

ECOLOGICALLY OR BIOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT MARINE AREAS: SPECIAL PLACES TO ACCELERATE IMPLEMENTATION TOWARDS SDG 14: 8 JUNE 2017

The event ‘Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs): Special places to accelerate implementation towards SDG 14’ took place on 8 June 2017 at the UN Headquarters in New York during the high-level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development). The event was co-organized by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI).

Representatives of governments, scientific institutes, international organizations and civil society gathered to discuss the multiple ways in which EBSAs are inspiring and necessary, as well as the need to support them through effective monitoring systems and through incorporating indigenous and traditional knowledge.

REPORT OF THE SIDE EVENT

Jihyun Lee, CBD, delivered opening remarks on behalf of Cristiana Paşca Palmer, CBD Executive Secretary. She highlighted that SDG 14 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets reflect a consensus of the global community to preserve the Ocean, its species and ecosystems. She stressed EBSAs are effective tools to achieve these goals and targets as they: detect and protect places of critical importance in the Ocean; foster regional cooperation; support an ecosystem approach; and avoid duplication with other processes.



Jihyun Lee, CBD

David Johnson, Coordinator,

GOBI, underlined that GOBI is composed of experts who support the work of the CBD by advancing the scientific basis for conserving biodiversity in the oceans. He spoke about several GOBI projects, whose goals are to make EBSAs a concrete way for actors to “make SDG 14 happen.” He also presented a short



David Johnson, Coordinator, GOBI

film on EBSAs in the Indian Ocean, where 39 EBSAs have been designated. Finally, Johnson stressed that only one of the 13 regional workshops has taken place and encouraging for work on this issue to continue.

On the global process of describing EBSAs, Jihyun Lee remarked that, when considering EBSAs, many policy makers only see the polygons delimiting EBSAs on maps, while the most important factor is the life behind those polygons. She stressed that the Aichi Biodiversity Targets are reflected in several SDGs and directly contribute to achieving them. Lee highlighted the CBD process to designate EBSAs, stressing that EBSAs are not marine protected areas (MPAs), nor fishing closures or a jurisdictional matter, but are based on several criteria reflecting the inherent value of biodiversity. She outlined the work undertaken in CBD regional workshops, based on scientific information, expert judgment and spatial description and mapping, and stressed that 279 EBSAs proposals, representing 19% of the Ocean, have been submitted to the UN General Assembly by the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth CBD Conference Of Parties (COPs).

Piers Dunstan, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), presented the work of his team focusing on the interactions between human



Piers Dunstan, CSIRO

activity and places of high biological value. He presented Australia's experience, where tools similar to EBSAs, "Matters of National Environmental Significance," have been designed. He stressed their use in: risk assessments, and environmental impact assessments (EIAs); monitoring ecosystem health; integrating traditional knowledge; and their application to other processes, nationally and internationally.

He described his work in studying pressures from fishing, shipping, oil and gas, and climate change, then overlaying them with biological values, in order to identify priority zones and informing processes such as EIAs in various sectors. He spoke on the building of ecosystem risks models, allowing them to show trends of change, citing its use for managing important tuna fisheries. He also stressed the possibility of including traditional knowledge in tools such as EBSAs to identify areas that are of significance for local communities, and to incorporate EBSAs into other decision-making process like marine spatial planning.

Yoshihisa Shirayama, Executive Director, Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology, described several deep-



Yoshihisa Shirayama, Executive Director, Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology

sea communities, including the Japan Trench, which contains a dense aggregation of *Calypotgena phaseliformis* and the deepest chemosynthetic community in the world, at 7,337 meters in depth.

Jake Rice, Fisheries Experts Group of the IUCN Commission of Ecosystem Management, said "we do not need to restructure oceans governance to break up silos," but stated that workshops such as the North Atlantic and Antarctic workshops have done so. He

invited marine policy, management and science communities to move beyond the maps by using the peer-reviewed narrative and tabular information as starting points in planning EBSAs, and by

matching the spatial tool to the needs of the site. He also called on the expert community working on EBSAs to support parties to the CBD with updated scientific information on EBSAs.

Salvatore Arico, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), presented the Global Ocean Observing System, which he said aims to help solve science questions and address societal needs, while contributing to the improvement of marine resources. Arico also described iObis, an online platform that contributes to conducting a census of the marine life, finding the number of species existing in the Ocean. He said iObis was created to build and maintain a global alliance that collaborates with scientific communities to facilitate free and open access to, and the application of, biodiversity and biogeographic data and information on marine life.



Blaise Kuemlangan, FAO

Blaise Kuemlangan, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), spoke about vulnerable ecosystems processes and highlighted the need for integrated interventions not only on the behalf of the scientific community but also on the behalf of fishing communities. He stressed the need to ensure that stakeholders are involved in the EBSAs processes,

in providing inputs as well as sharing their benefits. Kuemlangan further noted that the marine areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) deep sees network and the fisheries industry are valuable for sharing information and building partnerships, and invited participants to capitalize on the synergies between them.

In the ensuing discussion, participants raised issues related to, *inter alia*: establishing marine "infrastructures" in the Baltic Sea; stumbling blocks to EBSAs such as sectoral approaches; socio-economic and cultural values that could be added to the biological and ecological criteria for EBSAs; and special data for ecosystem services that are produced by some ecosystem systems.



(L-R) **Jake Rice**, IUCN; **Yoshihisa Shirayama**, JAMSTEC; **Piers Dunstan**, CSIRO; **David Johnson**, GOBI; **Salvatore Arico**, IOC/UNESCO; **Jihyun Lee**, CBD; and **Blaise Kuemlangan**, FAO