



Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity,

on the occasion of

***United Nations Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to
Study Issues Relating to the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological
Diversity Beyond Areas of National Jurisdiction
(20 - 23 January 2015, UNHQ, New York)***

Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, I am pleased to have this opportunity to update the Working Group on the outcomes of the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, as they relate to the issues under consideration by the Working Group.

At its twelfth meeting, which was held in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea from 6 to 17 October 2014, the Conference of the Parties to the CBD addressed a number of issues related to marine and coastal biodiversity. I will focus here on the description of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) and addressing threats to marine biodiversity such as ocean acidification and underwater noise, and provide updates on the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization.

Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas

As noted by the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, the application of the EBSA criteria is a scientific and technical exercise, while the identification of EBSAs and the selection of conservation and management measures are matters for States and competent intergovernmental organizations, in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Since 2011, the CBD Secretariat has convened nine regional workshops to facilitate the description of areas meeting the EBSA criteria, pursuant to CBD decisions X/29 and XI/17. These workshops covered nearly 70% of world ocean areas, including marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, and involved about 122 countries and 113 organizations, with some attending more than one workshop. The Secretariat will convene additional regional workshops for the North-East Indian Ocean region in March 2015, in Sri Lanka, and the North-West Indian Ocean and Adjacent Gulf Areas in April 2015, in the United Arab Emirates.

At its twelfth meeting, COP welcomed the outputs of the seven regional EBSA workshops held since its eleventh meeting. Combined with the outputs of the two regional EBSA workshops that were considered by the COP at its eleventh meeting, a total of 204 areas have been described as meeting the EBSA criteria and requested by COP to be included in the CBD EBSA repository. Pursuant to a request by



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the COP, the summary reports on the outputs of the seven regional EBSA workshops considered by COP at its twelfth meeting will be soon submitted to the General Assembly and its relevant Working Groups, including this Working Group. The scientific information used in the description of these areas will be made available online through the EBSA website and repository.

Threats to Marine Biodiversity

Pursuant to COP requests in decision XI/18, the Secretariat prepared, with the assistance of a team of international experts, CBD Technical Series No. 75, “An Updated Synthesis of the Impacts of Ocean Acidification on Marine Biodiversity”, building on a previous CBD synthesis on this issue. COP welcomed the updated synthesis, and invited Parties, other Governments, relevant organizations and indigenous and local communities to consider the information contained in the updated synthesis for their work under relevant processes.

COP also welcomed the report of the Expert Workshop on Underwater Noise and its Impacts on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity, which was convened by the Secretariat, from 25 to 27 February 2014. Referring to specific conclusions from the workshop, COP encouraged Parties and other Governments as well as indigenous and local communities and other relevant stakeholders, to take appropriate measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate the potential significant adverse impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise on marine and coastal biodiversity. COP also invited competent intergovernmental organizations to take measures within their mandates and to assist States in taking measures with regards to anthropogenic underwater noise.

Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing

The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization entered into force on 12 October 2014. The Protocol currently has 57 ratifications and more are expected in the coming months.

The entry into force of the Protocol allowed the first meeting of the Parties to the Protocol to be held concurrently with the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea from 13 to 17 October 2014. The Parties adopted a number of key decisions, including a decision that sets out a roadmap on Article 10 of the Protocol, which concerns a global multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism to address the sharing of benefits derived from the utilization of genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources that occur in transboundary situations or for which it is not possible to grant or obtain prior informed consent. The roadmap includes the convening of an expert meeting, tentatively planned for fall 2015, to examine the issue further.

With the entry into force of the Protocol, the Secretariat also launched a fully functional Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House, which will contribute to achieving legal certainty, clarity and transparency in access and benefit-sharing arrangements.

Finally, let me assure you that the CBD Secretariat is ready to work closely with States and relevant organizations to ensure that the best available scientific information on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction can be provided for consideration during your deliberations.

Thank you for your attention.