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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

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OTHER EFFECTIVE AREA BASED CONSERVATION MEASURES

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The global decline of biodiversity has led to an increased desire to safeguard environmental processes and mitigate anthropogenic impacts. The intersection between sustainable use of natural resources and conservation of biodiversity is therefore crucial to achieving global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets. Biodiversity is essential to the food security, nutrition and livelihoods of millions of people around the world. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has a long and well-established history of working to eradicate hunger and achieve food security worldwide. The conservation of natural resources is included in FAO's Constitution. FAO's Members have supported a number of biodiversity-related commitments through decisions of FAO's technical committees, including Committee of Fisheries (COFI). In response, FAO published the Biodiversity Mainstreaming Strategy¹ and is in the process of finalizing an action plan.

2. Fisheries have an important role to play in conserving ocean biodiversity and contributing to human well-being. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes SDG14 which aims to reconcile the sustainable use of fisheries resources, social equity and economic development. The sustainability of natural resources becomes extremely important and involves a many actors working across different sectors given that the global population is growing and relying more and more on fisheries and aquaculture for food, nutrition and livelihood security. Within this context, improved actions and synergies at the global and regional levels are essential.

II. AREA-BASED MANAGEMENT IN BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

3. Area-based conservation of marine resources is a key focus of many conservation-focused strategies and actions. The Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) officially recognized the role of area-based management in biodiversity conservation through the adoption of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 (Aichi Target 11) in 2010. Aichi Target 11 specifically captured the role of area-based conservation in marine biodiversity and called for 17 percent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 percent of coastal and marine areas to be conserved under protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) by 2020². The UN General Assembly reinforced this in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda through the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 14.5, which includes a similar target of conservation of 10 percent of coastal and marine areas. On December 18, 2022, the Parties to the CBD, during the 15th Conference of Parties (COP) to the CBD, adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)³. The GBF has 23 action-oriented global targets for urgent action by 2030, including targets aiming to reduce threats to biodiversity. In particular, Target 3 expands the previous area-based conservation coverage goals agreed upon in Aichi Target 11, calling for ensuring and enabling by 2030 that at least 30 percent of terrestrial, inland water and coastal and marine areas are effectively conserved and managed through protected areas and OECMs.

4. Much attention is currently focused on the concept of OECMs, which allows for a variety of sustainable use sectors to contribute to meeting global biodiversity targets through their own area-based management initiatives, thus helping countries meet their area-based conservation commitments. A definition, criterion, and recommendations for OECMs were formally adopted at the 14th COP to the CBD in November 2018. This Decision (14/8)⁴ defines OECMs by the outcomes produced by the area: "a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values." Decision 14/8 (Annex III) provides 13 Guiding Principles that

¹ www.fao.org/3/ca7722en/ca7722en.pdf

² <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-10/cop-10-dec-02-en.pdf>

³ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/e6d3/cd1d/daf663719a03902a9b116c34/cop-15-l-25-en.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-08-en.pdf>

describe characteristics that OECMs should have, as well as four criteria and 10 sub-criteria that area-based management measures should meet to be considered OECMs.

III. OECMS IN THE GLOBAL CONSERVATION AGENDA

5. The OECM concept represents a new opportunity for States to recognize biodiversity conservation potential from a wider range of spatial management measures than ever before. Various international efforts have been pursued to define, operationalize, and provide guidance on OECMs across multiple sectors. Specifically, within the fisheries realm, many area-based fisheries management measures (ABFMs) already aim to meet sustainability goals and are well poised to meet the OECM criteria. Such measures are widely included in fisheries management plans and processes.⁵ OECM recognition provides States with an incentive to coordinate ABFM efforts across fisheries and other relevant sectors that take place within their exclusive economic zones with area-based management tools being used in other sectors. These formally established, spatially-defined fishery management measures can be integrated across competing sectors in order to reduce conflicts and help stakeholders in achieving a balance between the competing uses of the marine environment.

6. OECMs represent an important opportunity to facilitate the involvement of people acting in sustainable use sectors, as well as from many other communities, on biodiversity conservation. In particular, the OECM concept allows for a variety of sustainable use sectors to contribute to meeting global biodiversity targets through their own area-based management initiatives. This can result in three significant steps forward in achieving biodiversity conservation: 1) mainstreaming biodiversity conservation objectives in the management of natural resource use; 2) ensuring that the objectives of sustainable use sectors are included in biodiversity conservation discussions and decisions; and 3) improving cross-sectoral dialogue and coordination by having to coordinate across sustainable use/natural resources sectors and environment agencies, as well as any other sector involved (e.g., public transports, forestry, energy, planning). Recognizing OECMs also makes conservation a multi-sectoral effort and explicitly acknowledges the needs of people (e.g., food security, income generation, livelihoods, cultural values).

7. Although an official definition and criteria for OECMs have existed since 2018⁶, many countries have encountered challenges in interpreting and applying the concept. In order to meet the newly adopted Target 3, it will be necessary to report a combination of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and OECMs in various sectors, including fisheries.

8. Many countries have expressed a need for guidance on how to interpret and apply the OECM official definition and meet the criteria. Such guidance will enable them to use both MPAs and OECMs to meet the area-based targets agreed to in the GBF. This is particularly important for countries that do not already have the capacity to identify and assess potential OECMs for the purposes to CBD reporting.

IV. SUMMARY OF THE FAO FISHERIES DIVISION'S WORK ON OECMS

9. The FAO recent work on area-based management has focused on the implementation of spatial management measures, with a particular focus on OECMs and the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources. This work includes actions to manage and conserve ecosystems through support for the implementation of spatial management measures in fisheries. This work has been directed by previous COFI meetings, in particular the 33rd session of COFI where:

“The Committee welcomed the support of FAO to the CBD towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and FAO participation in the post 2020 vision of CBD. It requested FAO to continue the work concerning area-based management tools and its cooperation with other organizations working on

⁵ Diz, D., Johnson, D., Riddell, M., Rees, S., Battle, J., Gjerde, K., Hennige, S. & Roberts, J.M. (2018). Mainstreaming marine biodiversity into the SDGs: the role of other effective area-based conservation measures (SDG 14.5). *Marine Policy*, 93, 251-261.

⁶<https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-08-en.pdf>

this matter. The Committee requested FAO to continue cooperation with CBD and UN Environment in facilitating formal coordination mechanisms between the Regional Fishery Bodies and the Regional Seas Programmes (para. 79, Report of the 33rd Session of COFI)."

10. In 2018 and 2019, as an observer to CBD, FAO contributed to the definition and criteria of OECMs and supported FAO's Member Countries in the CBD's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and the Conference of the Parties, where the Parties debated, negotiated and ultimately adopted a definition, guiding principles and criteria for recognizing OECMs.⁷

11. In recent years, FAO has participated regularly in the CBD Secretariat's process and activities related to helping States improve their Target 11 reporting and the development of the Post-2020 Framework. Following the CBD COP 14, where the CBD Parties adopted a definition of OECMs as well as criteria and guidance for their identification,⁸ FAO, the Fisheries Expert Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Commission on Ecosystem Management, and the European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD), in collaboration with the Secretariat of the CBD, and with support from the Nordic Council of Ministers, organized an expert meeting from 7–10 May 2019 at FAO Headquarters to begin the process of supporting the fishery sector to engage in identifying OECMs in support of Aichi Target 11⁹ for a summary of the meeting). The purpose of the expert meeting was to compile a broad range of expert advice on the identification and establishment of OECMs in the marine capture fishery sector, on the basis of CBD COP Decision 14/8.

12. With regards to the GBF, FAO provided input into the CBD's Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), meetings as well as several thematic consultations (i.e., area-based measures, marine and coastal biodiversity, restoration) organized by the chairs of the OEWG. Importantly, FAO has provided relevant technical advice to inform the deliberations on the inclusion of the OECM concept in the new GBF area-based management targets, noting that efforts to conserve biodiversity in a holistic way can only happen if both extractive use and non-extractive use sectors work together.

13. In February 2021, the 34th meeting of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI34) noted the importance of considering multiple effective time and area-based management tools (ABMTs), such as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. COFI also noted the relevance of OECMs to achieving a number of the SDGs and global biodiversity targets, and requested that FAO produce and disseminate practical guidelines to support Members in their identification and implementation (para. 17d and 17e of the 34th COFI report).

14. Following the request of COFI 34, the FAO's Fisheries and Aquaculture Division began developing specific guidance on applying the OECM criteria in marine fisheries and assisting countries, fisheries-related agencies, and stakeholders in assessing and identifying fisheries-related OECMs. As a first step, FAO released "A handbook for identifying, evaluating and reporting other effective area-based conservation measures in marine fisheries"¹⁰. This document aims to provide practical guidance on issues related to Fisheries OECMs, describes key characteristics of Fisheries OECMs and outlines a process for identifying, evaluating and reporting OECMs in marine fisheries.

15. In parallel, FAO developed a series of shared learning workshops with the following objectives: (1) To support countries, fisheries related agencies and stakeholders to understand, discuss and apply the CBD's criteria for identifying fisheries-related OECMs; and (2) To synthesize lessons learned from countries' experience in applying the CBD criteria and develop a guidance document on OECMs in the fisheries sector that complements existing global guidance. The workshops aim to build the capacity of States and experts in the region by: increasing their understanding of OECMs and the benefits associated with identifying/creating OECMs; increasing their understanding of the criteria to identify and report

⁷ <http://www.cbd.int/doc/c/91c3/4484/ab24ef8c1ed10ba59b020342/cop-14-1-19-en.pdf>

⁸ [CBD/COP/DEC/14/8](#)

⁹ [COFI/2020/SBD.19](#)

¹⁰ <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en?details=cc3307en%2f>

OECMs, and their ability to apply these criteria in the context of marine fisheries measures; and applying the OECM criteria on a test basis on selected illustrative case studies in the region. To date, FAO has organized and held, together with other partners, the following shared learning workshops:

a. Workshop on Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the Baltic Sea Area – online workshop, 1-3 February 2022. This workshop was organized by FAO together with the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM). During the workshop, participants discussed the potential as OECMs of a diverse range of marine ABMTs from the fisheries, shipping, cultural and archaeological, and energy sectors in the Baltic Sea.

b. Expert Meeting on Fisheries-Related Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean – online workshop, 16-17 February 2022.¹¹ This workshop was organized by FAO together with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). During the workshop, participants discussed the potential as OECMs of the GFCM 1000 m Fisheries Restricted Area and other area-based fisheries management measures from the Adriatic, Central Mediterranean, and Eastern Mediterranean regions.

c. Sustainable Ocean Initiative Capacity-Building Workshop for the Wider Caribbean and Central America on Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures in the Marine Fishery Sector – online workshop, 20-21 April and 27-28 April 2022. This workshop was organized by FAO together with the CBD Secretariat, in collaboration with Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, the Caribbean Environment Programme, the UNDP/GEF PROCARIBE + PPG Coordination Unit, and the IUCN Fisheries Expert Group. During the workshop, participants discussed the potential as OECMs of several ABMFs from Mexico, Costa Rica, Colombia, Puerto Rico, and Brazil.¹²

d. Expert Meeting on Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in Argentina - Buenos Aires, Argentina, 24 - 26 October 2022. This workshop was organized by FAO together with the *Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible* and the *Subsecretaría de Pesca y Acuicultura del Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca de Argentina* in response to Argentina's request for assistance from FAO in increasing its capacity to identify, evaluate and report OECMs in marine fisheries. During the the workshop, participants discussed the potential of several ABMFs in the country.

Workshop on Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the COPPESAALC region - San José, Costa Rica, 27–28 March 2023. This workshop was organized by FAO with the assistance of the *Organización del Sector Pesquero y Acuícola del Istmo Centroamericano* (OSPECA). During the the workshop, participants discussed the potential as OECMs of several ABMFs from Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Mexico.¹³

16. As part of the series of shared learning workshops, FAO is organizing the following upcoming workshops:

a. Workshop on Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in Chile - Santiago, Chile, 18–20 October 2023. Under the request of the *Subsecretaría de Pesca y Acuicultura (SUBPESCA)*, FAO is organizing, together with SUBPESCA and the *Ministerio del Medio Ambiente (MMA)*, the Workshop on Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in Chile, to take place in Santiago, Chile, between the 18 and 20 October. During the workshop, participants will review and discuss the potential as OECMs of several *Áreas de Manejo y Explotación de Recursos Bentónicos (AMERB)* from Chile, as well as discuss the potential content of a document aiming to highlight considerations and

¹¹ <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc4870en>

¹² FAO report forthcoming.

¹³ FAO report forthcoming.

implications of OECMs identification for local communities and how they can be a part of the process. The audience of such a document will be local communities.

b. Workshop on Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the Bay of Bengal and Gulf of Thailand Large Marine Ecosystems – Bangkok, Thailand, 5-7 December 2023. FAO is organizing this workshop with the assistance of the IUCN Asia Regional Office. During the the workshop, participants will discuss the potential as OECMs of several ABMFs from the Bay of Bengal and Gulf of Thailand.

c. Workshop on Fisheries-Related Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the Southwest Indian Ocean – Mombasa, Kenya, 16-18 April 2024. FAO is organizing this workshop with the assistance of the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA). During the the workshop, participants will discuss the potential as OECMs of several ABMFs from the Southwest Indian Ocean.

17. FAO aims to help build the capacity of its Members to report on how the fisheries sector is contributing to current and future area-based biodiversity conservation goals. In order to assist its Members and RFBs assess and identify fisheries OECMs, FAO is undertaking six main activities:

a. Develop e-learning courses with the objective of a) orienting learners to the OECM concept, with an emphasis on marine fisheries, including its origins, the potential benefits of OECMs and criteria for identifying OECMs, including considerations of equity and human well-being, and an introduction to area-based fisheries management measures that have potential to meet OECM criteria; and b) walking learners through a process for identifying, evaluating, and reporting OECMs in a fisheries context. These courses will be available in the FAO e-learning academy in early 2024.

b. Develop a document aiming to highlight considerations and implications of OECMs identification for local communities and how they can be a part of the process.

c. Host and participate in shared learning events in additional regions. The goal of these events will be 1) to bring stakeholders, experts and governments together and help guide countries in the identification, establishment, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of area-based management tools (ABMTs) that can contribute to marine biodiversity conservation and 2) to learn from countries' experience in using area-based management tools in the marine context. Such workshops are envisioned to include staff from fishery-related agencies as well as staff from RFBs.

d. Build general awareness on the use of spatial management tools and their benefits to fisheries and biodiversity, both at global and regional levels through advisory processes and communications materials.

e. Solicit input and finalize guidance for the recognition and management of OECMs in fisheries that complements existing non-sectoral guidance, including how to identify biodiversity outcomes associated with fisheries ABMTs, considerations for applying the OECM criteria in inland fisheries, community considerations, and the role of regional fisheries bodies in recognizing OECMs. Activity a) will inform preparation and review of this guidance, allowing for both global, and regionally specific guidance to be developed.

f. Provide on the ground assistance to States at regional/national level to share experience on the implementation of ABFM that delivers biodiversity co-benefits with the aim of increasing OECM coverage.

g. Support FAO Members in applying the guidance to ABFM in their national waters with the intent of assisting countries meet global area-based management targets while increasing food security and nutrition.

h. Assist FAO Members in developing social, economic and environmental indicators that can be used to monitor MPA and other ABMTs (including OECMs) performance so that they effectively contribute to fishery and biodiversity conservation, food security and meeting the SDGs.