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Agenda item 25

MARINE AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY: ECOLOGICALLY OR BIOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT MARINE AREAS

Draft decision submitted by the Chair of Working Group II

The Conference of the Parties,

Reaffirming decisions X/29, XI/17, XII/22 and XIII/12 on ecologically or biologically significant marine areas,

Reiterating the central role of the General Assembly of the United Nations in addressing issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction,

[Recalling that United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/73 reaffirms that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out¹,]

[Recalling that the United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/73 reaffirms that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and also recognizing the existence of other instruments providing the legal framework for regulating marine activities, including customary international law,]

[Recalling that international law including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as customary international law, sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out]

[Recalling the United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/73 on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea]

Noting the negotiations under way in the Intergovernmental Conference on an International Legally Binding Instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, following United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/249,

1. *Welcomes* the scientific and technical information contained in the summary reports prepared by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice at its twenty-second meeting, as contained in annex I to the present draft decision, based on the reports of the two regional workshops for describing ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in the Black Sea and the

¹ *Noting that Turkey voted against UNGA 72/73 and Colombia, El Salvador and Venezuela abstained*

Caspian Sea, and in the Baltic Sea,² and *requests* the Executive Secretary to include the summary reports in the EBSA repository, and to submit them to the United Nations General Assembly and its relevant processes, as well as Parties, other Governments and relevant international organizations, in line with the purpose and procedures set out in decisions [X/29](#), [XI/17](#), [XII/22](#) and [XIII/12](#);

2. *Also welcomes* the report of the Expert Workshop to Develop Options for Modifying the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas, for Describing New Areas, and for Strengthening the Scientific Credibility and Transparency of this Process,³ held in Berlin from 5 to 8 December 2017, and [*endorses*][*takes note of*] the set of options, as contained in annex II to the present decision;

3. *Takes note* of the addendum to the terms of reference of the informal advisory group on ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (annex III of decision XIII/12) contained in annex III to the present decision;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to work with Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to facilitate implementation of this set of options through the provisioning of scientific and technical support to Parties, other Governments and relevant competent intergovernmental organizations, as appropriate;

5. *Calls for* further collaboration and information-sharing among the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Maritime Organization and the International Seabed Authority, as well as regional fishery bodies, regional seas conventions and actions plans, and other relevant international organizations, regarding the use of scientific information on ecological and biological features related to ecologically or biologically significant marine areas as one of the key pieces of information that can be used inter alia for guidance regarding area-based management tools, with a view to contributing to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and relevant Sustainable Development Goals;

6. *Invites* Parties to submit descriptions of areas that meet the criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in the North-East Atlantic;

[7. *Reaffirms* that the sharing of the outcomes of the process under the Convention for the description of areas meeting the criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas does not prejudice the sovereignty, sovereign rights or jurisdiction of States (coastal, archipelagic).]

8. *Reaffirms* that the present decision and its implementation shall be without prejudice to the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries, nor does it have economic or legal implications. It is strictly a scientific and technical exercise.

² CBD/EBSA/WS/2017/1/3 and CBD/EBSA/WS/2018/1/4.

³ CBD/EBSA/EM/2017/1/3.

Annex I

**SUMMARY REPORT ON THE DESCRIPTION OF AREAS MEETING THE SCIENTIFIC CRITERIA
FOR ECOLOGICALLY OR BIOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT MARINE AREAS**

BACKGROUND

1. Pursuant to decision [X/29](#), paragraph 36, decision [XI/17](#), paragraph 12, decision [XII/22](#), paragraph 6 and decision [XIII/12](#), paragraph 8, the following two additional regional workshops were convened by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity:

- (a) Black Sea and Caspian Sea (Baku, 24 to 29 April 2017);⁴
- (b) Baltic Sea (Helsinki, 19 to 24 February 2018).⁵

2. Pursuant to decision XI/17, paragraph 12, summaries of the results of these regional workshops are provided in tables 1 and 2 below, respectively, while full descriptions of how the areas meet the criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) are provided in the annexes to the respective reports of the workshops.

⁴ Report contained in CBD/EBSA/WS/2017/1/3.

⁵ Report contained in CBD/EBSA/WS/2018/1/4.

3. In decision X/29, paragraph 26, the Conference of Parties noted that the application of the EBSA criteria is a scientific and technical exercise, that areas found to meet the criteria may require enhanced conservation and management measures, and that this can be achieved through a variety of means, including marine spatial planning, marine protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures and impact assessment. It also emphasized that the identification of ecologically or biologically significant areas and the selection of conservation and management measures is a matter for States and competent intergovernmental organizations, in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.⁶

4. The description of marine areas meeting the criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Nor does it have economic or legal implications; it is strictly a scientific and technical exercise.

Key to the tables

⁶ [United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1833, No. 31363.](#)

RANKING OF EBSA CRITERIA**Relevance****H: High****M: Medium****L: Low****-: No information****CRITERIA**

- **C1:** Uniqueness or rarity
- **C2:** Special importance for life-history stages of species
- **C3:** Importance for threatened, endangered or declining species and/or habitats
- **C4:** Vulnerability, fragility, sensitivity, or slow recovery
- **C5:** Biological productivity
- **C6:** Biological diversity
- **C7:** Naturalness

Table 1. Description of areas meeting the EBSA criteria in the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea

(Details are provided in the appendix to annex V of the report of the Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea (CBD/EBSA/WS/2017/1/3))

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
For key to criteria, see page 2							
Black Sea							
<p>1. Ropotamo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Ropotamo is located at latitude 42.3019 °N and longitude 27.9343 °E. It covers 981 km², of which 89.9 per cent is marine (881.91 km²). • The area comprises both a coastal and marine area along the Bulgarian coast of the Black Sea. The terrestrial part includes Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, CORINE Biotope sites (under the European Commission) and national protected areas. The marine area stretches over 881.91 km² (89.9 per cent of the total area). It comprises a variety of habitats of high conservation importance, distinguished by high biodiversity, good ecological status and extensive span – including the unique European flat oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>) biogenic reefs, the rare sciophilic association of the red seaweed <i>Phyllophora crispa</i> on infralittoral rock, productive communities of photophilic brown macroalgae, mussel banks on sediment, with high diversity of invertebrates and fishes, sandbanks and seagrass meadows. The marine area is an important habitat for shad fish, providing feeding grounds and migration routes to the spawning grounds. It is significant for the protection of the three small cetacean populations that occur in the Black Sea. The area represents the largest marine protected area within the Natura 2000 ecological network in the Bulgarian Black Sea, namely the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Ropotamo BG0001001, designated under the Habitats Directive. 	H	H	H	M	-	H	H
<p>2. Kaliakra</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The area is located in the coastal waters of the western Black Sea (between latitudes 43.37°N and 45.19° N). • The area encompasses a marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, designated primarily for its importance as a migratory corridor for the vulnerable yelkouan shearwater (<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>). The yelkouan shearwater is a Mediterranean endemic with a population estimated between 46,000 and 90,000 individuals, of which some 30 to 40 per cent migrate to the Black Sea during the non-breeding season, occurring near the coast of northern Bulgaria during their migrations. The area also encompasses the non-breeding distribution of two additional vulnerable seabirds – the velvet scoter (<i>Melanitta fusca</i>) and the horned grebe (<i>Podiceps auritus</i>). The area is also important for 17 other seabird species and has been designated a Natura 2000 Special Protection Area under the EU Birds Directive and a Special Area of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive. The area also includes the country's only national marine and coastal reserve, "Kaliakra". 	M	H	H	M	-	H	M

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
	For key to criteria, see page 2						
<p>3. Vama Veche – 2 Mai Marine Reserve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The Vama Veche - 2 Mai Marine Reserve is located in the southernmost part of the Romanian coastline, with a total area of 1231 km², all of which is marine. The geographical coordinates of the site are 28.0019777 E and 43.0064000 N. The area features a unique combination of a wide variety of broad habitat types, considered a real mosaic condensed in a rather small area, serving as shelter and spawning area to many marine species. Benthic and pelagic life is extremely rich here, compared to the biodiversity of surrounding areas. Although small in size, it was proposed as a sanctuary for cetaceans due to its high biological diversity and is also classified as a marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Area. The area is important for its biodiversity. 	M	M	H	H	M	H	M
<p>4. Danube Delta Marine Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The area is located in front of the Danube Delta between Chilia arm in the north and Midia Cape in the south and projecting into the sea until the 20m isobath. It has a total coverage of 1217 km², all of which is marine. The geographical coordinates of the site are 44.0006472 N and 29.0111277 E. This area is strongly influenced by the freshwater inflow and the sediments carried by the Danube River, creating a mixture of sedimentary habitats that is unique for the Romanian littoral area. These sedimentary habitats and the low salinity pelagic habitats contain a large proportion of freshwater, brackish water and marine species. It is an important nursery and feeding area for Black Sea sturgeons and shads, species that are protected under different conventions. Species in the area include: bottlenose dolphin (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>), harbour porpoise (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>), short-beaked common dolphin (<i>Delphinus delphis</i>), yelkouan shearwater (<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>), beluga sturgeon (<i>Huso huso</i>), Russian sturgeon (<i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i>), starry sturgeon (<i>Acipenser stellatus</i>), Danube shad (<i>Alosa immaculata</i>) and Caspian shad (<i>Alosa tanaica</i>). . The area is part of a larger protected area, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, which is listed as a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site and a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. 	H	H	H	H	M	M	L
<p>5. Zernov's Phyllophora Field</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The area is located on a wide shelf in the north-western part of the Black Sea at a depth from 25 to 50 metres. It has the following coordinates: 45°18'25" N 30°42'26" E; 45°54'42" N 30°55'05" E; 46°01'53" N 31°10'40" E; 45°31'05" N 31°42'56" E; 45°17'41" N 31°23'20" E. Zernov's Phyllophora Field (ZPF) is a unique natural phenomenon: a concentration of seaweed with a dominant species of red algae (Phylloporaceae). ZPF is an important habitat for many species of invertebrates and fish. The main cluster of macrophytes is the paleobed of the Dnieper River, located between the two branches of the Black Sea circular current. The dominant sediments are shell limestone, silted shell limestone and shelly silt. The state of the ZPF ecosystem is an indicator of the state of the whole northwestern part of the Black Sea ecosystem. 	H	H	H	H	H	H	L

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
For key to criteria, see page 2							
<p>6. The Small Phyllophora Field</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The Small Phyllophora Field is situated in Karkinitzky Bay, the largest bay in the Black Sea, between the northwestern shore of the Crimean peninsula and the coast of Kherson oblast, where it is bounded by Dzharylgach Island and Tendrovsky Spit. Phyllophora are a group of red algae that have commercial value for harvesting and extraction of agaroids. It also forms an important source of oxygen, resulting from the photosynthesis performed by the algae. Specialised faunal communities, including more than 110 species of invertebrates and 47 species of fish, are associated with the Phyllophora fields in the northwestern Black Sea. Many species have evolved a reddish colouration specifically to camouflage themselves inside the algae. 	H	H	H	M	L	H	M
<p>7. Balaklava</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The area is located at 33° 36' 12.37"E, 44° 26' 32.76"N, in coastal waters between the capes of Fiolent and Sarych, outside of Balaklava Bay, at depths between 0 and 70 m. This area has been a hotspot of cetacean distribution in the Black Sea and has been designated as a Cetacean Critical Habitat under ACCOBAMS. It is a critically important habitat for two cetacean species, the Black Sea harbour porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena relicta</i>) and the Black Sea bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus ponticus</i>), both of which are listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List. These two species use this area particularly for reproduction and feeding. 	H	H	H	H	M	H	M
<p>8. Yagorlytsky Bay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: Yagorlytsky Bay is located on the north-western Black Sea coast between the Nikolaev and Kherson regions of Ukraine. In the north it is separated from Dnieper-Bug estuary by Kinburg oblique. The bay is 26 km long, and its entrance is 15 km wide. Its geographical coordinates are: 46° 29,122' - 46° 19,867' N and 31° 47,066' - 32° 3,695' E. Owing to the peculiarities of the hydrological, hydrochemical and hydrobiological regimes, Yagorlytsky Bay is a unique area of the north-western part of the Black Sea. The marine-terrestrial complex of Yagorlytsky Bay is characterized by a rich variety of plant and animal life, high endemism, geomorphological and landscape uniqueness and status of international environmental importance. The marine area of Yagorlytsky Bay is part of the National Natural Park "Biloberezhia Sviatoslava" and the Black Sea Biosphere Reserve. The natural and territorial complexes of these reserves are represented not only by the aquatic complex of the bay, but by wetlands, steppe, salt marshes, sandy and forest landscapes characterized by high conservation value and high diversity of biocenoses. These biotopes play an exceptional role in maintaining the species diversity of the region and the country; they are used for reproduction and feeding by the main commercial fish species, and their shallow waters are refugia for many nesting and wintering waterbirds. 	H	H	H	M	L	M	H

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
	For key to criteria, see page 2						
<p>9. Kuban Delta</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The area is located at 45°30'N and 37°48'E. The southern border of the site lies along the shore of Kurchansky Liman (estuary), embraces the Kuban Delta and reaches the Sea of Azov. To the west and north, the borderline extends along the coast of the Sea of Azov and reaches the middle point of Akhtarsky Liman. The Kuban Delta is the second largest delta ecosystem in the Black Sea – Sea of Azov Basin (1920 km²). It includes more than 600 water bodies with different hydrological regimes. Many water birds utilize the coastal wetlands and estuaries of the delta as stopover areas during spring and autumn migrations. The area overlaps with a marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Area and a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. It is important for the vulnerable Dalmatian pelican (<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>). The Kuban Delta is undergoing continuous change under the influence of both natural and anthropogenic factors. 	M	H	M	M	-	H	L
<p>10. Taman Bay and the Kerch Strait</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: Taman Bay is a shallow lagoon-type bay situated to the north of the Taman peninsula, between the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. It opens to the Kerch Strait and is considered part of the Sea of Azov. The marine area of the Kerch Strait is delimited by the line between the Cape Ahilleon on the coast of Taman Peninsula and Cape Hroni on the coast of the Kerch Peninsula in the north and by the line between Cape Panagia (mainland coast) and Cape Taqil (Kerch Peninsula coast) in the south. Taman Bay and the Kerch Strait are partly separated from each other by the Chushka and Tuzla spits. The marine area measures 803 km². Taman Bay is a shallow semi-closed marine lagoon with no constant source of river inflow. It is a unique sea area in the Russian Black Sea and Sea of Azov coast, with primary production depending on seagrasses. Biomass of bottom vegetation varies strongly and can exceed 5000 g/m² (wet weight), while the macrozoobenthos biomass is 1500 g/m². Up to 1,000,000 birds stop on the bay during seasonal migration. The Taman Bay wetland is a wintering area of many species of waterfowl. The site has a significant value as a place of reproduction of waterbird species listed in the Red Book of the Russian Federation and Krasnodar Province. The ecosystem of the Bay shows some resilience and maintains a quasi-stable regime. The adjacent Kerch Strait is an important migratory pathway for marine life, including various fish species as well as two cetacean species, harbour porpoises (<i>Phocoena phocoena relicta</i>) and bottlenose dolphins (<i>Tursiops truncates ponticus</i>). 	H	H	M	M	H	L	L
<p>11. Northern Part of the Caucasian Black Sea Coast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The area includes the coastal zone on the northeastern Black Sea coast (2562 km²). Its western boundary goes from Volna Village and crosses the shore west of the river mouth at Arkhipo-Osipovka Village (45° 6'N, 36° 43' E to about 44° 30'N, 36° 51'E). The southern boundary is delineated by the 200 m isobath. The northern boundary generally follows the shoreline and also includes Bugazskiy, Kiziltashskiy and Vitjazevskiy limans (lagoons), but does not include the Novorossiysk (Tsemes) Bay. The area is part of the north-eastern Black Sea shelf and slope, which is narrow in the east and relatively broad in the west, to the south of the Kerch Strait. It also includes large shallow lagoons that are remnants of the Paleo-Kuban Delta. The area provides good conditions for macrophyte development and is highly productive (although 	M	H	M	H	M	H	M

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
	For key to criteria, see page 2						
<p>not maximally productive) at the regional scale. The area contains some unique and rare features, such as peculiar carbonate banks, but in many other respects it is more representative than distinct. It is important to the life histories of several marine invertebrates and fish species, including the now declining Black Sea turbot, anchovy and horse mackerel. It is also important for endangered species as a migration and foraging area of sturgeons and cetaceans. The biological diversity is high owing to a diversity of biotopes, including sandy spits and shallow sandy flats, shallow shelf carbonate banks, clay reefs, sandy, muddy and gravel biotopes of the shelf, ridged submerged benches and steep rocks with rich algal communities, biotopes of underwater landfall and biotopes of saltwater lagoons.</p>							
<p>12. Kolkheti Marine Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The area extends 502 km² between the Tikori River and the mouth of the Rioni River (inclusive), within the following latitudes and longitudes, respectively: 42.3688965 and 41.5923238; 42.3678906 and 41.3485938; 42.1492143 and 41.3730120; and 42.1781462 and 41.6434212. • This area is characterized by a high density and relative richness of zooplankton species and bivalves. It is a preferred habitat for turbot and flounder species. In winter and spring, large aggregations of anchovies (<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>) use the area as a wintering and spawning area. It is also a habitat and spawning area of the endangered Acipenseridae species and serves as wintering ground for large numbers of migratory birds and Black Sea cetaceans. The area is an important feeding and nursery ground for cetacean species (<i>Tursiops truncatus ponticus</i>, <i>Delphinus delphis ponticus</i> and <i>Phocoena phocoena relicta</i>) all year-round. 	H	H	H	H	H	H	M
<p>13. Sarpi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The area is located at the following latitudes and longitudes, respectively: 41.5447181 and 41.5606554, and 41.5266607 and 41.5485533. • The area covers sea rocks and stony coast. It is the largest rocky habitat on the Georgian coast. Its field of marine algae <i>Cystoseira barbata</i> and <i>Ceramium rubrum</i> provides shelter for many fish and invertebrate species. Mussels (<i>Mytilus galloprovincialis</i>) and other bivalves attach themselves to the sea rocks. The rocky area provides shelter and feeding grounds for different species of fish. Some of them, such as peacock wrasse (<i>Symphodus tinca</i>), are more common near Sarpi than in any other area in the region. The area overlaps with a non-breeding area of global importance for the yelkouan shearwater (<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>). It is also located in proximity to colonies of the Mediterranean endemic subspecies of European shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii</i>), thus being potentially important for this subspecies during the breeding season. Black Sea cetaceans use the area for feeding and possibly for breeding. 	M	H	M	H	-	H	M
<p>14. Artvin-Arhavi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The coordinates of the area are: 41 21.48' N- 41 18.824' E, 41 22.116' N- 41 18.824' E, 41 22.659' N- 41 20.216' E, 41 22.14' N- 41 20.216' E. • The area is mainly important for marine pelagic and demersal fish species and cetacean species. In terms of birds, 	M	H	H	M	-	M	H

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
	For key to criteria, see page 2						
<p>the area overlaps with a marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, which is regionally important for two seabird species: velvet scoter (<i>Melanitta fusca</i>) and Caspian gull (<i>Larus cachinnans</i>). A third species is also known to occur: mew gull (<i>Larus canus</i>). Harbour porpoises have been found all along the Turkish Black Sea coast and are especially abundant along the eastern coast, where several rivers enter the Black Sea.</p>							
<p>15. Trabzon-Sürmene</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: This area is located between 40 54.749' N - 40 08.364' E, 40 54.794' N - 40 10.404' E, 40 55.183' N- 40 10.404' E and 40 55.183' N-40 08.364' E. This area is very important for breeding, reproduction and feeding of demersal and pelagic fish species. It is a bioserve area that is closed to fisheries. It has a sandy, heel-shaped rocky structure, with an abundance of underwater rocks. The region is also the natural habitat of seabream—the only such spot in the Black Sea. The biological diversity of this part of the Black Sea is considerable, such that harbour porpoises are found all along the Turkish Black Sea coast and are especially abundant along the eastern coast, where several rivers enter the Black Sea. In terms of birds, the area overlaps with a marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, which is regionally important for two seabird species: velvet scoter (<i>Melanitta fusca</i>) and Caspian gull (<i>Larus cachinnans</i>). A third species, mew gull (<i>Larus canus</i>), is also known to occur. 	M	H	H	H	M	M	L
<p>16. Trabzon-Arsin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The area is located between the following coordinates: 40 57.769' N- 39 58.532' E, 40 58.123' N- 39 58.532' E, 40 58.123' N- 39 59.528' E and 40 57.849' N- 39 59.528' E. This area is very important for habitat, reproduction and breeding of some rare marine pelagic and demersal species, such as three species of dolphins, <i>Psetta maxima</i> (turbot) and <i>Zostera</i> meadows. Several other fish species, such as red mullet (<i>Mullus barbatus</i>) and grey mullet (<i>Mugil</i> spp.), are also abundant. The land side of this area is an official bioserve site. Many of the fish species, which do not migrate due to the rocky nature of the coastal part of the region, are located in a rocky and sandy environment and have a rich ecosystem for breeding and feeding. This is a reserve area that is closed to fishing. The area has a sandy, heel-shaped rocky structure with the richest benthic species diversity in the region due to the presence of underwater rocks and wide, flat, sandy areas. Moreover, harbour porpoises have been found all along the Turkish Black Sea coast and are especially abundant on the east coast, where several rivers enter the Black Sea. Also, the primary overwintering area of harbour porpoises is the south-eastern Black Sea. The area overlaps with a marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Area that is regionally important for two seabird species: velvet scoter (<i>Melanitta fusca</i>) and Caspian gull (<i>Larus cachinnans</i>). A third species, mew gull (<i>Larus canus</i>), is also known to occur. 	M	H	H	M	M	M	M

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
For key to criteria, see page 2							
<p>17. Giresun – Tirebolu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The area is located between the following coordinates: 40 59.23' N – 38 46.415' E, 41 0.241' N- 38 46.415' E, 41 0.489' N –38 48.48' E and 41 0.24' N - 38 48.48' E. • This area is very important for marine pelagic and demersal fish species, especially turbot (<i>Psetta maxima</i>), red mullet (<i>Mullus barbatus</i>), grey mullet (<i>Mugil spp.</i>), and for seagrass (<i>Zostera</i>). This is an underwater canyon area, which provides reproduction and breeding grounds for demersal and pelagic fish species. Biological diversity of this part of the Black Sea is very high, such that the area overlaps with a marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, primarily designated for its importance as wintering area for the vulnerable yelkouan shearwater (<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>). The yelkouan shearwater is a Mediterranean endemic, and some 30 to 40 per cent of the population migrate to the Black Sea during the non-breeding season. The importance of the area for this species was confirmed by studies based on tracking birds from their colonies, and also from studies of habitat suitability. Studies conducted on the crustaceans of sandy muddy biotopes on the seabeds of central and eastern Black Sea indicate that species diversity is relatively high in shallow waters (<50 m) and that diversity decreases in a direct correlation with increasing depth. 	M	H	M	M	-	M	M
Caspian Sea							
<p>18. Pre-estuarine area of the Ural River in the Caspian Sea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The lower estuary area of the Ural River occupies the brackish shallow water area of the Caspian Sea near the confluence of the Ural River (Zhayik) into the sea. The lower estuary space is defined at an isobath of 3 metres. • The pre-estuarine area of the Ural River (Zhayik River) is located in the northern part of the Caspian Sea, adjacent to the mouth of the Ural River. This is an important area for the reproduction of anadromous (sturgeon) and freshwater (carp, perch) fishes. During the spring, numerous fish species concentrate here, and then rush to spawn upstream of the Ural River in spawning grounds located in its lower and middle reaches. After spawning, the producers and young fish migrate to the lower estuary space (brackish shallow part of the sea) to feed. There are small remaining sturgeon stocks (e.g., Russian sturgeon, beluga, stellate sturgeon, thorn). 	H	H	H	M	M	H	M

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
	For key to criteria, see page 2						
<p>19. Komsomol Bay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: Komsomol Bay, including the islands of Durnev, is located to the west of the Dead Kultuk Bay in the northeastern Caspian Sea (45.38 N, 52.35 E). The Caspian seal (<i>Phoca caspica</i>), an endemic, transboundary species, is the only mammal inhabiting the Caspian Sea. In 2008, IUCN changed the status of the Caspian seal from “vulnerable” to “endangered”. The results of research on the distribution, abundance and structure of the population of the Caspian seal show that the rookeries on the Durnev islands are important for the conservation of the population. 	H	H	H	H	-	-	L
<p>20. Caspian Seal Breeding Grounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The location of the area is defined by the extent of ice coverage during winter months, as the breeding season for seals takes place from January until early March. This area takes into account the dynamic nature of ice conditions and distribution with and among years. Therefore, the shape of the area is defined by the overall observed extent of ice coverage during the winter from historical records and the observed distributions of breeding seals under different ice conditions. The Caspian seal (<i>Pusa caspica</i>) is an endemic, ice-breeding, trans-boundary species of marine mammal inhabiting the landlocked Caspian Sea. Caspian seals use this winter ice field between January and March each year for birthing and nursing pups. The area is also important for all species of Caspian sturgeons. 	H	H	H	H	-	-	M
<p>21. Kendirli Bay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: Kendirli Bay is located in the deep water zone of the central Caspian, in the eastern part of the Kazakh Gulf, which is 23 km long, with a maximum width of 1.5 km in the middle. The spit is connected to the mainland in the southeast and extends in a north-westerly direction, forming Kendirli Bay. In the north-western extremity, the spit has a small cove. The north-western part of the bay has an island, the area of which can reach 0.1 km², but which can be split into several smaller islands, depending on the wind-surge phenomena. The Caspian seal (<i>Phoca caspica</i>) is endemic to the Caspian Sea and is also its only mammal. In 2008, IUCN changed the status of the Caspian seal from "vulnerable" to "endangered". In contrast to habitats in the northern Caspian, on the islands at the tip of the Kendirli spit in the Gulf of Kazakhstan, wind-surge phenomena do not have much effect on the hauling rookery, due to the fact that the islands are located in the deep-sea zone of the middle Caspian. This creates ideal conditions for the formation of rookeries on the islands. 	H	H	H	H	-	M	M

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
	For key to criteria, see page 2						
<p>22. Karabogazgol Strait</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The Kara-Bogaz-Gol Strait is located in the eastern Caspian Sea, between the Caspian Sea and the Kara-Bogas-Gol Gulf. This area measures 4,108 km², with its centre at 41.093621N, 52.915339E. • The Karabogazgol Strait connects the Caspian Sea with the Karabogazgol Gulf. The area forms a unique natural hydro-geological complex. There are no rivers that drain into the lagoon. This hydrological system is heavily influenced by the dynamics of the Caspian Sea. All components of the system are very dynamic, and their parameters are defined by sea-level dynamics. All biodiversity in the broader area is concentrated mainly in the strait, including bacteria, lower plants, invertebrates and birds (the majority of which are migrant species). Some species of fish and birds present in the area are included in the Red Book of Turkmenistan. 	H	M	L	H	H	H	M
<p>23. Turkmenbashi Gulf</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Turkmenbashi Gulf is on the east coast of the Caspian Sea. It is connected on the northwest to Sojmonova Bay. It is geographically centred at 39.792556N, 53.310004E. The total area of this site is 2203 km². • As of 1968, Turkmenbashi Gulf, including Balhan, Northern-Cheleken, Mihajlovsky and other small bays, the site of mass winterings and migrations of waterbirds, has been part of Krasnovodsk (now known as Hazar) State Nature Reserve. This Nature Reserve is the main part of Turkmenbashi Gulf. It is a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention and an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area. Its biodiversity includes invertebrates and vertebrates (fishes, birds, mammals), including species listed in the Red Data Book of Turkmenistan. 	M	H	H	H	H	M	M
<p>24. Turkmen Aylagy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Turkmen Aylagy is bordered in the north by the Cheleken Peninsula and in the west by Ogurdzhaly Island. The site covers the water area of the Turkmen Gulf, from Ogurdzhaly Island (inclusive) in the west, to South Cheleken Bay, with a total area of 3708 km². Ogurdzhaly Island is a 2km-wide sandy strip that extends 40 km in a north-south direction, with an area of 6 000 ha. The area is geographically centred at 39.035352N, 53.439243E. • Turkmen Aylagy has a unique complex of biodiversity, especially birds, fishes and two species of mammals. It is affected by seasonal and annual fluctuations in the level of the Caspian Sea and by movements of Dardzhakum sands. During periods of sea-level rise, there are favourable conditions for protection, fodder nesting and wintering of birds in bays, but extensive saline soils are formed in their place during periods of sea-level drop. Prevailing depths of the Turkmen Aylagy range from 3-4 m in the east, to 9-11 m in the centre. The water in the area has a higher salt content than the Caspian Sea, as the rivers do not run into it. 	-	H	H	H	-	M	H

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
	For key to criteria, see page 2						
<p>25. Miankaleh-Esenguly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: This area is located in south-eastern corner of the Caspian Sea and covers the marine and coastal waters of Ekerem-Esenguly in Turkmenistan to Gomishan Lagoon, Gorgan Bay, Miankaleh Peninsula and the Lapoo-Zaghmarz Ab-Bandans in Iran. The area is a potential candidate Seal Special Protected Area (SSPA), under the Caspian Environment Programme. The area is also one of the most important foraging and spawning grounds for all five critically endangered species of sturgeon, including <i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i>, <i>A. nudiventris</i>, <i>A. persicus</i>, <i>A. stellatus</i> and <i>Huso huso</i>. The Miankaleh-Esenguly area is extremely important for both wintering and passage of waterfowl and holds one of the highest number of wintering birds in the entire south Caspian. 	H	H	H	H	-	H	H
<p>26. Sefidroud Delta</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The area is located in the South Caspian lowlands and encompasses the largest delta in the South Caspian region (about 1,350 ha) and Bandar Kiashahr Lagoon, one of the oldest lagoons in the south Caspian Sea. It is located in the south Caspian lowlands and encompasses the largest river delta in the south Caspian region. This area is a significant foraging and spawning ground for a wide variety of fish species, including five critically endangered sturgeon species: <i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i>, <i>A. stellatus</i>, <i>A. nudiventris</i>, <i>A. persicus</i> and <i>Huso huso</i>. The Sefidroud Delta is an important migratory and wintering ground for a wide variety of migratory waterfowl, regularly supporting more than 100,000 waterbirds and more than 1 per cent of the regional populations of several waterbird species. 	H	H	H	M	L	H	M
<p>27. Anzali Wetlands Complex</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: Anzali wetlands complex is located on the south-western shore of the Caspian Sea, close to the city of Bandar-e-Anzali. The area is a good example of a natural lagoon and wetland ecosystem characteristic of the south Caspian lowlands. This area supports more than 100,000 wintering waterbirds, and more than 1 per cent of the regional populations of several waterbird species. The area is also a significant site for preserving plant and animal genetic resources and diversity. 	H	H	H	M	L	H	L

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
For key to criteria, see page 2							
<p>28. Gizilagach Bay Complex</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The Gizilagach Bay Complex is located in the south-western part of the Caspian Sea along the coast of Azerbaijan. The area covers the entire water area of the Greater Gizilagach Bay, the northern part of the Lesser Gizilagach Bay, the western part of the Kura spit, the steppe in the north and the north-west of the Greater Gizilagach Bay, and the base or the northern part of the Sara Peninsula. The Gizilagach Bay Complex comprises the Greater Gizilagach Reserve, covering an area of 88,360 hectares, and the adjacent Lesser Gizilagach Bay Reserve, the area of which is 10,700 hectares, located on the south-western coast of the Caspian Sea. Azerbaijan places third in the western Palearctic for numbers of wintering waterbirds (more than one million) as part of the Caspian-West Siberian-East African Flyway. The area contains one of the most important wetlands for wintering and breeding waterbirds in the western Palearctic. The “Ghizil-Agaj” Bay was recognized as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance in 1975. The area’s fauna includes 47 species of fish, about 273 species of birds, 5 amphibia, 15 reptiles and 26 species of mammals. The local avifauna is mainly waterbirds. The area is located along the migration routes on the western coast of the Caspian Sea, and large flocks of migratory birds feed and rest in the area. It was reported that in previous years, as many as 10 million birds wintered in the complex and its surrounding areas. 	H	H	H	H	H	H	M
<p>29. Kura Delta</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The area is located where the Kura River flows into the Caspian Sea in the Neftechalinsky region, 10 km to the east and southeast of the city of Neftechal. The area measures about 15 000 hectares. The altitude above sea level is about 28 m. The geographical coordinates of the near-shore space are 39°16' - 39°25' N; 49°19' - 49°28' E. The Kura River area of the Caspian Sea is an area of foraging, wintering, spawning migrations and reproduction of all species of the Caspian sturgeon family except for the sterlets. It is an especially valuable area for the Persian sturgeon and pinch. In addition, the area is home to extensive wetlands with dense reed vegetation, a network of dams and a large island that is an important wintering and nesting site for some bird species. The area is especially important as a temporary resting place for a large number of birds during their flight. During the migration period, the number of waterbirds in one record reaches 75,000 individuals. Many curly and pink pelicans, small cormorants, spoonbills, sultan bird and other rare species have been recorded at the site. 	H	H	H	H	M	H	L

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
For key to criteria, see page 2							
<p>30. Samur - Yalama</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: Samur-Yalama covers an area of 1,250 km² along both sides of the Russian-Azerbaijani border, following the flow of the Samur River, which eventually meets the Caspian Sea. The site includes the mouth of the Samur River and a number of smaller rivers that start in the mountains of the Caucasus Range; its marine area consists of the 200 m isobath. The area includes the deepest nearshore area in the Caspian Sea, with a steep underwater slope. The area is highly important for the life history stages of at least 20 species of fish, and it is a critically important migration corridor and feeding ground for both juveniles and adults. It is also an important bird area, serving as a flyway segment and critical stopover and nesting area for waterfowl. It is also highly significant for all five species of critically endangered sturgeon species (IUCN Red List) and several other protected species of fish and birds. 	M	H	H	M	M	H	M
<p>31. Kizlyar Bay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The area covers the north-west coast of the Caspian Sea from the Volga Delta to the Agrakhan Peninsula (inclusive) and the islands of Tyuleniy and Chechen. The area is the most northerly sea bay on the western coast of the Caspian Sea. This area is of key importance for seasonal migrations of waterfowl and waterbirds moving from western Siberia and Eastern Europe, flying through, or wintering on this coast. Species composition of birds is represented by 250 species, most of them waterfowl. This is a key area for rare species of birds, such as the Dalmatian pelican (<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>), as well as many common species (e.g., coot, grey goose, and various species of ducks). The area serves as a breeding, foraging and migration ground for more than 60 species of fish. Kizlyar Bay is an important habitat for endangered species, such as sturgeons (<i>Huso huso</i>, <i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i>, <i>Acipenser stellatus</i>). The islands within the area are sites of seasonal aggregation of the Caspian seal (<i>Phoca caspica</i>). 	M	H	H	M	H	M	M
<p>32. Malyi Zhemchyzhnyi (“Small Pearl”) Island</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: This region is located in the central part of the northern Caspian Sea, 25 km to the south-east of the island of Chistaya Banka. Malyi Zhemchyzhnyi Island is the largest nesting site for Charadriiform birds, including Pallas's gull (<i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>) and the Caspian tern (<i>Sterna caspia</i>), listed in the Red Book of the Russian Federation, in the northern Caspian. In the spring, large concentrations (up to several thousand individuals) of the Caspian seal (<i>Phoca caspica</i>) inhabit the island. The adjacent water area is an important place for feeding fish, especially juvenile sturgeons (<i>Huso huso</i>, <i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i>, <i>Acipenser stellatus</i>). 	H	H	H	M	H	L	M

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
For key to criteria, see page 2							
<p>33. Pre-estuarine Area of the Volga River</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The area covers the lower zone of the Volga Delta and the Volga pre-estuarine zone. The northern boundary coincides with the northern boundary of the Volga Delta wetlands and passes along the border of the reed belt to the Ganyushkinsky channel. The area covers the sea to the 5 m isobath. • The area is part of the Volga Delta, a unique natural ecological system and the largest delta in Europe. The Volga Delta is located in the Caspian lowland, and its elevation ranges from -24 to -27 m. The area plays an exceptional role in maintaining populations of some globally significant species, primarily waterfowl and other aquatic and semi-aquatic birds. It serves as an important node of two bird flyways, extending from west Siberia to Eastern Europe. More than 300 species of birds have been recorded in the area. This is a key area for rare bird species, such as the Siberian crane (<i>Leucogeranus leucogeranus</i>), white-tailed eagle (<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>) and Dalmatian pelican (<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>), as well as many common species (e.g., coots, grey goose, ducks). The area serves as a breeding ground, foraging and migration habitat for more than 60 species of fish. There is an extremely high density of ichthyofauna during mass spawning migrations, when significant populations of semi-anadromous and anadromous fish species of the northern Caspian enter the delta. The area is home to spawning migrations of endangered species such as sturgeons (<i>Huso huso</i>, <i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i>, <i>Acipenser stellatus</i>, <i>Acipenser persicus</i>, <i>Acipenser nudiiventris</i>) and Caspian lamprey (<i>Caspiomyzon wagneri</i>). 	H	H	H	M	H	M	M

Table 2. Description of areas meeting the EBSA criteria in the Baltic Sea

(Details are provided in the appendix to annex VII of the report of the Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) in the Baltic Sea, (CBD/EBSA/WS/2018/1/4))

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
For key to criteria, see page 2							
<p>1. Northern Bothnian Bay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The area encompasses the northernmost part of the Bothnian Bay. The area covers 8963 km² in total, 8297 km² of which is in the sea. • The Bothnian Bay forms the northernmost part of the Baltic Sea. It is the most brackish part of the Baltic, greatly affected by the combined river discharge from four big rivers and a catchment area covering most of the Finnish and Swedish Lapland. The sea area is shallow, and the seabed consists mostly of sand. The area displays Arctic conditions; in winter the whole area is covered with sea ice (for 5-7 months), which functions as the reproductive habitat for the grey seal (<i>Haliobalchicus grypus</i>) and is a prerequisite nesting habitat for the ringed seal (<i>Pusa hispida botnica</i>). In summer the area is productive and due to the turbidity from the river discharge the primary production is typically limited to a narrow photic zone (between a depth of 1 and 5 metres). Due to the extreme brackish water the number of marine species is low, yet the number of endemic and threatened species is high, as the area is the final refuge for species retreating northwards after the last glaciation (10,000 BP). It is an important reproductive area for coastal fish and an important gathering area for several anadromous fish species. The Torne, Kalix and Råneå rivers, which all discharge into the northern part of the area, are spawning rivers of regional importance for the Baltic population of the Atlantic salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>). 	H	H	H	L	M	M	M
<p>2. Kvarken Archipelago</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The Kvarken Archipelago is located in the Gulf of Bothnia, in the northern part of the Baltic Sea. The archipelago's total area is 10,364 km², 9,638 km² of which is in the sea. The mean depth of the area is 22 m, with the deepest point in the open sea being 133 m. • The Kvarken Archipelago consists of a narrow (26 km) strait between Sweden and Finland, with approximately 10,000 multitude of islands and skerries on both sides. The Kvarken also divides the Gulf of Bothnia, forming a shallow underwater threshold (max. depth 26 m), between the Bothnian Bay in the north and the Bothnian Sea in the south. The area is characterized by its unique landscape, consisting of thousands of different moraine formations formed during the last glaciation (10.000 – 8.000 BP). The area is affected by continuous change. Ongoing isostatic land uplift (at a rate of 8 mm per year) continuously affects all biotopes and habitats, constantly bringing new areas up into the photic zone. The Kvarken Archipelago is a transition zone where the dominating and habitat-forming marine fauna and flora rapidly change from freshwater species into marine species from north to south. The relative latitudinal change in salinity is the highest in the Baltic Sea. A continuous mixing of water further adds ecological and evolutionary pressure to the ecosystem. The shallowness and the substrate diversity, combined with up to 20 hours of sunlight in summer, make the area highly productive and important for a large number of fish and bird species. 	H	H	H	M	M	H	M

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
For key to criteria, see page 2							
<p>3. Åland Sea, Åland Islands and the Archipelago Sea of Finland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The area is situated in the northern Baltic Sea and forms the border between the Baltic proper and the Gulf of Bothnia. It extends from the Swedish coast in the west across the Åland Islands to the Finnish Archipelago Sea and Hanko Peninsula in the east. The area is about 375 km in width and 100 km long (in W-E and N-S direction, respectively). The area covers 18,524 km² in total. • The area contains some of the most geomorphologically, biologically and ecologically variable marine environments in the Baltic Sea, and perhaps in the world. The area is characterized by an extremely mosaic and extensive archipelago that ranges from shallow and sheltered inner archipelago areas, through middle archipelago, with larger islands, to wave-exposed outer archipelago consisting of thousands of small islands and skerries. The Åland Sea, in contrast, is an open sea area with almost oceanic conditions and the second-deepest trench in the Baltic Sea, at 300 m. The trench is also the deepest oxygenated area in the Baltic Sea. Due to its low salinity (0 to 7 psu), the species composition in the area is a mixture of freshwater, brackish and marine organisms, with a high diversity of aquatic vascular plants and charophytes, in particular. The area contains hundreds of lagoons, narrow inlets, shallow bays, estuaries and wetlands, which are important areas for fish and birdlife. The benthic biomass in the shallow areas is the highest in the northern Baltic Sea. The area also supports important populations of the ringed seal (<i>Pusa hispida botnica</i>) and grey seal (<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>). Harbour porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>) visit the area regularly. 	H	H	M	M	H	M	M
<p>4. Eastern Gulf of Finland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The area is situated in the north-eastern and eastern Gulf of Finland, in the northern Baltic Sea. It extends 247km east-west and 122km north-south and covers a total of 13,411 km². • The area is a relatively shallow (maximum depth 80 m) archipelago, characterized by hundreds of small islands and skerries, coastal lagoons and boreal narrow inlets, as well as a large area of open sea. The area's geomorphology shows clear signs from the last glaciation, such as end moraines, sandy beaches, rocky islands and clusters of erratic blocks. Due to the low salinity (0 to 5 permilles in the sea surface layer), the species composition is a mixture of freshwater and marine organisms, and the diversity of aquatic plants in particular is high. Many marine species, including habitat-forming key species, such as bladderwrack (<i>Fucus vesiculosus</i>) and blue mussel (<i>Mytilus trossulus</i>), live at the limits of their geographical distribution, making them vulnerable to human disturbance and the effects of climate change. The area has a rich birdlife and supports one of the most endangered populations of the ringed seal (<i>Pusa hispida botnica</i>) in the Baltic Sea. 	M	H	H	M	M	M	M

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
	For key to criteria, see page 2						
<p>5. Inner Sea of West Estonian Archipelago</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The area is located in the inner sea area of the West Estonian Archipelago in the north-east Baltic Sea. This area forms a unique ecosystem in the north-eastern part of the Baltic Sea. Geologically, the area is a glacial formation composed of variable substrates of glacial moraine. It is very shallow, with mean depth less than 4m, and most of the seafloor is located in the photic zone. The presence of a salinity gradient from freshwater conditions inside the easternmost parts of Matsalu Bay to up to 6-7 psu in the western part in Soela strait and an extensive dynamic hydrological front area creates unique conditions for local and migratory species. High benthic productivity due to frontal conditions and freshwater runoff makes this a very important feeding area for migrating species. Unique local hydromorphological conditions enable the unique existence of a large loose, free-floating red algae community of <i>Furcellaria lumbricalis</i> in this area. Due to the presence of numerous uninhabited islets and specific ice conditions, this area is important for two seal species. The area is home to a large number of migratory and other species, and is a designated Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (BirdLife International). 	H	H	M	L	M	H	M
<p>6. Southeastern Baltic Sea Shallows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The Southeastern Baltic Sea shallows encompasses several geomorphologically distinct areas, including the Klaipeda-Ventspils plateau in the north, the Curonian-Sambian plateau in the south, the Klaipeda bank in the northwestern part of the area as well as the largest lagoons in the eastern Baltic Sea, Curonian and Vistula, each separated by a narrow spit. The area extends 11,626 km². The Southeastern Baltic Sea shallows encompasses several geomorphologically distinct areas, including the Klaipeda-Ventspils plateau in the north, the Curonian-Sambian plateau in the south, the Klaipeda bank in the northwestern part of the area as well as the largest lagoons in the eastern Baltic Sea, Curonian and Vistula, each separated by a narrow spit. Driven by complex geomorphological structures, the area is a hotspot of biodiversity both in coastal and offshore waters. The shallow water area is one of the most important habitats for benthic communities. Its underwater reefs sustain coastal benthic communities, a high biodiversity of invertebrates, fishes and wintering birds. Reefs are also used as spawning and nursery grounds by commercially important fish species, such as sprat, herring, turbot and flounder. The offshore bank serves as a refuge for mobile species from short-term hypoxia in the deeper parts of the Gotland basin. The coastline is an important stopover site for waterbirds. During particularly severe winters, the abundance of some species of wintering seabirds (e.g., long-tailed duck <i>Clangula hyemalis</i>, velvet scoter <i>Melanitta fusca</i> and red-throated diver <i>Gavia stellata</i>) may increase by several or several tens of times. Lagoons exist as large and multiple freshwater ichthyofauna complexes and permanent or temporary habitats for migratory and marine fish species. The Curonian Lagoon is an important regional spawning and recovery area for twaite shad (<i>Allosa fallax</i>). 	H	H	M	M	M	H	M
<p>7. Southern Gotland Harbour Porpoise Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The area is located between the coast and the islands of Gotland and Öland, stretching to the south to include three of the four large offshore banks in the Baltic Sea (latitude between 58.1 N and 55.4 N, longitude between 14.68 E and 19.55 E). The total area is 29 242 km². 	H	H	H	H	M	M	M

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
For key to criteria, see page 2							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area covers the core distribution area of the critically endangered harbour porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>) subpopulation in the Baltic Sea around the islands of Öland and Gotland and serves as a key breeding area for the population. Midsjöbankarna and Hoburg's bank is the most important area for the Baltic harbour porpoise. The population was estimated at 497 individuals, and the population's numbers have declined drastically since the mid-20th century. The area is also home to the vulnerable Kalmarsund subpopulation of the harbour seal (<i>Phoca vitulina vitulina</i>) and is the main wintering area for the endangered long-tailed duck (<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>). The area represents a variety of geologic and morphologic features, and contains three of the four large offshore banks in the Baltic Sea, which form a unique high-energy environment. These shallow areas create conditions for high productivity of filter-feeding animals that form the food base for flatfish and large amounts of wintering birds. 							
<p>8. Fehmarn Belt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The area covers 1,652 km² in the south-western part of the Baltic Sea in the HELCOM sub-basins Kiel Bay and Bay of Mecklenburg. Fehmarn Belt is the main pathway of water exchange between the Baltic Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, carrying 70-75 per cent of the water masses. The area is important for migratory aquatic species, such as the western population of the harbour porpoise. It is also of high regional importance for migratory and wintering waterfowl. The combination of permanent exposure to saline waters and the complexity of bottom structures leads to a complex mosaic of benthic biotopes inhabited by a variety of species-rich communities. Besides the presence of several endangered and protected habitats and benthic species, it is regionally important for one critically endangered biotope dominated by the ocean quahog, one of the longest-lived species in the world. 	H	H	H	M	L	H	M
<p>9. Fladen, Stora Middelgrund and Lilla Middelgrund</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: The area is located approximately between latitudes 56°30'N and 57°14'N and longitudes between 11°40'E and 12°0'E, and encompasses the central part of the Kattegat (a shallow sea area between Sweden and Denmark). The total coverage of the area is 615 km². The Fladen, Stora Middelgrund and Lilla Middelgrund are three large offshore banks in the Kattegat. The banks are characterized by large topographic variation formed by boulders and rocks. The area also includes sandbanks and shell gravel, which increase its habitat diversity. The shallowest parts of the area are approximately 6 m deep and are densely covered by kelp forest, which is associated with high diversity of fish and invertebrate species. Unique habitats like bubbling reefs and maerl beds occur in the area, as well as extensive horse mussel (<i>Modiolus modiolus</i>) beds. The area hosts a high diversity of fish, invertebrates and algae as well as a large quantity of rare and endangered species. The banks are internationally important for seabirds, and moreover, high densities of harbour porpoises have been recorded here. In addition, the area is important as spawning ground for a number of fish species. 	H	H	H	H	M	H	M

Annex II

**MODALITIES FOR MODIFYING THE DESCRIPTION OF ECOLOGICALLY OR
BIOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT MARINE AREAS, FOR DESCRIBING NEW AREAS, AND
FOR STRENGTHENING THE SCIENTIFIC CREDIBILITY AND TRANSPARENCY
OF THIS PROCESS**

I. MODIFICATION OF EBSA DESCRIPTIONS

A. Introduction

1. This annex and its implementation shall be without prejudice to the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries, nor do they have economic or legal implications. It is strictly a scientific and technical exercise.
2. The description of areas meeting the criteria for an ecologically or biologically significant marine area (EBSA) comprises both a textual description and a polygon of the area, as contained in the relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, including decisions XI/17, XII/22, and XIII/12, and included in the EBSA repository.
3. Modifications of EBSA descriptions constitute modifications affecting the textual descriptions of the areas meeting the EBSA criteria, as contained in the decisions noted above, and/or the polygons of the areas contained in the EBSA repository. The descriptions contained in the EBSA repository, as requested by the Conference of the Parties in decisions XI/17, XII/22 and XIII/12, can be modified through decisions by the Conference of the Parties.
3. *bis* [Nothing in the modalities set out below permits the modification of an EBSA description included in the repository pursuant to a COP decision by any other means than a COP decision.]

B. Reasons for modification of EBSA descriptions

4. Reasons for the modification of EBSA descriptions are the following:
 - (a) There is newly available/accessible scientific and technical information, including through advanced expertise, methodological approaches or analytical methods, as well as newly accessible traditional knowledge, on features associated with an area;
 - (b) There has been a change in the information that was used in the description of the EBSA;
 - (c) There has been a change in the ecological or biological feature(s) of an EBSA, which may lead to a change in the ranking of the area against the EBSA criteria or a change in the polygon of the area;
 - (d) There have been scientific errors identified in EBSA descriptions;
 - (e) There have been modifications to the EBSA template;
 - (f) Any other reason based on scientific and technical information.

C. Actors that can propose modification of EBSA descriptions

5. The following actors can propose in line with paragraph 3 of decision XIII/12, at any time, modification of EBSA descriptions:
 - (a) For an EBSA located entirely within a State's national jurisdiction: the State (coastal, including archipelagic) within whose jurisdiction the EBSA is located,
 - (b) For an EBSA located within the national jurisdiction of multiple States: the State(s) (coastal, including archipelagic) in whose jurisdiction the modification is proposed, [in collaboration with] [encouraging consultation, and collaboration as appropriate, and including through notification by the Executive Secretary to] the other States;

[(c) For an EBSA located beyond national jurisdiction: any State and/or competent intergovernmental organization, with provision of notice to all States, including through notification by the Executive Secretary, [without prejudice to developments under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea]];

(d) For an EBSA located both within and beyond national jurisdiction: the State(s) (coastal , including archipelagic) within whose jurisdiction the proposed modification is located, [in collaboration with concerned States] [encouraging consultation, and collaboration as appropriate, and including through notification by the Executive Secretary to concerned States]; as well as for modifications proposed in areas beyond national jurisdiction, any State and/or competent intergovernmental organization, where appropriate, with provision of prior notice to all States;

6. Knowledge holders, including scientific research organizations, non-governmental organizations and holders of traditional knowledge, should be encouraged to draw the attention of actors defined in subsection C, paragraph 5 above, for any of the reasons for modifying existing EBSA descriptions noted in subsection B, paragraph 4 above, and to support those actors, if requested, in the preparation of proposals for modification.

D. Modalities for the modification process

7. The modalities for modifying EBSA descriptions are the following:

7.1 For areas beyond national jurisdiction and, where the State so wishes, for areas within its national jurisdiction:

(a) The Secretariat compiles the proposals for modifications made by the actors defined in subsection C, paragraph 5;

(b) On the basis of the compiled proposals, the informal advisory group advises the Executive Secretary on the proposed modification, in line with guidance/criteria on significant or minor modifications developed by the informal advisory group on EBSAs;

(c) Modalities for significant or minor modifications are as follows:

(i) For a significant modification: The procedure outlined in section II, paragraph 12 (c) and (d) of this document will be utilized. The CBD Secretariat convenes a workshop following the procedures for regional workshops contained in decision X/29, the report of which is submitted to SBSTTA and COP for their consideration;

(ii) For a minor modification: The CBD Secretariat prepares, after consulting the relevant State(s) or regional experts⁷, a report on modifications, which is submitted to SBSTTA and COP for their consideration.

7.2 For areas within national jurisdiction:

(a) Building on the procedure set out in paragraph 7 of decision XII/22, and in accordance with paragraph 3 of decision XIII/12, the State may also provide an update of the description contained in the EBSA repository, as per the reasons outlined in subsection B, paragraph 4 above, and submit information on the scientific and technical process as well as the outcome of the scientifically sound nationally agreed peer-review process⁸ supporting the update, to the Executive Secretary to make it available to SBSTTA and COP, [for consideration] [for information] [with a view to inclusion] [to include] in the repository. Previous descriptions included pursuant to a decision of the Conference of the Parties will remain available in the repository. The date of inclusion of the EBSA description in the repository and

⁷ Including experts who participated in the regional workshops, based on their nomination by the CBD national focal points and relevant organizations, in which the EBSAs proposed for modification were originally described.

⁸ Voluntary guidelines on peer-review processes to be developed by the Executive Secretary with the advice of the Informal Advisory Group on EBSAs for the consideration of SBSTTA and COP.

whether it has been included pursuant to a COP decision or at a Party's request, should appear in the repository.

E. Key considerations for modifications

8. Parties and other Governments, as well as competent intergovernmental organizations, should be informed as soon as possible of the submission of any proposals for the modification of EBSA descriptions through a CBD notification and the EBSA website.

9. The following considerations need to be taken into account:

(a) The importance of incorporating traditional knowledge in the process of modification of EBSA descriptions, and ensuring the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, as appropriate and in accordance with national domestic law and international obligations;

(b) Enhancing the incorporation of traditional knowledge may require revision of the EBSA template;

(c) The need for a strong scientific and technical basis, including traditional knowledge, for any proposed modification;

(d) The importance of transparency in the modification process;

(e) Opportunities to use cost-effective modalities;

(f) The need to maintain a record of information about any previously described EBSAs that were modified or deleted from the repository.

II. DESCRIPTION OF NEW AREAS MEETING THE EBSA CRITERIA

A. Actors that can initiate the description of new areas meeting the EBSA criteria

10. The following actors can initiate the description of new areas meeting the EBSA criteria:

(a) Within a State's national jurisdiction: the State (coastal, including archipelagic) within whose jurisdiction the new description is proposed;

(b) Within the national jurisdictions of multiple States: the State(s) (coastal, including archipelagic) in whose jurisdiction the new description is proposed, [in collaboration with] [encouraging consultation, and collaboration as appropriate, and including notification by the Executive Secretary to] the other States;

(c) [In areas beyond national jurisdiction: any State and/or competent intergovernmental organization, with provision of notice to all States, including through notification by the Executive Secretary, [without prejudice to developments under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea]];

(d) For areas located both within and beyond national jurisdiction: the State(s) (coastal, including archipelagic) within whose jurisdiction the new description is proposed, [in collaboration with concerned States] [encouraging consultation, and collaboration as appropriate, and including through notification by the Executive Secretary to concerned States]; as well as for new descriptions proposed in areas beyond national jurisdiction, any State and/or competent intergovernmental organization, where appropriate, with provision of prior notice to all States.

B. Modalities to undertake the description of new areas meeting the EBSA criteria

11. National exercises for describing new areas meeting the EBSA criteria are outlined in section III, subsection C below.

12. For all other exercises to develop new EBSA descriptions, the following modalities are facilitated by the Secretariat, through a collaborative process:

- (a) New information is submitted (using the EBSA template), at any time, to the Secretariat;
- (b) The Secretariat notifies, through CBD notifications and the EBSA website, Parties, other Governments, relevant competent intergovernmental organizations and the informal advisory group on EBSAs of any proposals for the description of new areas;
- (c) In line with annex III of decision XIII/12, based on the guidance prepared by the informal advisory group on EBSAs, the Executive Secretary reviews the proposals and organizes, in consultation with Parties and other Governments, as appropriate, new regional workshops. A scientific gap analysis can inform this review process and identify the need for thematic analysis, which can complement regional workshops;
- (d) The description of new areas through regional workshops follows the existing process of submission to the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the Conference of the Parties for consideration and possible inclusion in the EBSA repository.

C. Key considerations for the description of new areas meeting the EBSA criteria

13. The following considerations need to be taken into account:

- (a) Parties and other Governments, as well as competent intergovernmental organizations, should be informed of any submission of proposals for the description of new areas through a CBD notification and the EBSA website;
- (b) The importance of incorporating traditional knowledge in the process of new EBSA descriptions, and ensuring the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, as appropriate and in accordance with national domestic law and international obligations;
- (c) The need for a strong scientific and technical basis for any new proposal;
- (d) The importance of transparency in the process for new description;
- (e) Opportunities to use cost-effective modalities;
- (f) Inter-regional differences in data availability and research efforts should be taken into account when describing new EBSAs.

III. OPTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE SCIENTIFIC CREDIBILITY AND TRANSPARENCY OF THE EBSA PROCESS

A. Scientific credibility of the EBSA process

14. With regard to strengthening the scientific credibility of the EBSA process, the following could be undertaken:

- (a) Planning of workshops in collaboration with the informal advisory group on EBSAs to ensure the provisioning of scientific information and traditional knowledge at appropriate scales;
- (b) Specifically addressing any imbalance across areas of expertise, including by exploring possible linkages with the CBD Global Taxonomy Initiative and the UNGA Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, and strengthening networks with other relevant organizations, as appropriate.

15. The following considerations need to be taken into account:

- (a) Furthering cooperation with the Ocean Biogeographic Information System of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO in accessing scientific information in support of regional workshops;

(b) Strengthening guidance, and, where necessary, mobilizing resources, for preparations at the national and regional level prior to a regional workshop in order to ensure the timely compilation of scientific information and traditional knowledge;

(c) Providing pre-workshop training;

(d) Using the training manual on the incorporation of traditional knowledge into the description and identification of EBSAs (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/20/INF/21);

(e) The application of the EBSA criteria can be strengthened by referencing, as much as possible, peer reviewed publications and by incorporating traditional knowledge.

B. Transparency of the EBSA process

16. The transparency of the EBSA process can be strengthened by making available the following:

(a) List of experts who have contributed to describing new EBSAs or reviewing existing EBSA descriptions;

(b) Information on the full and effective participation and on the free, prior informed consent of indigenous peoples and local communities, as appropriate and in accordance with national domestic law and international obligations, when traditional knowledge is used for the EBSA description;

(c) The geographic scope of regional workshops in the repository;

(d) Access to data/information (e.g., satellite images, links to referenced academic papers, documentation of traditional knowledge) used by the regional workshops;

17. When national processes are used to describe EBSAs, the descriptions are to be accompanied by an explanation of the national processes, including how national peer-review of the results was conducted.

C. National exercises

18. The results of national exercises, in line with paragraph 3 of decision XIII/12, can be included in the EBSA repository through one of the following paths:

(a) Parties or other Governments may submit the results of their national exercises to a regional workshop, followed by consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the Conference of the Parties for inclusion in the EBSA repository; or

(b) Building on the procedure set out in paragraph 7 of decision XII/22, the Party or Other Government may submit the results of national exercises on the description of new areas meeting the EBSA criteria, together with information on the scientific and technical process as well as the outcome of the scientifically sound nationally agreed peer-review process⁹ supporting the description, to the Executive Secretary to make them available to SBSTTA and COP [for consideration][for information], [with a view to inclusion] [to include] in the repository.

19. There is a need for:

(a) Capacity-building for the application of the EBSA criteria at the national level, particularly in developing countries;

(b) Incentives to enhance accessibility of local/national information;

(c) Inter-agency coordination for effective national exercises;

(d) Financial resources for national exercises.

⁹ Voluntary guidelines on peer-review processes to be developed by the Executive Secretary with advice from the Informal Advisory Group on EBSAs for the consideration of SBSTTA and COP.

IV. CAPACITY-BUILDING NEEDS FOR THE MODIFICATION OF EBSA DESCRIPTIONS AND THE DESCRIPTION OF NEW EBSAS

20. Capacity-building needs with regard to the modification of EBSA descriptions and the description of new EBSAs include:

- (a) Use of scientific and technical information and traditional knowledge to describe areas meeting the EBSA criteria and modify EBSA descriptions;
- (b) Awareness and understanding of the EBSA process;
- (c) Dialogue between the holders of traditional knowledge and scientists on the use of traditional knowledge in the description of EBSAs and the modification of EBSA descriptions;
- (d) Understanding the links between the EBSA process and other relevant processes.

*Annex III***ADDENDUM TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY GROUP ON ECOLOGICALLY OR BIOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT MARINE AREAS**

Further to the provisions in section I (Mandate) of annex III to decision XIII/12, the objectives of the informal advisory group are amended to include the following:

Regarding the modalities for the modification process for areas beyond national jurisdiction and, where the Parties or other Governments so wish, for areas within their national jurisdiction:

(a) Develop guidance/criteria on what constitutes a significant modification and/or a minor modification and submit draft guidance/criteria to a future meeting of SBSTTA for its consideration;

(b) On the basis of the compiled proposals for modification, advise the Executive Secretary on whether the proposed modifications meet the above-noted guidance/criteria for a significant and/or a minor modification;

Regarding the modalities to undertake the description of new areas meeting the EBSA criteria for areas beyond national jurisdiction and, where the Parties or other Governments so wish, for areas within their national jurisdiction:

(c) Develop guidance for the Executive Secretary on the organization of new workshops to facilitate the description of areas meeting the EBSA criteria; identify the need for scientific gap analysis and/or thematic analysis, which could complement regional workshops; and, as appropriate, provide advice to the Executive Secretary, based on the results of such analysis, and submit draft guidance to a future meeting of SBSTTA for its consideration.

Regarding strengthening the scientific credibility of the EBSA process

(d) Advise the Executive Secretary in the planning of EBSA workshops to ensure the provisioning of scientific and technical knowledge, as well as traditional knowledge, at appropriate scales.

(e) Advise the Executive Secretary in developing draft voluntary guidelines for scientific peer-review processes.
