



United Nations Decade on Biodiversity

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Dear Mr. Mathias,

Reference is made to your letter inviting the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to provide input to the report of the Secretary-General on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, which will be submitted to the United Nations General Assembly for consideration at its seventy-third session.

Appended herewith is the contribution of the Secretariat containing information on developments and activities under the Convention on Biological Diversity that are relevant to the theme of "sea-level rise and its impacts". Please accept our apologies for the delayed transmission of this information.

Yours sincerely,



Elizabeth Mrema
Acting Executive Secretary

Attachment

Mr. Stephen Mathias
Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Office of Legal Affairs
United Nations Headquarters
New York, United States of America



Annex. Information on developments and activities under the Convention on Biological Diversity relevant to theme of “sea-level rise and its impacts”

Executive Summary

This note summarizes the work under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) relevant to the theme of sea-level rise and its impacts. There are many interlinkages among issues with respect to climate change and biodiversity and, as such, issues related to climate change cut across nearly all aspects of work under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention has taken numerous decisions to address biodiversity and climate change, including decision 14/5 in 2018, in which it adopted voluntary guidelines for the design and effective implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. The COP has also requested the Secretariat to undertake a review of recent findings on climate change, including work under the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and report on potential implications of these findings for the work of the Convention.

Pursuant to various COP decisions, the Secretariat, with the help of experts and partner organizations has produced a number of studies and reports relating to climate change, which focus on improving understanding and sharing of knowledge and best practices on mitigating the impacts of climate change on biodiversity

Work under the Convention has also focused on undertaking ecosystem-based adaptation measures and the reduction and elimination of local stressors in order to enhance the resilience of coral reefs and closely associated ecosystems to major global changes. This work is encapsulated by the Priority Actions to Achieve Aichi Biodiversity Target 10 for Coral Reefs and Closely Associated Ecosystems, which were adopted by the COP in 2014.

Work under the Convention to facilitate the description of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) provides a key source of information to understand the ecological and biological significance of the most special places of the ocean, and to appropriately plan and implement measures to mitigate the impacts of sea-level rise.

The Secretariat also coordinates capacity building activities through the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI), including regional and national capacity-building workshops, training of trainers, and the SOI Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fishery Bodies. Such activities focus on building capacities for cross-sectoral conservation and sustainable use, thereby supporting developing country Parties in strengthening the resilience of the marine and coastal areas to the impacts of sea-level rise.

INTRODUCTION

1. There are many interlinkages among issues with respect to climate change and biodiversity and, as such, issues related to climate change cut across nearly all aspects of work under the Convention on Biological Diversity. Such areas of relevance can be generally grouped as follows:
 - a) Understanding and mitigating the impacts of climate change on biodiversity;
 - b) Identifying the potential impacts and implications of climate change response measures on biodiversity and approaches to avoid negative impacts;
 - c) Promoting the use of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction.
2. In this regard, considerations of sea-level rise and its impacts are also relevant to numerous areas of work under the Convention. The Conference of the Parties (COP) has issued many decisions directly

addressing the issue of climate change and biodiversity, stressing the importance of implementing ecosystem-based approaches to climate change and disaster risk reduction, and requesting the Secretariat to support Parties in effectively designing and implementing such approaches, inter alia, through capacity building and the provision of guidance in tools and approaches to mitigate impacts.

3. This note consists of brief descriptions of activities and developments under the Convention in the following areas: (i) decisions by the COP addressing climate change and biodiversity; (ii) synthesizing knowledge and best practices for mitigating impacts of climate change on biodiversity; (iii) Priority Actions to Achieve Aichi Biodiversity Target 10 for Coral Reefs and Closely Associated Ecosystems; (iv) ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs); and (v) capacity building to facilitate efforts to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in marine and coastal areas.

DECISIONS BY THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY

4. Numerous COP decisions stress the importance of addressing climate change impacts and threats, such as sea level rise on biodiversity. These include COP decisions X/33, XI/19, XII/20, XIII/4, and 14/5.

5. At its most recent meeting in 2018, the COP adopted decision 14/5, in which it adopted the voluntary guidelines for the design and effective implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction (as annexed to the decision), and encouraged Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to take various actions and steps with respect to designing and implementing ecosystem-based approaches to climate change and adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

6. In the same decision, the COP requested the Secretariat to review new scientific and technical information on biodiversity and climate change, and to prepare a report on potential implications of these findings for the work of the Convention. Pursuant to this request, the Secretariat prepared a review of new scientific and technical information on biodiversity and climate change and potential implications for the work of the Convention. The report reviewed findings from recent special reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, including the IPCC special report on the ocean and cryosphere in a changing climate (SROCC), which provides information on sea level rise and implications for ecosystems. The report was presented to the twenty-third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (see documents CBD/SBSTTA/23/3 and CBD/SBSTTA/23/INF/1). Based on this information, Parties adopted recommendation SBSTTA/23/2, which will be further considered by the Conference of the Parties at its fifteenth meeting later this year.

SYNTHESIZING KNOWLEDGE AND BEST PRACTICES FOR MITIGATING IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON BIODIVERSITY

7. Pursuant to various COP decisions, the Secretariat, in collaboration with experts and partner organizations, has produced a number of studies and reports relating to climate change, which focus on improving understanding and sharing of knowledge and best practices on mitigating the impacts of climate change on biodiversity.

8. The Secretariat, in collaboration with various experts and partner organizations, has produced numerous studies on issues related to climate change and sea-level rise, including the following:

a) Technical Series No. 41 - Connecting Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation: Report of the Second Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change (2009)

b) Technical Series No. 85 - Synthesis report on experiences with ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction (2016)

c) Technical Series No. 86 - Managing Ecosystems in the Context of Climate Change Mitigation: A review of current knowledge and recommendations to support ecosystem-based mitigation actions that look beyond terrestrial forests (2016)

d) Technical Series No. 93 - Voluntary guidelines for the design and effective implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction and supplementary information (2019)

PRIORITY ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE AICHI BIODIVERSITY TARGET 10 FOR CORAL REEFS AND CLOSELY ASSOCIATED ECOSYSTEMS

9. In 2010, the tenth meeting of the COP adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Considerations related to climate change are relevant throughout all of the Aichi Targets. In particular, however, one target that is especially relevant to sea-level rise and its impacts is Aichi Biodiversity Target 10, which reads:

“By 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are minimized, so as to maintain their integrity and functioning”

10. In response to the lack of progress on Aichi Biodiversity Target 10, the COP adopted, at its twelfth meeting in 2014, the Priority Actions to Achieve Aichi Biodiversity Target 10 for Coral Reefs and Closely Associated Ecosystems (annex to decision XII/23). The priority actions aim to address the urgent need to consolidate and further strengthen current efforts at local, national, regional and global levels to manage coral reefs as socio-ecological systems undergoing change due to the interactive effects of multiple stressors, including both global stressors (e.g., rising sea temperature, the effects of tropical storms and rising sea levels, as well as ocean acidification,) and local stressors (e.g., overfishing, destructive fishing practices, land-based and sea-based pollution, coastal development, tourism and recreational use, etc.).

11. In particular, the priority actions focus on actions that help:

- a) Reduce the impacts of multiple stressors, in particular by addressing those stressors that are more tractable at the regional, national and local levels, noting that this would have multiple benefits and that benefits can be expected regardless of the impacts of ocean acidification;
- b) Enhance the resilience of coral reefs and closely associated ecosystems through ecosystem-based adaptation to enable the continued provisioning of goods and services;
- c) Maintain sustainable livelihoods and food security in reef-dependent coastal communities, including indigenous and local communities, and provide for viable alternative livelihoods, where appropriate;
- d) Increase the capability of local and national managers to forecast and plan proactively for climate risks and associated secondary effects, applying ecosystem-based adaptation measures; and
- e) Enhance international and regional cooperation in support of national implementation of priority actions, building upon existing international and regional initiatives and creating synergies with various relevant areas of work within the Convention.

12. Parties have reported various experiences in the implementation of the Priority Actions, including activities such as:

- a. Development of baseline assessments for coral reef ecosystems;
- b. Application of the ecosystem approach to fisheries management in coastal areas;
- c. Sustainable and integrated management of watersheds, coastal areas and waters and small island; and
- d. Training local community stakeholders on coral reef monitoring.

13. The priority actions are grouped according to the following sets of actions:

- a) Strengthen existing sectoral and cross-sectoral management to address local stressors, such as overfishing, destructive fishing practices, land- and sea-based pollution, coastal development, tourism and recreational use

b) Identify and apply measures to improve the adaptive capacity of coral reef based socio-ecological systems within the local context, which will ensure sustainable livelihoods of reef-dependent coastal communities, including indigenous and local communities, and provide for viable alternative livelihoods

c) Establish or further enhance integrated management and coordination mechanisms to effectively address multiple stressors to coral reefs, including through the implementation of national coral reef action strategies/plans

d) Promote activities with regard to information exchange, knowledge sharing, awareness building, capacity-building, sustainable financing, and research and monitoring

ECOLOGICALLY OR BIOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT MARINE AREAS

14. A necessary pre-requisite to understanding the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise on biodiversity is an understanding of the components of biodiversity and habitats that are present in affected areas. In this respect, work under the Convention on ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) provides a key source of information to understand the ecological and biological significance of the most special places of the ocean.

15. Work under the Convention on EBSAs began in 2008, when the COP, at its ninth meeting, adopted the seven EBSA criteria, which provide a global framework for assessing ecological and/or biological significance of the various parts of marine and coastal biodiversity.

16. At its tenth meeting in 2010, the COP requested the Secretariat to convene a series of regional workshops to facilitate the description of EBSAs through the application of the EBSA scientific criteria, in collaboration with Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations. To date, a total of fifteen regional workshops have been organized in nearly all ocean regions around the world.

17. A total of 321 areas described as meeting the EBSA criteria have already been considered by the COP, included in the CBD EBSA repository and submitted to the United Nations General Assembly. The details and outputs of the regional EBSA workshops, as considered by the COP, are available online through the EBSA website (<https://www.cbd.int/ebsa/>).

18. The COP has emphasized that the application of the EBSA criteria is a scientific and technical exercise, that areas found to meet the criteria may require enhanced conservation and management measures, and that this can be achieved through a variety of means, including marine protected areas and impact assessments. Parties further emphasized 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.

CAPACITY BUILDING TO FACILITATE EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THE AICHI BIODIVERSITY TARGETS IN MARINE AND COASTAL AREAS

19. The Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI)¹ is a global platform for building partnerships and enhancing the capacity of developing country Parties to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in marine and coastal areas in a holistic manner by (a) facilitating the exchange of knowledge, experience and best practices, (b) creating partnerships that can provide targeted capacity-building, (c) enhancing communication among global policy, science and local stakeholders and (d) enhancing dialogue and coordination among various sectors to achieve a balance between the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity. The execution of SOI activities is coordinated by the CBD Secretariat in collaboration with various international partners, and has been financially supported by the Governments of Japan (through the Japan Biodiversity Fund), France (through the French Biodiversity Agency), Republic of Korea (through the Ministry of

¹ See www.cbd.int/soi

Oceans and Fisheries), Sweden (through the Ministry of the Environment and Energy), and the European Union.

20. Activities under the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) focus on enhancing capacity for cross-sectoral efforts for conservation and sustainable use, including to address, in a holistic manner, various pressures on marine and coastal ecosystems, such as climate change and sea-level rise.

21. SOI national capacity building workshops facilitate dialogue among various stakeholders, including government ministries, international and regional organizations, scientific communities, and civil society, and coordination related to marine biodiversity to address capacity needs of developing countries to achieve national priorities as well as global goals under the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals.

22. SOI regional capacity building workshops gather experts and practitioners in conservation and fisheries management from governments and global and regional organizations to facilitate sharing of scientific information and exchange of experiences on the application of different types of planning and management tools and to identify key opportunities and approaches at the regional and national scale to enhance cross-sectoral conservation and sustainable use.

23. SOI Training of Trainers workshops aim to strengthen national scientific, technical and managerial capacity on: (a) the application of the ecosystem approach and area-based management tools, such as integrated marine and coastal area management and marine spatial planning; (b) enhancing multistakeholder and cross-sectoral dialogue and coordination to support planning and management; and (c) the development and implementation of capacity development activities at the national and subnational level.

24. The SOI Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations (RSOs) and Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) facilitating the exchange of experiences and discussing specific tools and guidelines in order to enhance science-based, cross-sectoral and ecosystem-based approaches for addressing biodiversity and fisheries issues, and identifying options and opportunities to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration among regional seas organizations and regional fishery bodies, with a view to further strengthening their complementary roles in supporting national implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the relevant Sustainable Development Goals.