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## Background

In 2010, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, with the shared vision that “by 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.” The Strategic Plan includes strategic goals and 20 ambitious targets, collectively known as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. It was intended to promote the coherent and effective implementation of the three objectives of the CBD.

The Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 (Target 11), under Strategic Goal C, aimed to improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity. It stated that:

*“By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected **systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures**, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes” (emphasis added).*

The UN General Assembly reinforced the target for the marine environment through the adoption of 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.5.

While earlier marine conservation targets and actions had a clear focus on marine protected areas (MPAs), Target 11’s inclusion of *“other effective area-based conservation measures”* (OECMs) explicitly recognizes that other types of spatial conservation measures may also achieve important conservation gains. This wording allows for the inclusion of other spatial management interventions that may not meet the definition of a protected area mostly because their primary objective is not the conservation of biodiversity. The clause clearly requires that the measures in question be effective, area-based, and with a conservation focus, but at the time of adoption there remained a need to further explore the extent and limits of what these measures might include.

At their 14th Conference in 2018 that Parties to the CBD adopted the following definition for OECMs:

*“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.”).*

In addition to the definition a number of supporting documents, including criteria and guiding principles have been prepared to commence the process:

- CBD Decision 14/8. (English: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop14-dec-08-en.pdf>);
- IUCN/WCPA Technical Report on Recognising and Reporting OECMs: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/48773>
- FAO expert meeting report expert meeting to guide the identification of OECM in fisheries conservation areas: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca7194en/CA7194EN.pdf>
- Special Issue of PARKS on OECMs : <https://parksjournal.com/wpcontent/uploads/2018/07/PARKS-24-SI-Low-ResWeb.pdf>

The adoption of the definition and criteria of OECMs opens new opportunities to assess the extent of potential OECMs and to begin to recognize and report them. This is particularly relevant and pressing as the potential successor to the Target 11 under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework is likely aim toward 30% coverage of both protected areas and OECMs.

OECMs represent an opportunity to recognize biodiversity conservation potential from a wider range of spatial management measures than before. For the marine environment there are a number of existing measures which show potential as OECMs, including sites of historic or cultural importance. The potential within the fisheries sector has also been highlighted, where many area-based fisheries management measures already aim to meet sustainability together with broader ecosystem management and biodiversity conservation goals and are well poised to meet the OECM criteria. Such measures are widely included in fisheries management plans and processes. Given that fisheries-related OECMs' primary objectives are usually not about biodiversity conservation, but often related to fisheries sustainability, they are more likely to generate multiple benefits for social, ecological, and economic development. This makes fisheries-related OECMs particularly relevant to reconcile food security, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development and to help achieve a number of the SDGs alongside the global biodiversity targets.

Early experiences have shown that OECMs not only contribute to filling the gap in terms of coverage but that, alongside MPAs, they can result in more effective conservation overall by enhancing the connectivity and representativity of area-based management and increasing the diversity of governance arrangements.

In 2020 the IUCN WCPA arranged the first regional workshop on OECMs, focused on North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean, which took place in Tunis, Tunisia (10-11 February 2020). The main objective of the workshop was to support the region in learning about advances in the international arena on OECMs and to share guidance about how to identify, support and report such areas. The report from the workshop can be found [online](#)

STATE&CONSERVATION 13-2020 took note of information regarding the first IUCN WCPA regional workshop on OECMs. The meeting acknowledged that regional work on OECM in the Baltic sea is linked to actions under the updated BSAP and welcomed the suggestion to approach WCPA and FAO for informal enquiry regarding the possibility to arrange a similar event for the Baltic Sea region. The meeting agreed to come back to this in more detail at STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2020.

In line with the outcome of STATE&CONSERVATION 13-2020 the Secretariat has been in contact with the relevant representatives of IUCN WCPA and FAO and received positive responses regarding cooperation and the possibility to arrange a regional workshop in the Baltic Sea region

The actions regarding OECMs currently proposed for inclusion in the updated BSAP relate to achieving a shared agreement on a definition of OECMs to be used in HELCOM, the identification of OECMs in the BSR, both by [2022] and that OECMs will support the spatial actions related to MPAs.

With this in mind, and the fact that national work on OECMs has commenced for some of the Contracting Parties, the proposal is to arrange a regional workshop on OECMs in early 2022, likely February, thus enabling support for the Contracting Parties which are planning or have started their OECM work and meeting the

planned target year of the proposed BSAP actions. The format of the event will be decided later, depending on further planning and the Covid-19 situation in the region.

### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to agree that a regional HELCOM workshop on OECMs, supported by FAO/WCPA, can be arranged in early 2022.