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MARINE AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY

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

Note by the Executive Secretary

Addendum

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);¹
- (b) Baltic Sea (Helsinki, 19 to 24 February 2018).²

2. 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.

3. 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.

* Reissued for technical reasons on 22 June 2018.

** [CBD/SBSTTA/22/1/Add.1](#).

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

² Report contained in CBD/EBSA/WS/2018/1/4.

4. 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.³

Key to the tables

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

³ [United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1833, No. 31363.](#)

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

(Details are provided in the 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 Ramsar sites, 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 of 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 western Black Sea coastal waters (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 	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						
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 only national marine and coastal reserve, "Kaliakra".							
<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 28.0019777E 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 are 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 fresh water inflow and the sediments carried by the Danube River, creating a mixture of sedimentary habitats 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>), yellow 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>), Caspian shad (<i>Alosa tanaica</i>) (Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Management Plan, 2015). 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 Ramsar site 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 of the north-western part of the Black Sea. 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. 	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						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zernov's Phyllophora Field (ZPF) is located in the northwestern part of the Black Sea at a depth from 25 to 50 metres. It is a unique natural phenomenon – a concentration of seaweed with a dominant species of red algae (Phyllophoraceae). ZPF is an important habitat for many species of invertebrates and fish. The main cluster of macrophytes is the paleobed of Dnieper River, located between the two branches of the Black Sea circular current. The dominant sediments are shell limestone, silted shell limestone, shelly silt. The state of the ZPF ecosystem is an indicator of the state of the whole northwestern part of the Black Sea ecosystem. 							
<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 north-western 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. Phyllophora fields in the north-western Black Sea have associated with them specialised faunal communities, including more than 110 species of invertebrates and 47 species of fish. 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. The area is located 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 cetacean 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. Yagorlytsky Bay, owing to the peculiarities of the hydrological, hydrochemical and hydrobiological regimes, is a unique area of the north-western part of the Black Sea. The marine-terrestrial complex of 	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>Yagorlytsky Bay is characterized by a rich variety of plant and animal life, high endemism, geomorphological and landscape uniqueness and has one of the highest environmental statuses of international importance. The marine area of Yagorlytsky Bay is a 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 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 the reproduction and feeding of the main commercial fish species, and shallow waters are refugia for many nesting and wintering waterbirds.</p>							
<p>9. Kuban Delta</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The area is located at 45°30'N, 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 is an important international wetland, designated as a Ramsar site. 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 bay of the lagoon type situated between the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea, lying to the north of the Taman peninsula. 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 spits Chushka and Tuzla. The whole 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 	H	H	M	M	H	L	L

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
	For key to criteria, see page 2						
<p>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 truncatus ponticus</i>).</p>							
<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 designated 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 (Temes) 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 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. 	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>12. Kolkheti Marine Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The area extends 502 km² between 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; 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; 41.5266607 and 41.5485533. • The area covers sea rocks and stony coast. It is the largest rocky habitat on the Georgian coast. The field of marine algae <i>Cystoseira barbata</i> and <i>Ceramium rubrum</i> located there provide 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, the area overlaps with a marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Area; this IBA is of regional importance 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 	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						
several rivers enter the Black Sea.							
<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 marine pelagic and demersal fish species. It is an important fish breeding, reproduction and feeding area for 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. Biological diversity of this part of the Black Sea is considerably high, 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 (IBA) of regional importance 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 (e.g., red mullet <i>Mullus barbatus</i>, grey mullet <i>Mugil</i> species) 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 (IBA) 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 area 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. Here in the spring period, pre-spawn concentrations of all numerous fish species are concentrated, which then rush to spawn upstream of the Ural River in spawning grounds located in its lower and middle reaches, and 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>, Gmelin, 1788), 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 few months of 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

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
For key to criteria, see page 2							
<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
<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, 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

Location and brief description of areas	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
For key to criteria, see page 2							
<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. Its coordinates are: centroid 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, which is the site of mass winterings and migrations of waterbirds, has been part of Krasnovodsk (now known as Hazar) State Nature Reserve. Hazar State Nature Reserve is the main part of Turkmenbashi Gulf. It is a Ramsar Site and an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA, BirdLife International). 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 sandy strip, 2 km wide, 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 from 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 located in the south-eastern corner of the Caspian Sea in the marine and coastal areas. • 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% 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 1.0 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 up to 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, as it is associated with the Kura River. 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 and 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 fishes 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 northwest 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, gray 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 that are located 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 Zhemchzhnyi (“Small Pearl”) Island</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: This region is located in the central part of the northern Caspian, 25 km to the southeast of the island of Chistaya Banka. • Malyi Zhemchzhnyi 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 within the borders. 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, gray 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 nudiventris</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 total coverage of the area is 8963 km², and its sea area is 8297 km². • 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>Haliocoerus 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, and its sea area is 9,638 km². 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 a 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 archipelago encompasses approximately 10,000 islands and skerries. 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, 	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>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.</p>							
<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 total coverage of the area is 18,524 km². • 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 stretches from Åland Sea, across the Åland Islands and the Archipelago Sea to Hanko Peninsula in southwestern Finland. It 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 has the second-deepest trench in the Baltic Sea, 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>). Harbor 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. The total coverage of the area is 13,411 km². • The area is a relatively shallow (maximum depth 80 m) archipelago and open sea area in the eastern Gulf of Finland, northeastern Baltic Sea. It is 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 	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>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.</p>							
<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 designated as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA). 	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 	H	H	M	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>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>).</p>							
<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. • 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. 	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							
<p>8. Fehmarn Belt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The area covers 1652 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 and Stora 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 and Stora 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 of international importance for seabirds, and moreover, high densities of harbor 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