



Press Brief

Protected Areas

Why is this important?

Protected areas are the cornerstone of biodiversity conservation; they maintain key habitats, provide refugia, allow for species migration and movement, and ensure the maintenance of natural processes across the landscape. Not only do protected areas secure biodiversity conservation, they also secure the well-being of humanity. Protected areas provide livelihoods for nearly 1.1 billion people; are the primary source of drinking water for over a third of the world's largest cities and are a major factor in ensuring global food security by protecting fisheries, wild crop relatives and the ecosystems services upon which agriculture depends.

Well-managed protected areas with participatory and equitable governance mechanisms yield significant benefits far beyond their boundaries. These can be translated into cumulative advantages across a national economy and contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development, including achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 Development Agenda. Better managed, better connected, better governed and better financed protected areas are recognized as the key to both mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre, the current protected area coverage of terrestrial areas including inland waters is about 15.4%, and protected area coverage of territorial waters (to 12 nautical miles) is about 10.9%. However, there are still areas that lag behind. The social costs and benefits of protected areas, the effective participation of indigenous and local communities and the diversification of various governance types need more commitment and resolute actions. The evaluation and improvement of management effectiveness, and the development and implementation of sustainable finance plans with diversified portfolios of traditional and innovative financial mechanisms need enhanced measures. Climate change considerations for both mitigation and adaptation responses need to be incorporated.



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What news to expect in Pyeongchang?

Successive decisions of the Conference of the Parties (COP) have established a policy environment to foster implementation of the Convention's Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA). As the elements of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 ("By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscape and seascape.") incorporate the tenets of the PoWPA, furthering PoWPA implementation remains key to achieving Target 11 and to help achieve most, if not all, of the other Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

To strengthen implementation of the PoWPA and to align implementation with available funding and technical support, the COP invited Parties to develop a long-term action plan for the implementation of the PoWPA (or reorient existing plans), contributing to implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and to use these PoWPA action plans as the basis for accessing funding. As a result, 108 PoWPA action plans were formally submitted to the Secretariat by Parties. In decision XI/24 Parties were invited to integrate PoWPA action plans into revised NBSAPs which, in line with decision X/2, should be adopted as policy instruments and used as a primary framework for implementation.

Aside from general discussions on implementation of the Strategic Plan, discussion at COP 12 on protected areas will include: involvement of indigenous and local communities in management and establishment of protected areas; possible usage, as appropriate, of the scientific information regarding the description of areas meeting EBSA criteria for *inter alia* marine spatial planning including developing representative networks of marine protected areas; taking measures to reduce potential significant adverse impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise on marine and coastal biodiversity through *inter alia* management plans for marine protected areas; and increasing coverage and effectiveness of marine and coastal protected and managed areas in coral reefs and associated ecosystems.

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