



UN BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE

Investing in biodiversity for people and planet



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Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, 2018

Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs)

This year, the process under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to describe ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) celebrates its tenth anniversary. This process focuses on describing and mapping special places in the world's oceans—areas most crucial to the healthy functioning of marine ecosystems. Thus far, 279 EBSAs, comprising 19 per cent of total global ocean surface area, have been described and mapped through a series of regional workshops convened by the CBD since 2011.

EBSAs are as varied as the life within them. Some address large ocean areas, while others focus on small individual features. Some are static, while others move with seasonal variations in certain oceanographic features.

Likewise, EBSAs can be used in various ways. EBSAs can be used to prioritize monitoring and research. They can also be used to plan and implement different types of management tools, including marine protected areas, environmental impact assessments and fisheries management measures. It is important to note, however, that describing an EBSA is a purely scientific exercise. It is up to governments and competent intergovernmental organizations to decide how they use the EBSA information. Describing an EBSAs can provide an important basis to support research and management, but it does not necessarily mean that management measures will be put in place, nor does it prescribe what types of management measures should be used.





EBSAs at the UN Biodiversity Conference¹

The Conference in Egypt will be a crucial milestone in the CBD's work on EBSAs, as it will discuss important aspects of the future of the EBSA process, in particular options for modifying the existing EBSA descriptions, for describing new EBSAs, and for ensuring that the best available scientific and technical information, including traditional knowledge, are used in the EBSA process.

COP 14 will also consider the results of the two most recent regional EBSA workshops, namely the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, and the Baltic Sea. To date, fourteen regional EBSA workshops have been conducted, covering almost 75 per cent of the global ocean. These workshops are an inclusive, science-driven process involving national, regional and global experts and an enormous amount of scientific data. As a result, the EBSA process has expanded our understanding of those areas that are the richest in life, boast the greatest diversity and abundance of species, and possess the rarest species and the most unique communities of marine flora and fauna.

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Important links

- EBSA website, with links to the information and outputs of the 12 regional EBSA workshops thus far considered by COP: www.cbd.int/ebsa
- EBSA criteria: www.cbd.int/marine/doc/azores-brochure-en.pdf
- EBSA Brochure: www.cbd.int/marine/doc/ebsa-brochure-2012-en.pdf
- EBSA Booklet Vol. 1: Western South Pacific: www.cbd.int/marine/ebsa/booklet-01-wsp-en.pdf
- EBSA Booklet Vol. 2: Wide Caribbean and Western Mid-Atlantic: www.cbd.int/marine/ebsa/booklet-02-wcar-en.pdf
- EBSA Booklet Vol. 3: Southern Indian Ocean: www.cbd.int/marine/ebsa/booklet-03-sio-en.pdf
- EBSA Booklet Vol. 4: North Pacific: www.cbd.int/marine/ebsa/booklet-04-np-en.pdf

¹ Fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity; Ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; Third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing; 17-29 November 2018

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