

## Briefing note on Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)

CBD COP Decision 14/8 defined “**Other effective area-based conservation measure**” as “*a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area<sup>1</sup>, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values*”. CBD COP Decision 14/8 also outlined scientific and technical advice on other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), including criteria for the identification of OECMs (see Table 1 and Figure 1, below), noting that they “should be applied in a flexible way and on a case-by-case basis”, and urged parties to facilitate mainstreaming of OECMs into key sectors, such as fisheries.

CBD COP Decision 14/8 refers to “**area-based fisheries management measures**” (ABFMs) as one of the main types of area-based conservation measures (ABCMs) in marine and coastal areas, defining them as “*formally established, spatially defined fishery management and/or conservation measures, implemented to achieve one or more intended fishery outcomes. The outcomes of these measures are commonly related to sustainable use of the fishery. However, they can also often include protection of, or reduction of impact on, biodiversity, habitats, or ecosystem structure and function*”. It also notes that ABCMs in the marine environment, are, in many instances, coupled with an expectation of resource-based “outcomes”, such as the improvement of fishery resources and restoration of productivity.

OECMs provide an opportunity to recognise and account for biodiversity outcomes of area-based measures that are not recognised as protected areas and an incentive to shift practices that are not presently biologically sustainable to those that yield long-term conservation benefits. Many different types of ABFMs have the potential to meet the OECM criteria and thus contribute to the achievement of global biodiversity objectives, including a new set of targets and goals being negotiated under the CBD.

The post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF), which will be submitted for adoption at CBD COP 15, is the ambitious successor to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. While discussions are still ongoing, Target 3 of the GBF, the successor to Aichi Target 11<sup>1</sup>, will likely call for 30% of land and sea areas to be under some form of protection by 2030 – the ‘30 by 30’ or ‘30x30’ target: “*Ensure that at least 30 per cent globally of land areas and of sea areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and its contributions to people, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes*”. The evolution of Aichi Target 11 into GBF Target 3 has been carefully considered by negotiating parties, and while discussions about GBF Target 3 revolve around many aspects, the explicit inclusion of “*other effective area-based conservation measures*” in the wording of this target is widely supported, thus highlighting the importance not only of protected areas but also of OECMs to the success of the GBF, notably in the marine environment.

In 2018, the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organisations (RSOs) and Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) on accelerating progress toward the Aichi

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<sup>1</sup> The genesis of this target relates to language agreed for Aichi Biodiversity Target 11, which reads as follows “By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.”

Biodiversity Targets and Sustainable Development Goals identified four priority areas for cooperation between both types of regional organisations (SOI, 2018)<sup>2</sup>:

- *Enhancing the application of the ecosystem approach/ecosystem-based management;*
- *Preventing, reducing and mitigating the impacts of pollution;*
- *Strengthening monitoring and data/information sharing;*
- *Strengthening the effectiveness of area-based management tools (ABMTs).*

Vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) are one type of ABMT and have potential to be considered OECMs provided they are able to produce effective conservation outcomes. OECMs present an important opportunity for RFBs to mainstream and promote their role in biodiversity conservation and for collaboration across regional organisations, notably for the achievement of the 30x30 target, which will, i.a., require consideration of ABNJ. As noted by Claudet et al. (2022)<sup>3</sup>, “*OECMs can promote the integration of meaningful conservation actions into sectors not typically associated with the protection of biodiversity, such as fisheries*” and, *by their ability to support management that is aligned with local social-ecological contexts, they can also “foster equity and inclusion of diverse values, knowledge systems and ways of achieving conservation”.*

### **Specific issues that RSOs and RFBs should think about**

1. How well do key stakeholders understand the OECM concept and its relevance to multiple multilateral commitments (i.e., SDG 14, GBF, BBNJ)? Can regional organisations help to get everybody on the same page?
2. Do potential OECMs in your region confer *in situ* conservation benefits? Can you highlight specific examples of measures that are likely to qualify as OECMs?
3. What are the biggest challenges to the identification and adoption of OECMs in your region? (Please refer to Table 1 and Figure 1)
4. How can regional organisations facilitate cross-sectoral dialogue towards a common target?

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<sup>2</sup> SOI (2018). Seoul Outcome +2: The 2nd meeting of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies on accelerating progress towards the Aichi biodiversity targets and Sustainable Development Goals.

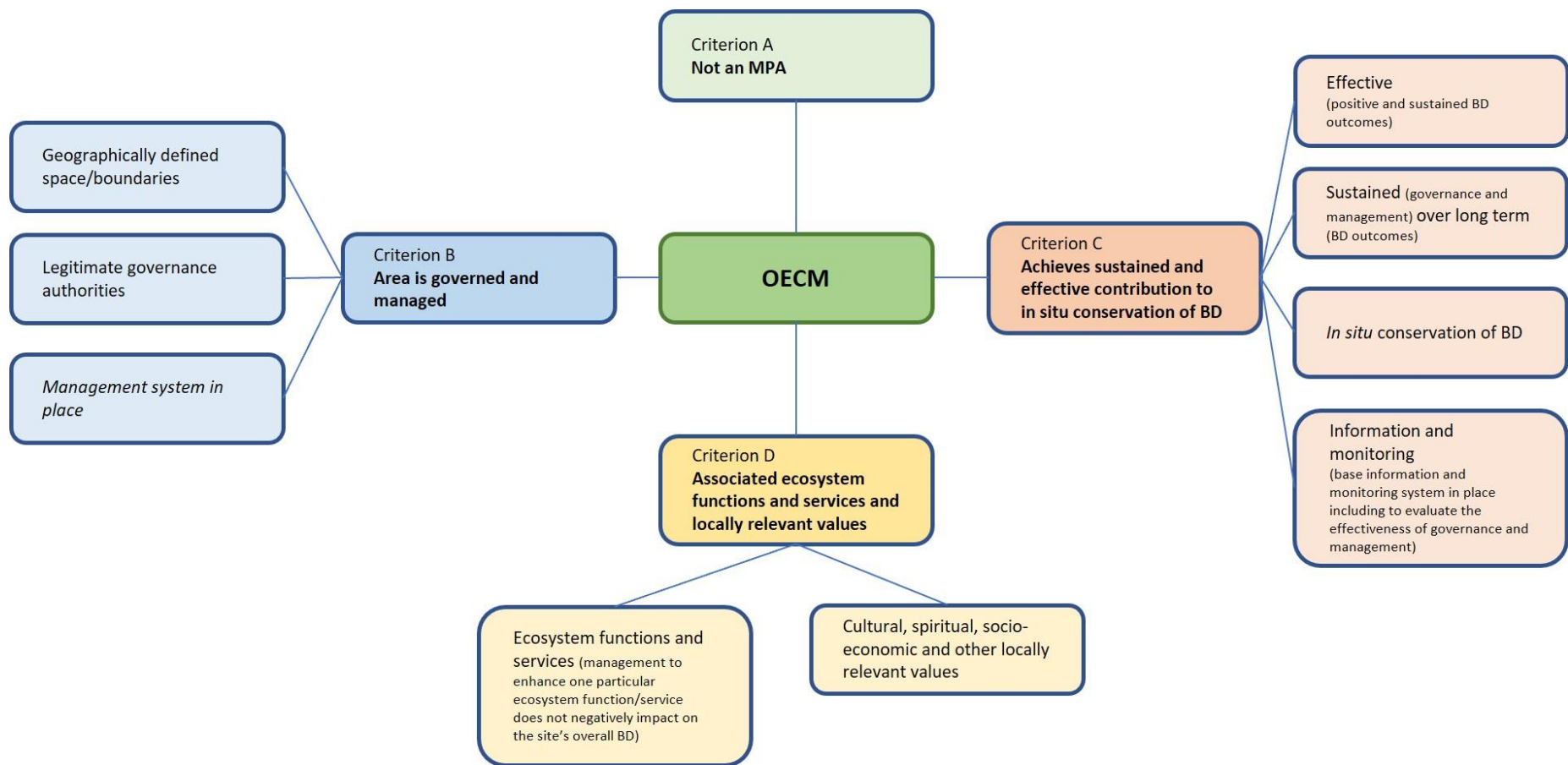
<sup>3</sup> Claudet et al. (2022). Avoiding the misuse of other effective area-based conservation measures in the wake of the blue economy. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2022.08.010>.

**Guiding principles and common characteristics of OECMs** (abridged from CBD/COP/DEC14/8):

- Have a significant biodiversity value, or have objectives to achieve it (basis for achieving the GBF);
- Have an important role in conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services:
  - complementary to protected areas
  - contributing to the coherence and connectivity of protected area networks
  - mainstreaming biodiversity into other uses in land and sea, and across sectors
- Opportunity to provide in situ-conservation of biodiversity over the long-term in marine ecosystems;
- Deliver biodiversity outcomes of comparable importance to and complementary to those of PAs:
  - contribution to representativeness
  - coverage of areas important for biodiversity and associated ecosystem functions and services
  - connectivity and integration in wider landscapes and seascapes
  - management effectiveness and equity requirements
- Potential to demonstrate positive biodiversity outcomes, with relevant scientific and technical information and knowledge, by:
  - successfully conserving in situ species, habitat and ecosystems and associated ecosystem functions and services
  - preventing, reducing or eliminating existing or potential threats, and increasing resilience
- Management is consistent with the ecosystem approach and the precautionary approach and adaptive;
- Can help deliver greater representativeness and connectivity in PA systems, and thus address larger and pervasive threats and enhance resilience, including in regard to CC;
- Recognise, promote and make visible the roles of different governance systems and actors in biodiversity conservation

**Table 1.** Criteria for the identification of OECMs (from CBD/COP/DEC/14/8, abridged).

Criterion	Sub-criterion/Indicator (Abridged)
<b>A: Area is not currently recognized as a protected area (PA)</b>	
Not a PA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not currently recognized or reported as a PA or part of a PA; may have been established for another function</li> </ul>
<b>B: Area is governed and managed</b>	
Geographically defined space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Size and area are described, including in 3D where necessary</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boundaries are geographically delineated</li> </ul>
Legitimate governance authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance has legitimate authority &amp; is appropriate for achieving <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity (BD) within the area</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance by IPLC is self-identified in accordance with national legislation and applicable international obligations</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance reflects the equity considerations adopted in the Convention</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance may be a single authority and/or organization or through collaboration among relevant authorities and provides the ability to address threats collectively</li> </ul>
Managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management achieves positive and sustained outcomes for BD conservation</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevant authorities and stakeholders identified and involved in management</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management system in place contributes to sustaining the <i>in situ</i> BD conservation</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management is consistent with the Ecosystem Approach with the ability to adapt to achieve expected BD conservation outcomes, including long-term outcomes, and the ability to manage a new threat</li> </ul>
<b>C: Achieves sustained and effective contribution to <i>in situ</i> conservation of BD</b>	
Effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The area achieves/ is expected to achieve, positive and sustained outcomes for the <i>in situ</i> conservation of BD</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Threats, existing or reasonably anticipated, addressed effectively by preventing, significantly reducing or eliminating them, and by restoring degraded ecosystems</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanisms, such as policy frameworks and regulations, in place to recognize and respond to new threats</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To the extent possible, management inside and outside the OECM is integrated</li> </ul>
Sustained over long-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OECMs are in place for the long-term or are likely to be</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Sustained" (continuity of governance and management) and "long-term" pertains to BD outcome</li> </ul>
<i>In situ</i> conservation of BD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>include identification of range of BD attributes for which site is considered important</li> </ul>
Information and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification of OECMs should document known BD attributes, and, where relevant, cultural and/or spiritual values, of the area and the governance and management in place as a baseline for assessing effectiveness</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A monitoring system informs management on the effectiveness of measures with respect to BD, including the health of ecosystems</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Processes should be in place to evaluate the effectiveness of governance and management, including with respect to equity</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General data of the area such as boundaries, aim and governance are available</li> </ul>
<b>D: Associated EFS and cultural, spiritual, socio-economic and other locally relevant values</b>	
Ecosystem functions and services (EFS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EFS are supported, including those of importance to IPLCs, for OECMs concerning their territories, taking into account interactions and trade-offs among ecosystem functions and services, with a view to ensuring positive BD outcomes and equity</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management to enhance one particular EFS does not impact negatively on the site's overall BD</li> </ul>
Cultural, spiritual, socio-economic and other locally relevant values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance and management measures identify, respect and uphold cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values of the area</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance and management measures respect and uphold the knowledge, practices and institutions that are fundamental for the <i>in situ</i> conservation of BD</li> </ul>



**Figure 1.** Schematic/simplified representation of the criteria for the identification of OECMs (from CBD/COP/DEC/14/8, abridged).