

Wednesday, 22 March 2017

Subject: inputs to the concept papers on themes of the UN Ocean Conference partnership dialogues.

Dear Ms. Wang,

BirdLife International would like to thank for the opportunity to provide inputs to concept papers on themes which will compose the partnership dialogues during the upcoming UN Ocean Conference.

Please allow me to briefly introduce BirdLife International in order to contextualize the inputs here presented. BirdLife is the world's largest nature conservation partnership, comprising 122 national nature conservation organisations in 120 countries worldwide. Our unique structure and the solid scientific foundation to our conservation programmes help us to deliver high impact and long-term conservation that benefits both nature and people.

Since the late 1970s, the BirdLife Partnership has been working collectively to identify, document and protect all places on earth of greatest significance for biodiversity. As a result, over 15,000 Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) have been so far identified.

BirdLife, together with UNEP-WCMC and IUCN, is the metadata provider of the SDG Goal 14 Indicator 14.5.1: Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas.

The inputs below are related to the **Theme 2: Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems** and follows the suggested sections for the concept paper.

Status and Trends:

The SDG framework recognized the relevance of the Convention on Biological Diversity Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 to contribute to sustainable development and incorporated those pertinent associated Aichi Biodiversity Targets within its own set of targets. This is the case for SDG Target 14.5 to which countries commit to "By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information" and that reflects the aims of the CBD Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 on protected areas.

While setting a percentage of area to be under protection, as Target outlined above, is a positive move in safeguarding biodiversity, it is also fundamental that efforts are driven towards establishing protected areas in spaces of particular importance for biodiversity, such as the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs). Key Biodiversity Areas are 'sites that contribute to the global persistence of biodiversity', including vital habitat for threatened plant and animal species in marine, terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems. Until now, KBAs have been identified for birds by the BirdLife International Partnership, for Critically Endangered or Endangered species restricted to single sites through the Alliance for Zero Extinction, and for other mammals, reptiles, amphibians and plants through the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) hotspot profiling process.

The Protected Planet report (update of Dec 2016), shows that 12.7 % of the coastal and marine areas have been covered by protected areas in areas within national jurisdiction (including territorial waters and countries' Exclusive Economic Zone; 0-200 nautical miles), while 5.1% for the global ocean is protected. While figures indicates that overall the 10% target has been achieved within jurisdictional waters, there are some regions, such as Africa or Eastern Europe, where an area around 3% of marine surface is protected¹.

In respect to the location of protected areas, elements such as areas important for biodiversity and ecological representativeness should be observed, as protected areas should represent the full range of biodiversity. As for the last analysis BirdLife conducted on the SDG indicator to Target 14.5, only 21.13% of marine Key Biodiversity Areas are fully covered by protected areas, meaning that there are many areas of high biodiversity value that are currently neglected. Marine IBAs can, therefore, support countries in achieving the global target. If protecting all marine IBAs in the high seas, an area of 4.16% would be safeguarded, whereas 9.14% is the area in EEZs or 6.2% of the whole ocean.

On the other hand, analysis of the marine protected areas ecological representativeness shows that far below half of the ecoregions have 10% of protected area coverage (84 out of 232 ecoregions have at least 10 per cent protected area coverage; while 28 out of 62 marine provinces and 6 out of 12 marine realms have reached 10 per cent protected area coverage²).

¹ UNEP-WCMC and IUCN (2016). Protected Planet Report 2016. UNEP-WCMC and IUCN: Cambridge UK and Gland, Switzerland

² <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-13/information/cop-13-inf-17-en.pdf>

As for the coverage of protected areas for marine areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ), which constitute the majority of the world's oceans, progress is still inadequate, at just 0.25 per cent¹.

Challenges and Opportunities:

BirdLife International has been working collectively to identify, document and protect all places on earth of greatest significance for the conservation of the world's birds. As a result over 3,000 marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) have been identified to date. IBAs are identified using a standardised set of data-driven criteria and thresholds, ensuring that the approach can be used consistently worldwide. IBAs are the most significant subset of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and have been identified virtually in all countries worldwide.

KBAs are useful for setting national priorities for establishing or expanding protected areas and 'other effective area-based conservation measures' (such as community-managed areas), for identifying priorities for conservation interventions, and for informing the implementation of site-safeguard policies.

Accurate knowledge of the location of marine IBAs can be used to inform marine spatial planning through the designation of MPAs, and help identify areas where shipping, renewable energy, fisheries, and oil spills are likely to have the greatest impacts on biodiversity. For example, identifying the overlap between the major world fishing fleets and albatross distribution has played an important role in addressing the by-catch of albatrosses and contributing towards sustainable fishing practices.

Benefits of a network of sites: since biodiversity is not distributed evenly across the globe, the protection of a carefully chosen network of sites can represent a cost-effective and efficient approach to conservation because a relatively small network can support disproportionately large numbers of species. Effective protection of sites can address habitat loss and over-exploitation, two major causes of biodiversity loss.

Marine IBAs have also formed an important input to sites agreed to have met the Ecologically or Biologically Significant marine Areas (EBSAs) criteria. Over 50 IBAs have been used to inform the scientific basis for EBSAs agreed at the Convention on Biological Diversity-led workshops to describe EBSAs, while many others could be used as the EBSA process develops in these and other regions.

While the process for EBSAs description is a technical and scientific exercise, it can, and has, already been used by many coastal States to assist with processes aimed at securing sustainable outcomes of activities within their territorial seas, Exclusive Economic Zones and seabed of continental shelves in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) – the CBD EBSAs process takes into account the sovereign right of coastal States.

Existing partnerships:

The Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership was launched in September 2016, by eleven³ of the world's leading nature conservation organisations. The Key Biodiversity Area Partnership, which BirdLife is a founder organisation to, is mobilising expertise, experience and resources of the partner organisations to map, monitor and conserve the most important places for life on earth.

The KBA concept originates in the work of BirdLife International in developing the Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) concept and identifying thousands of IBAs worldwide over the past 40 years. KBAs are sites that contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity on land, in water or in the seas and include Alliance for Zero Extinction sites (AZEs), BirdLife Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs), IUCN Freshwater KBAs and KBAs identified through the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) hotspot profiling process. These sites are maintained in the World Database of Key Biodiversity Areas (WDKBA), which is managed by BirdLife International on behalf of the KBA Partnership.

The KBA Partners are engaging actively and constructively with public and private sector policy makers to promote conservation and the sustainable and equitable management of KBAs. Key policy priorities include: targeted expansion of protected area networks; support for community based conservation and private protected areas; guidance on business operations in KBAs; and, financial institution safeguards for critical habitats.

We thank you again for the opportunity to contribute.

Yours sincerely,



Carolina Hazin

Global Marine Policy Coordinator

³ BirdLife | BirdLife International, IUCN, Amphibian Survival Alliance, Conservation International, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, Global Environment Facility (GEF), Global Wildlife Conservation, NatureServe, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, World Wildlife Fund, Wildlife Conservation Society International, IUCN, WWF