



Ref.: SCBD/SPS/DC/SBG/JL/JG/86798

20 October 2017

NOTIFICATION

Submission of information to support the objectives of the expert workshop to develop options for modifying the description of areas meeting the criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), for describing new areas, and for strengthening the scientific credibility and transparency of the EBSA process, 5-8 December 2017 – Berlin, Germany

Dear Madam/Sir,

Through this notification, Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations are invited to submit information relevant to the objectives of the expert workshop to develop options for modifying the description of areas meeting the criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), for describing new areas, and for strengthening the scientific credibility and transparency of the EBSA process. This expert workshop is being convened by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Berlin from 5 to 8 December 2017 (see notification [2017-086](#), dated 8 September 2017).

Information submitted in response to this notification will be compiled and made available to workshop participants to support their deliberations.

In preparing their submissions, Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations are encouraged to make use of the annex to this notification, as appropriate. Submissions should outline national, subregional, regional and/or global experiences relevant to the objectives of the workshop, in particular with regard to the issues addressed in the annex. Relevant information may be provided in any appropriate format (e.g., reports, scientific articles), including links to relevant reports or other publications.

Kindly provide your submissions as soon as possible but no later than **10 November 2017**, to facilitate the timely compilation and synthesis of information. Contributions should be addressed to the Executive Secretary of the Convention and submitted via e-mail to secretariat@cbd.int or via fax to +1 514 288 6588.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter and your continued support for the work of the Convention. Please accept, Madam/Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Cristiana Paşca Palmer, PhD
Executive Secretary

To: CBD National Focal Points, Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Focal Points, SBSTTA Focal Points, Convention on Migratory Species, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Maritime Organization, International Seabed Authority, Ramsar Convention, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Heritage Convention, relevant United Nations/international organizations, Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, Regional Fisheries Bodies, indigenous peoples and local communities; other relevant organizations

Annex. Guidance for the preparation of submissions (to be used on a voluntary basis)

Considering the objectives of the expert workshop, information on the following types of experiences would provide useful examples and insights for the workshop deliberations:

- **Experience in procedures to modify the geographic scope and/or status (including expansion, downgrading, downsizing or degazettement) of areas previously designated as significant (e.g., ecologically, socio-culturally, historically) and/or sensitive/vulnerable, including information on relevant scientific and technical guidelines for modification;**

The project I work for in Vanuatu (MACBIO¹) was instrumental in developing our country's National Ocean Policy. In April this year, the Government of Vanuatu launched its Ocean Policy which is a first for the Pacific. The Government is now in the process of implementing the Ocean Policy and implementation of the most novel and innovative part of the Ocean Policy: *A Marine Spatial Plan*.

A Marine Spatial Plan will separate conflicting uses, optimize the location of developments in some places, control activities in other places and also offer protection to the wondrous variety of marine plants and animals in our ocean. To do the latter, we need to know where the most special and unique marine areas of Vanuatu are located.

For this, in following through with our Marine Spatial Planning work plan. We recently held our Vanuatu Special and Unique Marine Areas (SUMA) workshop.

The Workshop Objectives were to:

1. Identify and map the Special, Unique Marine Areas of Vanuatu (offshore and inshore)
2. Collect additional information including references, data and reports to fill critical gaps.

For this Vanuatu SUMA workshop; EBSA's, & existing marine sites deemed significant (e.g., ecologically, socio-culturally, historically) and/or sensitive/vulnerable, from recent NBSAP consultations/process were used as data layers.

There was a noted mismatch of scale with EBSA and national planning efforts, hence this workshop was essential to identify special, unique marine areas at a scale the government could use.

I will refer to this workshop in further detail in answering the second bullet point below.

- **Experience in the incorporation of new scientific information, including traditional knowledge, into a pre-existing process for the designation of significant and/or sensitive/vulnerable areas;**

Background

Since the launch of the Oceans Policy in April at our National oceans summit.

The Government is now in the process of implementing the Ocean Policy and implementation of the most novel and innovative part of the Ocean Policy: *A Marine Spatial Plan*.

A Marine Spatial Plan will separate conflicting uses, optimize the location of developments in some places, control activities in other places and also offer protection to the wondrous variety of marine plants and animals in our ocean.

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The ministerial government delegation went to UNOC, attending the United Nations Ocean Conference, in which they highlighted the National Oceans Policy, and Vanuatu made international commitments.

-National Oceans Office by 2020

-National Marine Spatial Plan by 2020

-National network of Marine Protected Areas by 2020

Implementation of the overall policy has been placed under the co-chairmanship of Ministry foreign Affairs & Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology, Geohazards, Environment & Energy, and work on getting that underway is also going ahead.

The MSP component, of which my project MACBIO¹ - GIZ - IUCN is facilitating with the Vanuatu national oceans policy implementation committee; line agencies, is progressing well so far, as explained in the following content below:

-on the 20th July we had the **Vanuatu Ocean Zone Typology Workshop**.

ocean experts, users and managers attended to lay one of the first, and the most important, foundation stones for Vanuatu's proposed Marine Spatial Plan.

At the workshop, held at the Climate Change Conference Room on Thursday 20th July, government and non-government experts helped to decide what types of ocean zones Vanuatu wants to have in its Marine Spatial Plan.

Ocean zones, in the sea,

Vanuatu's marine resources and cross-sectoral forward planning for their sustainable use is imperative. And a standardized, understandable and sensible set of ocean zones is a big part of this planning exercise.

Discussions at the workshop guided the government's future decisions about what kinds of uses should be allowed, and where, in our ocean

-We've worked on finalizing outcomes from that workshop.

suggestions have led to a number of changes to the draft zones. The revised zones typology (activity matrix)

A number of follow-up questions have arisen in our efforts to address the suggestions made during the workshop.

Now, those draft Ocean zones have been reviewed, revised and finalized (circulated by email) and are able to be used in future planning for Vanuatu's seas. These zones form one of the first, and one of the most important, foundation stones for Vanuatu's proposed Marine Spatial Plan.

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This typology workshop & following Special & Unique Marine Areas workshop forms part of the Government's marine spatial planning work plan:

Legal review - done 2015

Develop draft Ocean mgt objectives – done 2015

Finalise Ocean Policy – done 2016

Build consultation/communication plan mid-2017

Build draft zone typology mid - 2017

Identify biophysically special or unique areas (this workshop) end-2017

Develop biophysical description of Vanuatu's ocean early - 2018

Design zone placement guidelines early - 2018

National public consultation – what kinds of uses/protection where? 2018

Draft marine spatial plan late 2018

Preparation for consultation late 2018

National public consultation on draft marine spatial plan 2019

Revise and finalise draft marine spatial plan late 2019

Formal Government Gazette 2020

Inform public of new Ocean Plan 2020

Special and Unique Marine Areas (SUMA) workshop for Vanuatu 25 October.

In this workshop we tried to identify & define first up, our Special and unique marine areas in our EEZ. a technical workshop to define Biophysically Special, Unique Marine Areas of Vanuatu. A report to be produced bearing the outcomes of which, and follow-up research recommended during the workshop. The report to also outline the methods used to identify and describe the sites and the resulting list of biophysically special, unique marine areas of Vanuatu. The sites are categorized as either being “large scale” or associated with an island group (“fine scale”).

Workshop participants chosen based upon their expertise. (and other contributors) have marine expertise to do with one or more of the following: inshore and offshore fish and other species, marine habitats and environments, high biodiversity areas, marine mammal areas, hydrology, findings from deep sea mineral explorations, oceanography, ports, fisheries, marine research, and social issues.

The criteria used to select the sites were:

- Justification
- Geographic explicitness
- Type of information source(s)
- Number of information sources
- National or international obligations

The participants were divided into groups to make decisions about what they considered biophysically special and/or unique sites for Vanuatu.

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Each group had available: the electronic data on a GIS with a screen and GIS technician to access and map any data they wished to view (data was provided by MACBIO¹ + any data brought by participants to workshop), a facilitator, hard copy maps, worksheets and response maps upon which to draw their chosen sites. Each group also nominated a rapporteur. At the end of the workshop, each group presented their findings to a plenary session.

The final report should also access any additional research, data and information to both inform the descriptions of the sites identified in the workshop, and to consider any additional sites that the workshop had not identified. This should involve following up on potential sources of information, including experts who were not able to attend the workshop. Information to be collected through online libraries that linked to peer-reviewed journals and other online “grey” (or unpublished) literature. The status of this task, which is now ongoing and I am currently in the process of following up upon. Species-specific obligations should be supplemented by compiling a list of species occurring in Vanuatu waters that are listed in national and international conservation legislation.

All spatial data and information collected during the workshop to be digitized and a map of each identified site created, this is also currently underway. A geographic boundary for each site to be created in GIS from the minimum bounding geometry enclosing each site. The diagonal coordinates (latitudes/longitudes) generated from this process to be used to identify the geographic boundaries for the special and unique marine areas of Vanuatu. All this to be compiled eventually into a final report.

Here’s an example recently done by MACBIO¹ for Tonga; of what the SUMA report should look like when its completed:

<http://macbio-pacific.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/SUMA-Tonga-digital-lo-res.pdf>

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- **Experience in ensuring scientific credibility and transparency in the use of specific criteria for designating significant and/or sensitive/vulnerable areas, including through processes for regular peer-review.**

For our SUMA Workshop; Special, Unique Areas were determined to be geographically defined areas that may have:

- threatened, rare, vulnerable habitats or species
- important life stages of key species (feeding, breeding, nesting, migration)
- biologically outstanding attributes e.g. high species diversity, endemism
- habitats of high complexity or size
- Other marine areas might be physically unique (geomorphology) e.g Tongoa Wall

The Criteria we used was:

•**Justification**

- Amount, detail and nature of justification
- Consider whether there are:
–rare, vulnerable or unique habitats or species

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- species of concern
 - important life stages of key species (feeding, breeding, nesting, migration),
 - physically or biologically outstanding attributes e.g. unique geomorphology or high species diversity
 - habitats of high complexity or size
- This workshop wasn't particularly identifying culturally important sites.*

•Geographic explicitness

Need to be as specific as possible when defining the boundaries.
Clearly defined boundaries means that better decisions can be made about the area that is special and/or unique.

•Type of information source(s)

- Type of information sources: Is the information source(s) reliable and verifiable?
- Local knowledge and expert advice available
 - Reports available
 - Scientific studies available

•Number of information sources

Number of information sources
– information is more likely to be correct and can be cross-referenced and triangulated if multiple information sources are used.

•National or international obligations

- Are the areas associated with species or habitats for which the country has:
- national obligations (e.g. under law) &/or
 - international obligations (e.g. under Conventions)

Relative Importance

- Based on the information provided, plus further research, a relative score will be assigned for each site.
- there will be an opportunity to comment on the score
- It is very important – as much information was collected at the workshop.

We will then be using an in-country expert for the purpose of:

- a) Reviewing the workshop outputs
- b) And reviewing the draft report (once it is written).

And an established consultant will be finalizing the report, once all the reviews are completed.

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These can include, for example, relevant experiences under the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Maritime Organization, International Seabed Authority, Ramsar Convention, UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme, World Heritage Convention, and other relevant global, regional or national processes.

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