdiction (ABNJ) does not negatively impact the rights of freedom of navigation or ship routing measures. Similar areas actually already exist through the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) such as Special Areas or Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs). Marine transport also needs to consider the impacts of shipping activities on marine biodiversity including the impacts of radiated sound, operating within species migration corridors and also the introduction of non-native species via biofouling (accumulation of organisms on submerged surfaces), especially in ecologically important areas.
Priorities for negotiation

There needs to be sufficient collaboration with the shipping sector and the IMO to provide specialised technical input to negotiations to ensure that a balance is maintained between environmental protection and freedom of navigation in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ).

The Way Forward

The shipping sector can consider the BBNJ Agreement as a further step towards a more sustainable industry. This would build on work by the IMO, which has already instilled targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and encouraging greener policies that protect biodiversity.

What happens in international waters affects all of us –

CARICOM stakeholders from government, private sector, communities, civil society, academia and regional agencies have rights, responsibilities and interests in the sustainable use and protection of biodiversity in international waters.

Get more information: https://www.un.org/bbnj/
Get involved! Contact CANARI: info@canari.org

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