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AD HOC OPEN-ENDED WORKING  
GROUP ON PROTECTED AREAS  
Second meeting  
FAO, Rome, 11-15 February 2008  
Item 3.1.3 of the provisional agenda\*

### **PROGRESS REPORT ON REFINEMENT AND CONSOLIDATION OF SCIENTIFIC AND ECOLOGICAL CRITERIA FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF MARINE AREAS IN NEED OF PROTECTION AND ON COMPILATION OF BIOGEOGRAPHICAL AND OTHER ECOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS**

*Note by the Executive Secretary*

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The provisional agenda for this meeting, contained in annex I to decision VIII/24 of the Conference of the Parties and released again as document UNEP/CBD/WG-PA/2/1, includes under item 3.1.3 a progress report on refinement and consolidation of scientific criteria for the identification of marine areas in need of protection and on compilation of biogeographical and other ecological classification systems. Accordingly, the present note has been prepared to update the Working Group on progress made.

#### **II. PROGRESS REPORT**

##### **A. *Compilation of existing ecological criteria for identification of potential marine areas for protection and biogeographical classification systems***

2. In paragraph 2 of its recommendation 1/1 (UNEP/CBD/WG-PA/1/6, annex), the Working Group on Protected Areas invited the Executive Secretary to compile a list of existing ecological criteria for identification of potential marine areas for protection and biogeographical classification systems based on submissions received from the Parties, other Governments and organizations, and requested the Executive Secretary to synthesize the information received for reference by the Parties. Pursuant to this request, the synthesis (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/INF/16) was prepared and submitted to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its eighth meeting.

3. Among the submissions received, the most often used ecological criteria included: (i) representativeness; (ii) importance for threatened, endangered, declining, rare or endemic species and/or habitats; (iii) high diversity; (iv) uniqueness/rarity/endemism; (v) importance for life history

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\* UNEP/CBD/WG-PA/2/1.

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stages of species or for migratory species; and (vi) naturalness. Other criteria included integrity of the area in surrounding landscape/seascape, connectivity/coherence, biogeographical importance, high biological productivity, vulnerability/fragility/sensitivity, international or national importance, size, comprehensiveness, resilience and dependency.

***B. Scientific Experts' Workshop on Criteria for Identifying Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, held from 6 to 8 December 2006 in Ottawa***

4. In response to the offer made by Canada at the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Protected Areas, the Scientific Experts' Workshop on Criteria for Identifying Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction was organized from 6 to 8 December 2006 in Ottawa. The results of the workshop were circulated for the information of participants in the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/INF/39).

5. The workshop identified the following criteria for ecological or biological significance: (i) uniqueness or rarity; (ii) critical life-history functions/habitats; (iii) vulnerability; (iv) productivity; (v) biological diversity; and (vi) naturalness. This list is similar to that constructed in the note by the Executive Secretary's summary of existing ecological criteria for identification of potential marine areas for protection and biogeographical classification systems (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/INF/16) circulated at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (see paragraph 3 above). However, the expert group treated the criteria of representativity separately, which can be used either as a stand-alone criterion or in conjunction with the ecological or biological criteria identified above.

***C. Compilation of biogeographical and other ecological classification systems***

6. In response to the request to the Executive Secretary by the Working Group at its first meeting for a list of existing biogeographical classification systems (see paragraph 2 above), a report on "Global Coastal and Marine Biogeographic Regionalization as a Support Tool for Implementation of Programmes of Work under the Convention on Biological Diversity" was submitted to the Conference of the Parties at its eighth meeting as an information document (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/INF/34). The report described a new global system for coastal and shelf areas: the Marine Ecoregions of the World (MEOW), a nested system for 12 realms, 62 provinces and 232 ecoregions. The updated version of the report, which was published in *Bioscience* (Vol. 57, no.7, pp. 573-583), was provided as a background document for the Expert Workshop on Ecological Criteria and Biogeographic Classification Systems for Marine Areas in Need of Protection, held from 2 to 4 October 2007 in the Azores, Portugal (see section D below).

7. With regard to the bioregionalization of ocean regions beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, the Scientific Experts' Workshop on Biogeographic Classification Systems in Open Ocean and Deep Seabed Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction was organized from 22 to 24 January 2007 at the National University of Mexico, Mexico City, as a joint expert effort under the co-sponsorship of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), The World Conservation Union (IUCN), Australia, Canada, Mexico and the J.M. Kaplan Fund. The Workshop developed the Global Open Oceans and Deep Sea-habitats bioregionalisation (GOODS regionalization), and is currently finalizing the report.

***D. Expert Workshop on Ecological Criteria and Biogeographic Classification Systems for Marine Areas in Need of Protection, held from 2 to 4 October 2007 in the Azores, Portugal***

8. Pursuant to paragraph 46 of decision VIII/24, the Executive Secretary, with the generous financial support of the Government of Portugal, organized an Expert Workshop on Ecological Criteria

and Biogeographic Classification Systems for Marine Areas in Need of Protection from 2 to 4 October 2007 in the Azores, Portugal, with the following terms of reference:

(a) Refine and develop a consolidated set of scientific criteria for identifying ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in need of protection, in open ocean waters and deep sea habitats, building upon existing sets of criteria used nationally, regionally and globally;

(b) Compile biogeographical and ecological classification systems for delineating ocean regions and ecosystems, building on existing broad classification systems, and including more detailed subregional classification systems where they exist in a nested approach, and initiate future development by making recommendations for further work to fill gaps; and

(c) Compile a consolidated set of scientific criteria for representative networks of marine protected areas, including in open ocean waters and deep sea habitats.

9. Details of the workshop results are provided in the workshop report (UNEP/CBD/EWS.MPA/1/2) and summarized in a note by the Executive Secretary (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/13/4) prepared for the thirteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.

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