



Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

on the occasion of

21st Session of the International Seabed Authority
(13 to 24 July 2015, Kingston, Jamaica)

Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss the CBD's relevant scientific and technical work on marine and coastal biodiversity, including the description of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas and the facilitating the use of the CBD voluntary guidelines for the consideration of biodiversity in environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments in marine and coastal areas.

In 2008, the Conference of the Parties to the CBD adopted a set of scientific criteria to be used in identifying ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (also called EBSAs). At this meeting, the Conference of the Parties urged Parties, and invited other Governments and relevant organizations to apply, as appropriate, the EBSA criteria to identify ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in need of enhanced protection, with a view to assist the relevant processes within the UN General Assembly and the implementation of conservation and management measures by States and competent intergovernmental organizations.

The Conference of the Parties has noted that the application of the EBSA criteria is a scientific and technical exercise, and that the identification of EBSAs and the selection of conservation and management measures is a matter for States and competent intergovernmental organizations, in accordance with international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

With a view to supporting the efforts of States and competent organizations, in this regard, the CBD Secretariat has convened eleven regional workshops around the world to facilitate the description of EBSAs, with additional workshops planned for 2015 for the Black Sea and Caspian Sea and the Seas of East Asia. These workshops, which are organized in close collaboration with Parties and relevant regional and international organizations, have covered more than 70% of the oceans, and described more than 200 areas meeting the EBSA criteria. Further workshops may be organized for other regions where Parties request them.

The Conference of the Parties has, thus far, considered the results of the first nine regional EBSA workshops, and will consider the results of the workshops held since 2014 at its forthcoming thirteenth meeting in December 2016. The results of the regional EBSA workshops considered by the Conference of the Parties (including the scientific information used to describe the EBSAs) have been incorporated into the EBSA repository (accessible online through www.cbd.int/ebsa), and transmitted to the UN General



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Assembly and other relevant intergovernmental organizations, including the International Seabed Authority.

The EBSA process aims to enhance the scientific foundation for planning and management, and has facilitated information-sharing and networking of experts across disciplines at the regional scale, and expanded collaboration among various initiatives for marine conservation and sustainable use by providing a global and regional platform for scientific assessment of the ecological or biological significance of marine areas.

I would also like to note the relevance of the voluntary guidelines for the consideration of biodiversity in environmental impact assessments (EIAs) and strategic environmental assessments (SEAs) in marine and coastal areas. These guidelines, developed by a CBD global-level expert workshop in 2009, provide guidance on integrating biodiversity-related considerations into EIAs and SEAs. They focus on people-nature interactions and the role of stakeholders in identifying and valuing potential impacts on biodiversity, and specifically address the screening of biodiversity impacts at different levels (ecosystem, species and genetic) in each stage of the EIA and SEA processes in the context of both conservation and sustainable use. These voluntary guidelines are intended to be adaptable to facilitate their incorporation into various EIA and SEA frameworks at different scales and for a range of activities, as appropriate.

The scientific and technical work related to EBSAs and to guidance for biodiversity-inclusive EIAs/SEAs aims to enhance understanding of the ecological and biological values of marine and coastal areas, and support States and competent organizations in developing and implementing measures to effectively mitigate adverse impacts on these values and conserve and sustainably use their marine living resources.

In this regard, the CBD Secretariat is prepared to work closely with the International Seabed Authority and its Member States to provide the best available scientific information on marine and coastal biodiversity to support your current and future work.

Thank you for your attention.