



### Convention on Biological Diversity

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### **REPORT OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY GROUP ON ECOLOGICALLY OR BIOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT MARINE AREAS ON ITS FIRST MEETING**

### MONTREAL, 30 JUNE 2018

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. With financial support from the Government of Sweden, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity convened the first meeting of the Informal Advisory Group on Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas in Montreal, Canada, from 30 June to 1 July 2018, immediately preceding the twenty-second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. The meeting was convened pursuant to paragraph 11 of <u>decision XIII/12</u>, whereby the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity requested the Executive Secretary to establish an informal advisory group for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), subject to available financial resources, to facilitate implementation of the voluntary practical options referred to in paragraph 9 and annex II of the same decision. The Conference of the Parties requested that the Executive Secretary follow the guidance on expert groups contained in the consolidated modus operandi of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (<u>decision VIII/10</u>, <u>annex III (h)</u>) and the terms of reference for this informal advisory group for EBSAs, as provided in <u>annex III to decision XIII/12</u>, as follows:

(a) Provide scientific and technical advice on matters relating to revising and further developing existing scientific guidance, particularly regarding information collection, protocol for data quality control and sharing, gap analysis, systematic assessment against the EBSA criteria, and improvement of the functionality of the EBSA repository;

(b) Provide scientific and technical advice regarding the need for additional workshops at the appropriate scale, based on the analysis of new information and a representativeness analysis with regard to the geographic coverage beyond national jurisdiction as well as coverage of ecological and biological features of existing areas meeting the EBSA criteria in areas beyond national jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup>

2. Pursuant to the above request, the Secretariat issued notification 2017-058, dated 21 June 2017, inviting Parties, other Governments, relevant organizations, and indigenous peoples and local communities to nominate scientific and technical experts to participate in the Informal Advisory Group on Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas. A total of 112 nominations were received; 78 nominations were submitted by 32 Governments, and 34 nominations were submitted by 25 organizations, including three from two indigenous peoples and local community organizations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The activities described in this subparagraph only relate to the areas meeting the EBSA criteria in areas beyond national jurisdiction. In cases where the EBSA is located both within and beyond national jurisdiction, the activities only relate to the portion of the EBSA that is beyond national jurisdiction.

3. Participants were selected in line with the criteria outlined in the above-mentioned notification, in consultation with the Bureau of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, taking into account the need to ensure geographical distribution and gender balance. A total of 30 experts were selected, as indicated in notification 2018-056, dated 14 June 2018.

4. The meeting was attended by experts from Australia, Canada, China, Ecuador, Egypt, Guinea, Japan, Mexico, Mozambique, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Turkmenistan, Indigenous Peoples and Community Conserved Areas and Territories (ICCAs), the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative, Duke University, BirdLife International, Coastal Oceans Research and Development in the Indian Ocean (CORDIO) East Africa, and the Regional Partnership for Coastal and Marine Conservation (PRCM). A participant from Jamaica participated remotely in part of the workshop. The full list of participants is provided in annex I.

### ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

5. Mr. Alexander Shestakov, Director of the Science and Policy Support Division of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, opened the meeting at 9 a.m. on Saturday, 30 June 2018. After welcoming participants, he explained that the newly formed Informal Advisory Group, created pursuant to a decision of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its thirteenth meeting, in 2016, was convening to formulate scientific and technical advice for the Executive Secretary on the EBSA process. Therefore, the experience and expertise of those present were essential to the future of the EBSA process. He explained that, since the adoption of the EBSA criteria at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the work of the Convention on Biological Diversity on EBSAs had taken an incredible journey. This work had significantly advanced our understanding of the special places in the ocean crucial to the healthy functioning of the global marine ecosystem. It had provided a basis for actions by Parties and competent authorities to focus their conservation and management efforts towards the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. He noted that the Secretariat had strived to build awareness and appreciation of EBSAs using different means and approaches, including the development of a series of EBSA booklets, which translated the scientific and technical terminology of the EBSA descriptions into language that could be better appreciated and understood by non-scientists. He noted the recent publication of the fourth EBSA booklet in the series, which showcased the EBSAs of the North Pacific. He pointed out that the work on EBSAs under the Convention had gained global recognition—being widely recognized as one of the Convention's major accomplishments. He noted that while the EBSA process had accomplished much, there had also been challenges, most notably the deliberations on ways to enhance the scientific credibility and transparency of the EBSA work and to integrate new scientific information into the EBSAs. In closing, he noted that these discussions were critical to the future of the EBSA process and to collective efforts to achieve the objectives of the Convention.

### ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: ELECTION OF THE CHAIR AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

6. After a brief explanation by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity on procedures, the participants were invited to elect the meeting chair, based on proposals from the floor.

7. Mr. Moustafa Fouda (Egypt) was elected chair.

8. Participants were then invited to consider the provisional agenda (<u>CBD/EBSA/OM/2018/1/1</u>) and the proposed organization of work, as contained in annex II to the annotations to the provisional agenda (<u>CBD/EBSA/OM/2018/1/1/Add.1</u>) and adopted them without any amendments.

9. The meeting was organized in plenary sessions. The chair nominated the following facilitators and rapporteurs for the sessions, to assist the Secretariat in preparing the draft workshop report on the discussions to be undertaken at the plenary sessions, based on the expertise and experience of the workshop participants and in consultation with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity:

Agenda item 4(a): Mr. David Johnson (facilitator); Mr. David Obura (rapporteur)

Agenda item 4(b): Mr. Piers Dunstan (facilitator); Ms. Nadine Wells/Ms. Vivienne Solis (rapporteurs)

Agenda item 4(c): Mr. Pat Halpin (facilitator); Mr. David Johnson (rapporteur)

Agenda item 4(d): Mr. Piers Dunstan (facilitator); Ms. Nadine Wells (rapporteur)

### ITEM 3. MEETING BACKGROUND, SCOPE AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

10. Ms. Jihyun Lee (CBD Secretariat) provided an overview of the EBSA process under the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as the objectives and expected outputs/outcomes of the meeting. A summary of her presentation is provided in annex II.

### ITEM 4. ISSUES FOR IN-DEPTH DISCUSSION

11. There were four main issues addressed under this item, as follows:

(a) Scope, approaches and steps for revising and further developing existing scientific guidance on the application of the EBSA criteria;

(b) Scope, approaches and steps for revising and further developing existing training manuals, including the training manual on the application of EBSAs and the training manual on the incorporation of traditional knowledge (TK) innovations and practices into the description and identification of EBSAs;

(c) Preliminary results of a scientific gap analysis of the process of regional workshops to facilitate the description of the EBSAs under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and implications for the future work on EBSAs;

(d) Scope, approaches and steps for improving the functionality of the EBSA repository and the information-sharing mechanism.

12. Participants heard the following theme presentations, followed by plenary discussions:

(a) Mr. David Johnson (Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative) delivered a presentation (which was prepared with input from Mr. Nic Bax) on the scope, approaches and steps for revising and further developing existing scientific guidance on the application of the scientific criteria for EBSAs;

(b) Mr. Piers Dunstan (Australia) delivered a presentation on the scope, approaches and steps for revising and further developing existing training manuals, including the training manual on the application of EBSAs and the training manual on the incorporation of TK into the description and identification of EBSAs, which was followed by remarks from Ms. Vivienne Solis Rivera (ICCA) on bridging knowledge on EBSAs with knowledge, experiences and expertise of indigenous peoples and local communities;

(c) Mr. Pat Halpin (Duke University) delivered a presentation on the preliminary results of a scientific gap analysis of the process of regional workshops to facilitate the description of EBSAs under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and implications for the future work on EBSAs;

(d) Mr. Joseph Appiott (CBD Secretariat) delivered a presentation on the scope, approaches and steps for improving the functionality of the EBSA repository and the information-sharing mechanism.

13. A summary of each presentation is provided in annex II.

14. Following each presentation, the Secretariat presented key questions to facilitate plenary discussion. A summary of the plenary discussion on each item is provided in annex III.

### **ITEM 7. OTHER MATTERS**

15. In response to questions regarding reporting of this meeting to the twenty-second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (which took place immediately following this meeting), the Secretariat explained that it would prepare a short report to be delivered by the chair of the meeting during the proceedings of the Subsidiary Body.

### ITEM 9. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

16. The meeting closed at 1 p.m. on Sunday, 1 July 2018.

### Annex I

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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### **Duke University**

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#### Annex II

### SUMMARY OF THEME PRESENTATIONS

#### **AGENDA ITEM 3**

#### Meeting background, scope and expected outputs

(by Ms. Jihyun Lee, CBD Secretariat)

Ms. Jihyun Lee presented on the meeting background, scope and expected outputs. She explained that the EBSA process is celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2018, having begun with the adoption of the EBSA criteria at COP 9 in 2008. She emphasized that the EBSA process is based on one very simple question: When Parties are working to fulfil their commitments under the CBD, where should they focus their actions? Where are the areas of highest ecological or biological importance? This is the basis of Parties' efforts, and they cannot begin to fulfil their commitments without an answer to this very basic question, which was not at all available prior to the start of the EBSA process. She emphasized that EBSAs are a purely scientific endeavour and should not be confused with management efforts, such as marine protected areas or fishing closures. Nor, she pointed out, do they affect jurisdictional matters. Instead, the EBSA process focuses on scientific information on the inherent value of marine biodiversity. She emphasized that management efforts and human interventions are the work of Governments and competent intergovernmental organizations, which can use the information provided through the EBSA process, in combination with information on human interactions and threats, to apply management efforts as well as to support planning and scientific research. She noted that more than 74 per cent of the global ocean has been covered by a total of 14 CBD regional EBSA workshops, the results of which are submitted to the United Nations General Assembly and included in the EBSA repository. She noted that the results of the two most recent workshops would be reviewed by COP in November 2018. She invited participants to visit the EBSA website, at www.cbd.int/ebsa. She noted that there are ongoing discussions under COP regarding the options for modifying the description of EBSAs, for describing new areas, and for strengthening the scientific credibility and transparency of the EBSA process, including on the basis of the results 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, which took place in Berlin, from 5 to 8 December 2017. Ms. Lee noted that the informal advisory group would provide essential support to guide the EBSA process. In conclusion, she highlighted that the role of this group is to provide scientific guidance to the CBD Secretariat directly, rather than to SBSTTA or COP, as well as advice on training, functionality of the EBSA repository and the need for future workshops.

### **AGENDA ITEM 4**

### Scope, approaches and steps for revising and further developing existing scientific guidance on the application of the scientific criteria for EBSAs

### (by Mr. David Johnson, Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative)

Mr. David Johnson presented some contextual insights on the scope, approaches and steps for revising and further developing existing scientific guidance on the application of the scientific criteria for EBSAs (also on behalf of Mr. Nic Bax who contributed to the presentation). Mr. Johnson began by explaining that conservation and sustainable use require sound understanding of the ecosystem and reliable data, including on biogeography for planning and sustained monitoring of trends over time. He noted, however, that marine biological data is typically lacking. He noted that consideration of different scales is important. Mr. Johnson pointed out that COP 13 emphasized the importance of improving the EBSA process, including through refinement of existing EBSAs by adding new information, further sharing of data and building capacity, and that there are ongoing discussions under COP to consider how to modify EBSA descriptions without compromising the strengths of the EBSA process. He noted that the scientific needs for updating EBSA descriptions have been discussed in peer-reviewed journal article he coauthored, as well as during the CBD Expert Workshop to Develop Options for Modifying the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs), for Describing New Areas, and for Strengthening the Scientific Credibility and Transparency of this Process. Mr. Johnson provided examples of issues relevant to individual EBSA criteria. He explained that criterion 1, "uniqueness or rarity", is based on biological, ecological and oceanographic information from peer-reviewed literature, technical reports and datasets. EBSA workshops have sought to identify different morphological features and seascapes and assessed them on a relative basis, compared to other areas in the region containing similar features (or sets of survey data). As more information becomes available, it may be necessary, in some cases, to re-evaluate the extent to which a given feature meets this criterion (i.e., new sites or similar sites may be found, thus challenging uniqueness). Similarly, criterion 2, "Special importance for life history stages of species", which can include features such as breeding grounds, spawning areas, nursery areas and juvenile habitat, could benefit from further work on migratory species (taking into account feeding, wintering, resting, breeding and moulting areas and migratory routes), new technologies, such as remote sensing and TK. Seabird tracking data is an example of new data available to evaluate criterion 3, "Importance for threatened, endangered or declining species and/or habitats". Criterion 4, "vulnerability, fragility, sensitivity, or slow recovery" relates to the functionality of fragile species and habitats (i.e., those highly susceptible to degradation or depletion by human activity or natural events) with traits that predicate slow recovery. He noted that this criterion would particularly benefit from updated scientific guidance, as it is sometimes misinterpreted. The criteria on biological productivity and biological diversity would benefit from illustrative examples of areas meeting the EBSA criteria. Finally, naturalness considerations could benefit from future consideration of cumulative effects and recognition of stressors. With respect to further expanding scientific guidance on the use of biogeographical classification systems, consideration is needed on how to ensure the EBSA process has taken into account all biogeographic regions. Both scale and depth layers (i.e., different zones: sunlit, twilight and dark zones) are also important considerations. New technologies are informing taxonomic and genetic studies at different depths. Lessons can be learned from other processes, such as the multi-criteria assessment tool to evaluate the likelihood of vulnerable marine ecosystem occurrence developed by the International Council for Protection of the Sea (ICES) Working Group on Deep-water Ecology (WGDEC). Climate change (changing oceanic variables) was highlighted as a major driver impacting on EBSAs and requiring more specific consideration in terms of scientific guidance. Mr. Johnson concluded by suggesting that strengthened guidance was needed to inform the updating of existing EBSA descriptions with new information, including guidance to inform a consultative process to communicate and modify ranking against the EBSA criteria, if necessary. This would help to better understand and articulate a role for EBSAs in other international processes such as the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Development, negotiations for a new Implementing Agreement on Biodiversity beyond National Jurisdiction and the Sustainable Development Goals.

### Scope, approaches and steps for revising and further developing the training manual on the application of EBSAs

(by Mr. Piers Dunstan, Australia)

Mr. Dunstan presented a short summary of the contents of the Training Manual for the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) in Open-Ocean Waters and Deep-Sea Habitats (available at: https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-16/information/sbstta-16-inf-09en.pdf) and the Training Manual on the Incorporation of Traditional Knowledge into the Description and Identification https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbsttaof EBSAs (available at: 20/information/sbstta-20-inf-21-en.pdf). He described the contents and modules in each of the training manuals. Mr. Dunstan provided some examples from training that has occurred prior to each EBSA regional workshop and how that training might be improved drawing on experiences from previous regional workshops. He also provided examples from the regional workshops that are not covered in the current training manuals. Finally, he provided some examples of experience and potential approaches for including traditional and local knowledge into the description of EBSAs.

## Scope, approaches and Steps for revising and further developing the training manual on the incorporation of traditional knowledge into the description and identification of EBSAs (by Ms. Vivienne Solis Rivera, ICAA Consortium)

Ms. Solis shared her perspectives on the Training Manual on the Incorporation of Traditional Knowledge into the Description and Identification of EBSAs (https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-20/information/sbstta-20-inf-21-en.pdf). She pointed out that the training manual is directed at indigenous people and local communities, as well as managers and scientists, noting that it provides a framework that is based on the ethical value of common understanding. She noted that the manual presents some of the main challenges to promoting the use of TK within the EBSA description process: the need for co-production of knowledge, a collaborative process for bringing together a plurality of knowledge sources and types to understand and address a defined problem; and integration of knowledge holders into the process (a very challenging task due in part to the plurality of languages involved). Concerning the EBSA criteria and the associated scientific definitions, Ms. Solis emphasized that indigenous people and local communities (IPLCs) likely interpret them differently than scientists. Today, national authorities have a responsibility to engage with IPLCs in an effective and meaningful way in the description and identification of EBSAs. Ms. Solis highlighted good examples of effective involvement of IPLCs, in particular Canada's national EBSA process and the CBD EBSA workshop for the Arctic region. In conclusion, Ms. Solis emphasized the importance of developing alliances with processes and networks that have developed approaches to the recognition and valuing of TK, including the ICCA (Indigenous Peoples and Community Conserved Areas and Territories) Consortium and the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF).

## Preliminary results of a scientific gap analysis of the process of regional EBSA workshops under the CBD, and implications for future work on EBSAs

### (by Mr. Pat Halpin, Duke University)

Mr. Halpin presented the results of a preliminary scientific gap analysis of the process of regional workshops to facilitate the description of EBSAs under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and implications for future work on EBSAs, noting that a review of the outcomes of previous EBSA workshops can provide useful information on the specific data gaps and gaps in expertise that may be rectified in future work under the EBSA process. This presentation highlighted the need for the scientific gap analysis, components of the analysis, monitoring needs and next steps. The analysis was described as following two complementary processes: (1) a general assessment of the scientific robustness of the existing EBSAs and (2) a goal-oriented assessment of representativity, connectivity, replication and adequacy of the global collection of EBSAs. The review of robustness and integrity necessarily needs to address potential errors of omission and commission. A review of the outcomes of previous EBSA workshops can provide useful information on the specific data gaps and gaps in expertise that may be rectified in future work under the EBSA process. The components of the review were separated into four topics: gaps in geographic coverage, implementation of EBSA type classification, biogeographic coverage, and network/connectivity coverage. Mr. Halpin explained that classifying EBSAs into four descriptive types (Type 1 – static features; Type 2 multiple features; Type 3 – ephemeral features and Type 4 – dynamic features) adds precision to their definition and monitoring. He explained that a number of different issues could motivate the potential revision of EBSA descriptions and description of new EBSAs, including: availability of new data; identification of new regional expertise and knowledge; identification of new analysis methods; promulgation of new EBSA classifications or categories; need to fill spatial gaps; need to fill taxonomic (species) gaps; edge-matching of regional workshop boundaries identifies gaps; sufficient time has passed that an update appears to be prudent; significant environmental change has occurred; and consideration of suggested representativity or connectivity issues. Mr. Halpin concluded by presenting examples of initial results from the review of the existing EBSA descriptions, focusing on focal species, focal habitats or geomorphic features, focal depth range (i.e., benthic vs. pelagic) and EBSA classification (i.e., the 4 classes previously derived).

## Scope, approaches and steps for improving the functionality of the EBSA repository and the information-sharing mechanism

(by Joseph Appiott, CBD Secretariat)

Mr. Appiott presented the key elements, structure, content and functionality of the EBSA website, which houses the EBSA repository and EBSA information-sharing mechanism. He presented the context for the development of the EBSA website, reviewing previous COP guidance on the EBSA repository and information-sharing mechanism, and their distinct purposes. He reviewed their strengths and weaknesses and explained that many of these weaknesses are dictated by technical and resource limitations. He then presented a proposed framework for improving the functionality of the EBSA website, as well as a revised structure to be further in line with COP guidance. He also reviewed potential means to improve the user uptake of the EBSA information through the website as well as means to link to other data sources.

### Annex III

### SUMMARY OF THEME DISCUSSIONS

### SCOPE, APPROACHES AND STEPS FOR REVISING AND FURTHER DEVELOPING EXISTING SCIENTIFIC GUIDANCE ON THE APPLICATION OF THE SCIENTIFIC CRITERIA FOR EBSAs

### Improving scientific guidance on the application of the scientific criteria for EBSAs

- The Group acknowledged that COP had tasked the IAG with providing scientific and technical advice on matters relating to revising and further developing scientific guidance to support the EBSA process and that the discharging of this mandate must continue to be in line with any future COP decisions, in particular regarding potential future modalities on revising the descriptions of existing EBSA or describing new EBSAs.
- The Group noted that the guidance should be a living document for use in future training and workshops rather than a formal document. It should be informed by the forthcoming EBSA scientific gap analysis. The Group agreed that this task is a priority and could be undertaken by a consultant as part of a detailed review of the outputs of EBSA regional workshop and previous guidance.
- It was agreed that there is now a good rationale for updating the scientific guidance based on experience from all the workshops, which should be documented. There were specific suggestions that:
  - Improving guidance should focus on those criteria that had in some instances proved difficult for regional EBSA workshops to interpret (e.g., vulnerability and naturalness);
  - Links to the training manuals should be provided in any updated guidance;
  - One-page summaries for decision makers could be useful;
  - Examples can be used to illustrate the types of features/areas that clearly meet specific criteria and can assist in the interpretation/application the guidance provided in decision IX/20, annex I;
  - Guidance should also include examples of how TK could be/has been used in EBSA descriptions.
  - The Group had mixed views about whether or not it would be useful to establish indicative quantitative thresholds for meeting the EBSA criteria. The IUCN Key Biodiversity Areas global standard methodology could provide inspiration in this regard. However, some cautioned against incorporating such thresholds into the EBSA process as there are scale-related issues with doing so and different thresholds may not be applicable across all regions. Focusing on thresholds may exclude the consideration of many areas, particularly in relation to those described using TK or where scientific data is scarce.

### Guidance on biogeographic classification

- The Group recalled the report of the 2009 Expert Workshop on Scientific and Technical Guidance on the use of Biogeographical Classification Systems and Identification of Marine Areas beyond National Jurisdiction in Need of Protection (UNEP/CBD/EW-BCS & IMA/1/2), the outcome of which was informed by a compilation of existing sectoral, regional and national efforts. Annex V of the workshop report provides scientific guidance recognizing that biogeographic classification delineates units that provide a framework for assessing status, trends and threats at the scale of specific regions or subregions.
- The Group also considered the future development of biogeographical classification systems and highlighted the value of a nested hierarchical classification system that would provide an interface between coastal and oceanic/deep-sea classification.
- Ongoing examples of international and national biogeographic classifications were highlighted. For example, work on Pacific/Indian Ocean bioregionalization as part of the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiatve International Climate Initiative (GOBI-IKI) Project would be relevant to any new round of EBSA workshops in those areas.
- Lessons learned from national exercises highlighted scale issues and challenges in relation to consideration of representativity for both pelagic and benthic ecosystems.
- Capacity to develop classifications and language issues were noted as significant challenges for some regions.
- TK was highlighted as an important consideration. However, a challenge in integrating these knowledge types is that, in some cases, scientific maps are not always the most relevant way to present this information. Further guidance is needed on different formats for displaying and interpreting TK in a way that can support the application of the EBSA criteria and biogeographic classification.
- The Group noted the relevance of information held by Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) projects and the need to consider connectivity both within and between different biogeographic regions (e.g., Yellow Sea LME).
- It was unlikely that the Group could initiate a new project on biogeographical classification, but it could recognize and build on existing efforts to update the guidance. The Group concluded that it would be more efficient to have a zero draft and build on this rather than start from scratch.
- In summary, the Group agreed that developments in biogeographical classification since the start of the EBSA process were relevant to developing and refining the scientific guidance and that there are clear opportunities to link to monitoring, ecosystem services, training and capacity building.

### SCOPE, APPROACHES AND STEPS FOR REVISING AND FURTHER DEVELOPING EXISTING TRAINING MANUALS, INCLUDING THE TRAINING MANUAL ON THE APPLICATION OF THE EBSA CRITERIA AND THE TRAINING MANUAL ON THE INCORPORATION OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE INTO THE DESCRIPTION AND IDENTIFICATION OF EBSAS

### Lessons learned in the development and use of the training manual on the application of the EBSA criteria

- The need to determine the main audience for the training manual was highlighted, so that it can be correctly tailored to that audience. Potential users could include scientists, practitioners, academics, indigenous and local communities and policymakers. The potential users could be determined by reflecting on who has attended past workshops.
- It was noted that the first training manual was prepared before the CBD regional EBSA workshops began. The training manuals were not used extensively during workshops, and the extent of their use has varied among regional and national workshops. During some regional workshops, the training manual was used as a reference document. It has not always been used directly at these workshops, although it has been summarized by facilitators and referred to in presentations on interpreting the EBSA criteria. And, as these workshops generally did not focus on the use of TK, the training manual on the incorporation of TK into the description and identification of EBSAs was not generally used.
- The Group highlighted the need for a standard set of presentation materials for workshop facilitators.
- If the CBD is going to hire a consultant to review lessons learned from past EBSA workshops, the consultant can also review and advise on information pertinent to training. Workshop participants can be interviewed/surveyed on what they learned, what the challenges were and other matters relevant to the training of future participants. Case studies could be provided, along with links to previous workshop documents.

### Suggestions for additional training materials

- As regional EBSA workshops have encountered different challenges, valuable lessons have emerged, many of which are not reflected in the training manuals. In this regard, it was suggested to develop a FAQ ("frequently asked questions") list based on questions/challenged addressed by previous regional workshops along with practical ways to address them.
- It was noted that training should be developed for techniques that can be used to prepare scientific information for the description of EBSAs. Platforms such as the OceanTeacher Global Academy could be referenced. An online forum can be used to provide information for targeted audiences (e.g., IPLCs, policymakers, scientists).
- In the training materials, it was suggested to differentiate between EBSA products (i.e., maps and descriptions) and processes (i.e., methods and modalities).
- Separating the manual into two parts, workshop preparation and workshop procedures, may be practical. Regarding workshop preparation, there could be a module developed that would inform participants on how to prepare for a workshop. Participants could be trained on the knowledge required, and the training content should include all of the processes that go into developing the EBSA map and description. Furthermore, it would be useful for workshop participants to have a checklist of what kinds of information they should take to the workshop or prepare ahead of time.
- While it was recommended that a module be developed on how EBSAs can contribute to other tools, such as marine spatial planning and MPA establishment, it was noted that other organizations/groups have developed some guidance in this regard and that such a module could build on these previous efforts.

- It was agreed that there is a need to refine the existing training manual on the incorporation of TK into the description of EBSAs. One potential option was to merge the existing TK manual into the overarching EBSA training manual. It was suggested that TK considerations should be incorporated into the overarching guidance but that the guidance should be communicated in different formats (e.g., videos, photos, maps).
- The difference between scientific and traditional ecological knowledge should be clarified. For example, when local scientists contribute TK, should this information be considered scientific or traditional? It should be clear how this information is incorporated and used to identify and describe EBSAs.
- While it is recognized that the sociocultural perspective is important, the EBSA process is focused on ecological and biological features, and any information that is considered, including from TK, should focus on ecological and biological information.
- Guidance for preparing for EBSA workshops should also include guidance for TK holders.
- One participant recommended that the manual should be adapted to each region. For example, what types of legislation have to be considered in each region and what are the management implications? However, this suggestion was met with hesitation, as there is already other guidance under the Convention on management measures (e.g., MSP, MPAs) and legislative frameworks, and adding this information to the EBSA training manual may serve to complicate the training materials.
- There may be a need to rely on experts in different regions to deliver training materials. It is hoped that experts from the IAG can take on the shared responsibility of training in their regions. Therefore, it is important for IAG members to be comfortable with the training material and ensure they can communicate it to a broad range of geographic regions.

### Alternative formats for training materials

- It was acknowledged that the current manuals are much too long and cumbersome. The training manuals could be made more succinct with links to additional training material depending on the specific needs of different users. Users could be provided with links to the many reference materials and studies that have been done on EBSAs around the world.
- There was discussion about the different formats that could be used and ways to make training materials more accessible without losing detail. Suggestions included a series of documents as well as online/e-learning modules, which can be a more accessible resource. These could allow the user to dive deeper into specific issues, depending on the level of information needed and the desired approach. There are ways to make training materials more accessible without losing detail.
- Webinars on the application of the criteria were recommended, and it was acknowledged that a webinar was organized previously leading up to a regional workshop. This online webinar prepared participants on what to bring to the workshop and how to apply the criteria. It was found to be useful for workshop participants. These webinars could involve broader participation beyond workshop participants.
- Additionally, it was noted that an online forum could be used to help users understand existing EBSAs and how to use EBSA information.
- The Group discussed whether online modalities could be used in the EBSA process, including for proposing new areas and incorporating sociocultural elements. However, it was noted that this matter was subject to further guidance from COP as it relates to areas of discussion under COP that have not been resolved.
- There was consensus on the need for online training. It was suggested that there should be a series of modules that are targeted towards different groups, depending on their needs. The information that

already exists in the manuals, as well as experiences from regional workshops and previous training, could be incorporated into online modules. Also, online module(s) could have a set of slides that could be downloaded for training purposes. This is all subject to the availability of resources within the Secretariat.

• There was some discussion on language and translation. Regardless of the medium used (e.g., training manuals, online forums, videos) translation has to be a consideration. Materials should be available in different languages.

### Incorporating TK into the EBSA process

- It was acknowledged that the issue of integrating TK is not a simple matter and has been a challenge since the beginning of the EBSA process. The knowledge can be varied, and it is sometimes difficult to get participants to agree on how it can be used. It was noted that lessons can be learned from other processes that have encountered similar issues, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).
- The current manual on TK is intended for local communities to learn about EBSAs and for scientists to learn about the potential of TK to support the description of EBSAs. It was acknowledged that TK needs to come from knowledge holders, and that it is important to determine what kind of knowledge exists and how technical experts can use tools to adapt to these different types of knowledge.
- It was noted that the incorporation of TK into EBSA identification and description is a process. The training manual currently recognizes two types of knowledge, which are of equal importance. These information types should complement one another.
- It was stressed that more IPLCs should participate in EBSA training and workshops.
- As many groups come to the EBSA workshops well-prepared, it was recommended that TK holders should have the same opportunity. By contacting IPLCs earlier in the process for the planning of EBSA workshops, they will have time to organize their information and consider carefully what should be incorporated into the EBSA process. There is value in learning how other processes incorporate TK into their analyses. In Canada, IPLCs are invited to attend peer-review meetings where EBSA identification and descriptions are being discussed. In some cases, IPLCs are involved in the production of a working paper before the peer-review meetings. This is an important consideration for the CBD as well for any future regional workshops.
- As TK is often very locally based, there are practical reasons why it may be difficult to include it in EBSA description processes, in particular for offshore areas. However, some TK can also pertain to distant sites (e.g., marine mammal migratory pathways).
- The issue of EBSA size and scale was discussed, and it was recognized that TK is often linked to smaller-scale EBSAs.
- It was stressed that it should be clearly indicated in the EBSA description when TK was used to describe an EBSA.
- Furthermore, as the final EBSA products are maps and text, it is necessary to ask IPLC representatives what an EBSA looks like in their terms and possibly consider a third medium to better incorporate their knowledge.

# DISCUSSION ON THE PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF A SCIENTIFIC GAP ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS OF REGIONAL EBSA WORKSHOPS UNDER THE CBD, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK ON EBSAS

Discussion followed the presentation of the preliminary results of a scientific gap analysis of the process of regional EBSA workshops under CBD. The review is aimed at assessing the geographic, taxonomic and EBSA-type coverage of the global EBSA collection to help identify potential gaps and trends. This initial review was based on two approaches: (1) mapping overlays of the existing EBSAs on jurisdictional areas, biogeographic features, habitats and enhanced management status; and (2) a review of each of the EBSA descriptions to identify the type of EBSA, the criteria described, the primary taxonomic features described, the role of endemic species and the role of connectivity used in the individual EBSA description. The review identifies a number of trends and patterns of coverage globally as well as differences between workshop regions and individual EBSA descriptions. It is aimed at informing the interpretation of the existing EBSAs as well as the development of future EBSA workshops or regional EBSA review processes.

### EBSA categories / types

(*Type 1 – static features; Type 2 – multiple features; Type 3 – ephemeral features and Type 4 – dynamic features*)

- It was noted that there is a need to be careful about overlapping categories, which might be addressed by considering primary and secondary categories.
- Some participants stressed that the categories should not be seen on par with the EBSA criteria (which were adopted by the CBD COP), but rather than they should be used to support interpretation of EBSA information and boundaries.

### **Considerations regarding scale**

- In discussions regarding the significantly varying scale of different EBSAs, it was noted that EBSAs described at different scales could have different levels of accuracy and precision, with broad ocean-basin EBSAs potentially being less accurate and precise than smaller-scale EBSAs. This outlines the importance for EBSA descriptions to clearly indicate the origin and rationale of the boundaries.
- There was discussion regarding the potential categorization of EBSAs by scale in the EBSA repository. However, it was also noted that practical considerations and resources limit the ability of the Secretariat to institute and maintain many layers of groupings and that the focus of the EBSAs should be on the EBSA criteria rather than other metrics.

### Credibility and robustness of EBSAs

- Participants discussed potential ways to indicate robustness, such as the number of citations, quality of citations, how they were mapped (e.g., isobaths boundary or arbitrary "artistic" interpretation). However, it was noted that it could be difficult to undertake such a review and would also be subject to differing interpretations regarding the robustness of certain data sources.
- Some highlighted the potential for different means of peer-review, such as review workshops to revisit/re-evaluate the results of previous EBSA workshops, or inviting experts to update thematic reviews (i.e., taxa or habitat types).
- It was stressed that updating EBSAs with new information is a key means to ensure their credibility and robustness.
- Participants noted that the elements of annex II of COP decision IX/20 (Scientific Guidance for Selecting Areas to Establish a Representative Network of Marine Protected Areas, Including in Open Ocean Waters and Deep-Sea Habitats) can provide useful guidance, in particular with regard to representativeness.

- Participants were reminded that the IAG was tasked with providing scientific and technical advice regarding the need for additional workshops at the appropriate scale, based on the analysis of new information and a representativeness analysis with regard to the geographic coverage beyond national jurisdiction as well as coverage of ecological and biological features of existing areas meeting the EBSA criteria in areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- It was noted that there has been limited coverage in certain regions because experts from some countries were not present, and that further collaboration and efforts are needed to address this gap.

### SCOPE, APPROACHES AND STEPS FOR IMPROVING THE FUNCTIONALITY OF THE EBSA REPOSITORY AND THE INFORMATION-SHARING MECHANISM

### Comments on current website and considerations for improved website design

- It was noted that the EBSA website is an important tool for sharing information on EBSAs, but that the current interface is not user friendly and needs improvement. Users often refer back to workshop reports for EBSA information, as it can be difficult to navigate the website.
- The website should have a more strategic design for the different types of users accessing it (e.g., IPLCs). However, it was recognized that it is not possible to have a website that will be convenient for everyone. It was suggested that several websites that target different audiences would be a better option. On the front page of the website, users could choose the direction to go based on the type of information they are looking for. However, it was stressed that the resource requirements for this could be significant.
- Participants noted that it would be practical to be able to filter EBSAs based on their ecological features. Information from current EBSA descriptions could be useful for filtering criteria; this would include TK. Furthermore, it would be helpful to be able to select multiple features (e.g., ecological feature, geographic region), which would allow for cross-referencing. Also, it would be useful to include statistics, such as what information (e.g., taxa, ecological features) is available by country or region, as this could be used for policymakers and decision makers. The raw data may not be as useful. While the EBSA classifications described above by Pat Halpin (Duke University) are useful, they have not been considered by SBSTTA and COP and, therefore, it would not be advised to include these classifications in the filters.
- Information from the gap analysis (discussed in the previous agenda sub-item) should be provided on the website.

### Language/translation

- It was mentioned that, during previous workshops in certain regions, the website was not useful for the large majority of participants because most of the materials are only available in English.
- It is important for experts to have access to the website and its materials, and it was recommended that training information and all EBSA descriptions be made available in all languages. Many of the EBSA descriptions are available in the language of the region (or of the original submitter of the description) in which they were originally identified, and that is how they are posted on the website.
- Translations of the descriptions of individual areas are not available, but the abstracts of each description are indeed available in all official languages of the United Nations, as they are submitted to COP. It was suggested that these abstracts be made available on the website in all United Nations official languages. Training materials should be translated as well, subject to the availability of financial resources.

### Copyright considerations/disclaimers

- The current website provides a link to the shapefiles for individual EBSAs. There is a need to consider how and where it is appropriate to make the underlying data layers available; the possibility of using a data request form was discussed.
- The Secretariat has had requests for shapefiles of multiple EBSAs, and they have discussed enabling the download of all EBSAs from one regional workshop; however, there is a need to obtain better legal advice about the disclaimers that should be displayed on the website.
- It was noted that the information could be copyrighted and that the type of licence being used should be indicated for anyone who wants to reuse information downloaded from the website.

- Furthermore, it should be indicated that there is to be no modification and no derivatives of these products, and that textual information or new data cannot be added to the EBSAs. The use of Creative Commons licences, which would indicate user capabilities, should be considered.
- Another suggestion was to have Digital Object Identifier numbers on each of the EBSA descriptions and shapefiles. As there is no clear resolution on what the legal options are, the Secretariat stated that it would consult the legal advisor.

### Suggested changes/additions to website

- The following are specific suggestions for content additions to the website:
  - Case studies could be provided where TK has been used (e.g., Canadian Arctic case). The website could also indicate how and where different sectors fit into the EBSA process. Training materials should be organized based on user needs.
  - Training information should be added to the website and should provide access to any training materials developed by the Secretariat, including TK inputs.
  - It was recommended that the workshop posters should be made available on the website. Countries should be able to download and print high-resolution copies.
  - Currently the website does not highlight features using visual media (e.g., graphs, photographs, videos). It was recommended to add these components and have a more dynamic website with less text.
  - The map display could include management areas of organizations (e.g., RFMOs). EBSA boundaries could then be viewed in this context.
  - The website could have a page that indicates the latest news about programme development. Short summaries could be provided.
- The group was reminded that the Secretariat has to respect guidance from COP. The website should be user-friendly but can only include information that was formally approved by COP. For example, information in the EBSA booklets could be accessed on the website; however, these booklets were not approved at COP and therefore could not be included in the repository.
- The following are specific suggestions for modifications to the website functionality:
  - The website should showcase specific cases of where TK was used to describe EBSAs.
  - As it stands, there is much frustration when using the global scale map and trying to find individual, especially smaller, EBSAs. Without the use of cookies, the user has to go back to global map every time, which is not a user-friendly approach. The JAMSTEC website was suggested as an example of a site that has several features, and this template should be reviewed for better user capabilities. It was recognized that there is often a trade-off between cost and functionality.
  - The Secretariat suggested that the filter function that was presented earlier would be one way to address the issue of finding smaller EBSAs. When the user clicks certain filters, a list of areas would show up in addition to areas on the map. The intent is to better link to individual sources that are listed in the references in the descriptions; however, it was acknowledged that this requires a great deal of work and is subject to IT staff priorities.
  - It was suggested that the ability to link directly to an EBSA polygon or provide embedding capabilities for individual EBSAs or other features could be useful.

### **Considerations for changes to EBSAs**

- If the information that is used to describe an EBSA changes, there needs to be strict protocol about how these changes might be handled in the repository. This could be difficult to manage if the Secretariat is faced with multiple changes, and this may result in times when EBSAs are semi-approved or waiting for approval. Furthermore, the significance of the change has to be taken into consideration. For example, a boundary change or new information for the description could be contested, which could require additional review.
- The issue of modifying EBSA boundaries was discussed as there are examples of EBSAs where the polygons are not correct. As this is an issue subject to ongoing discussion by COP, along with the role this group will play in these matters, this issue was not discussed any further.

### Archiving of workshop data/information

- It is also important to gain access to and preserve information that went into previous workshops, as most of it is still on computers belonging to the technical teams and has not yet been archived. There were many proposed EBSAs that were described but were not approved by the workshops and therefore did not make it into the final reports.
- It would be useful to archive this information so that these areas can be revisited in the future. An internal repository (see below) would be useful for all of these reasons. The aesthetics of the site are less of a concern than the actual public EBSA repository, but it could contain valuable information that should be archived. Of course, if this is possible, revision issues would have to be considered. As the final mapping has been done by Duke University in the past, minor changes, such as technical changes of boundaries (e.g. fixing slivers, etc.), were always indicated by version control.

### User capabilities

• When asked if users/delegations will have the capacity to load documents on to the website, the Secretariat indicated that this will not be possible for EBSA descriptions as this is the role of the CBD secretariat once they are approved by COP.

### **Repository and information-sharing mechanism**

- There was a brief discussion on the difference between the repository and the information sharing mechanism (e.g., what should be contained in each). However, as this issue is subject to ongoing discussions under COP, it was not further discussed.
- However, other options were discussed for inclusion in the information sharing mechanism. Linkages with Sustainable Development Goals, information on critical habitats, and other studies or papers on how EBSA information was used for management purposes were discussed. It was suggested that the IAG could play a role in determining which information to include; however, because the CBD Secretariat currently decides what information is placed on the website, the exact nature of the IAG's role (i.e. decision-making processes) would require further clarification.
- The Secretariat reminded the IAG that its role is to advise the Secretariat on how to make the website more useful and user-friendly, but the repository houses information considered by SBSTTA and COP. Therefore, there are many caveats and sensitivities to consider.

### IAG processes and requirements

• It was proposed that the IAG could have a separate section of the website which would need to be password-protected. The number of proposals for changes to EBSAs could be used by the IAG to determine if a workshop is necessary. However, this information does not need to be available to the public. In general, it was agreed that the IAG needs to further discuss modalities for identifying where new workshops may need to be held, based on further relevant information, including the gap analysis.

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- In Canada, during some national exercises, scientists described key features that were used to identify and delineate EBSA boundaries. Maps of these features were also included in the reports resulting from the peer review process. Others features that occur within the EBSA boundaries are still described, but they are not mapped and included in reports because of the large volume of spatially referenced layers. If the IAG will be required to review submissions of new or modified EBSAs, it was suggested that it would be useful for the IAG to have access to the data layers that were used to identify and describe EBSAs. This would allow a full transparent review of these layers. This is another potential function of an internal website only accessible by the IAG. If it is too difficult to set up an interactive password protected part of the website for the IAG, other means should be investigated, such as a Facebook group, Googlechat, etc.
- The facilitator proposed to task a subgroup that could discuss the availability of data that is considered as part of EBSA descriptions, and whether this information could be made available to the IAG via an internal website. The subgroup consists of Piers Dunstan, Pat Halpin, Nadine Wells, and Yoshihisa Shirayama. Piers Dunstan will follow up with this group and facilitate a remote meeting in the near future.
- It was recommended that additional information such as EEZ boundaries be included in the mapping function. However, some boundaries could be difficult to include on the public website due to the lack of an agreed upon set of shapefiles, in particular in areas where there are boundary disputes. It was therefore recommended that these types of data layers be included in the internal data portal, which could be discussed by the subgroup.

### **Resourcing issues**

- The Secretariat should consider that website maintenance could be a full-time job.
- The Secretariat suggested that there is a lot of potential for the process of updating the website. It can be used to link the information with stakeholders. However, as there are no full-time resources available to update and maintain the website, they sometimes rely on consultants and often compete for internal IT related resources. Suggestions on how to improve these internal resource issues, as well as suggestions for how to better establish links with partnering institutions and delegates were welcomed.
- It was suggested that the IAG help draft TOR for a consultant or an intern to indicate what capabilities would be required for the website. This TOR could include a prioritized "wish list". This resource does not necessarily have to be with the Secretariat; this person could work with the lab at Duke University or with CSIRO. Another option is to have graduate students perform the tasks.