Document title	Information on the CBD Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) in the Baltic Sea
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Background

At the United Nations Conference "Our oceans, our future: partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14" HELCOM Contracting Parties registered the voluntary commitment to identify Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) in the Baltic Sea.

A workshop to identify Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) in the Baltic Sea will be organized in February 2018 in collaboration between the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and HELCOM. This document contains information on the workshop and the EBSA concept.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note and make use of the information.

The CBD Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) in the Baltic Sea

The Workshop

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) in the Baltic Sea will be held from 19 to 24 February 2018 in Helsinki, Finland. The workshop is convened by the CBD Secretariat in collaboration with HELCOM and the Finnish Ministry of the Environment, and is financed by Finland and supported by the EU co-financed HASPSII project. The initiative to arrange a Regional EBSA workshop for the Baltic Sea was introduced by Finland and has been agreed to by the HELCOM HOD, bearing in mind especially the possibilities the EBSA concept offers for Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP). Identifying EBSAs in the Baltic Sea has also been contributed as one of the HELCOM voluntary commitments to the UN Ocean Conference held in June 2017 in New York, aiming to accelerate the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14.

The nine Baltic Sea countries will be invited by the CDB Secretariat to nominate national experts to the workshop. Relevant HELCOM Observers and other relevant regional organizations will be invited. The CBD Secretariat, a GIS expert team from the Duke University and the HELCOM Secretariat will also attend the workshop.

The intention is that all available relevant data hosted in HELCOM are used to support the EBSA identification, in addition to any data that countries may decide to submit for the identification process.

The expected result of the workshop is that all areas of ecological and biological importance (based on current knowledge and best available information) in the Baltic Sea will be identified and categorized in a structured way utilizing a recognized method.

The EBSA concept and process

The EBSAs are special areas in the ocean that serve important purposes, in one way or another, to support the healthy functioning of oceans and the many services that it provides (www.cbd.int/ebsa/about).

Identification of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas is done according to the established scientific criteria (adopted by the Parties to the CBD).
These criteria are:

1. Uniqueness or Rarity
2. Special importance for life history stages of species
3. Importance for threatened, endangered or declining species and/or habitats
4. Vulnerability, Fragility, Sensitivity, or Slow recovery
5. Biological Productivity
6. Biological Diversity
7. Naturalness

In 2010, the CBD Conference of Parties (COP) 10 noted 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 (MPA) and impact assessments. The COP further noted that the application of the EBSA criteria is an open and evolving process that should be continued to allow ongoing improvement and updating as improved scientific and technical information becomes available in each region. For more

details on the EBSA criteria, please see: https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/mar/ebsaws-2014-01/other/ebsaws-2014-01-azores-brochure-en.pdf .

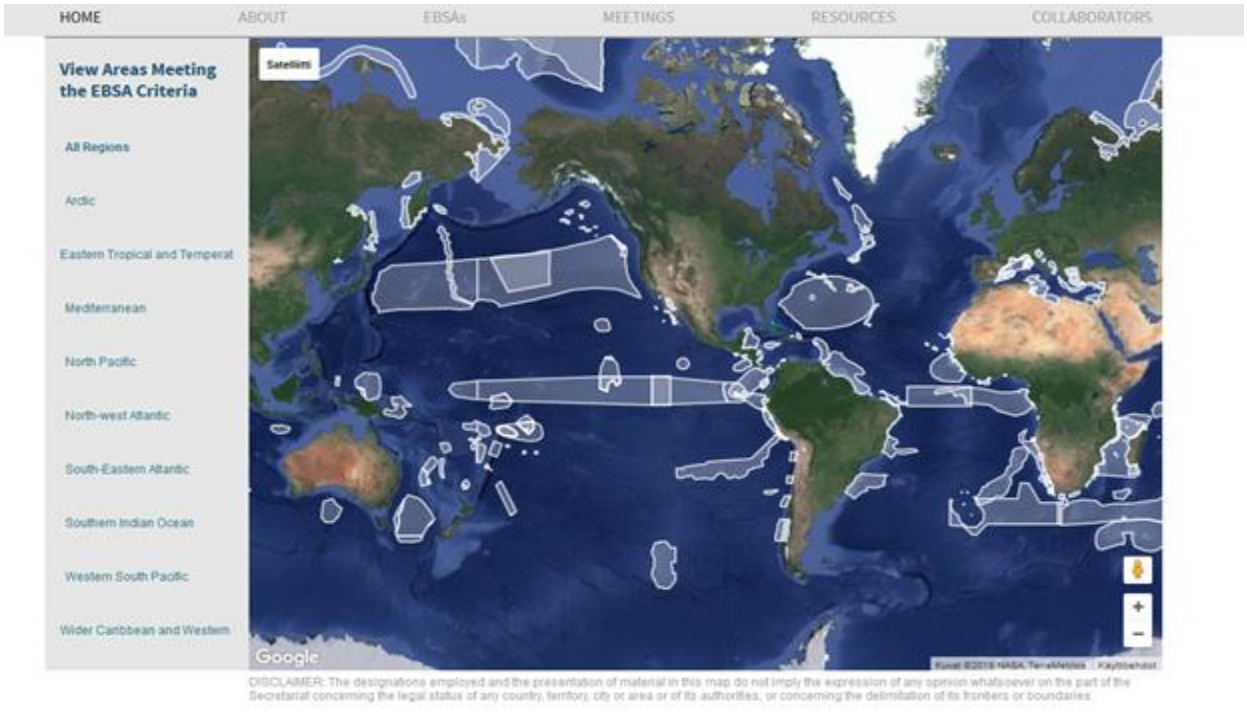
EBSA can provide useful information that can be used for actions to safeguard the species and habitats in these areas as may be decided individually or collectively by the countries concerned. However, EBSA are not MPAs, even if they can in some cases overlap with the existing MPAs – if the criteria fit the site. EBSA do not have the legal protection or other implications of MPAs.

The first EBSAs identified were very large, in many cases larger than the Baltic Sea. Later on, also smaller areas have been identified as EBSA e.g. in the Mediterranean and South-East Atlantic Ocean EBSAs.

The identification of EBSAs is a matter for States and competent intergovernmental organizations, in accordance with international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and is done in workshops.
Several regional workshops have been organized in different parts of the world:

- Western South Pacific (*held in Nadi, Fiji, in 2011*)
- Eastern Tropical and Temperate Pacific *(held on Galapagos, Ecuador, in 2012)*
- South Indian Ocean *(held in Flic en Flac, Mauritius, in 2012)*
- The Wider Caribbean and Western Mid-Atlantic *(held in Recife, Brazil, in 2012)*
- North Pacific *(held in Moscow, Russian Federation, in 2013)*
- South-East Atlantic Ocean *(held in Swakopmund, Namibia, in 2013)*
- Arctic *(held in Helsinki, Finland, in 2014)*
- North-West Atlantic *(held in Montreal, Canada, in 2014)*
- The Mediterranean *(held in Málaga, Spain, in 2014)*
- North-East Indian Ocean *(held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 2015)*
- North-West Indian Ocean and Adjacent Gulf Areas *(held in Dubai, UAE, in 2015)*
- Seas of East Asia *(held in Xiamen, China, in 2015)*
- Caspian and Black Seas (*April 2017*)
- Considered: North-Eastern Atlantic

Map of EBSA sites (Source: CBD https://www.cbd.int/ebsa/



After being identified by the regional workshops, the proposed EBSAs are reviewed by the technical body of CBD (SBSTTA) and put forward for endorsement to CBD COP and inclusion into the CBD EBSA Repository.

More information on EBSAs

Brochure on the EBSA criteria
https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/mar/ebsaws-2014-01/other/ebsaws-2014-01-azores-brochure-en.pdf

Example of an EBSA workshop report
https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/mar/ebsaws-2014-01/official/ebsaws-2014-01-05-en.pdf

- This is the workshop report from the Arctic EBSA workshop. The EBSA workshop reports are drafted, reviewed and agreed to by the workshop participants during the workshop. Preparatory work is alsoneeded for compiling information used in the EBSA descriptions.
- The EBSA descriptions are contained in the appendix to annex VIII (on page 52)
- The workshop reports also contain syntheses of key issues that were addressed during the workshop. In this case, for example, the workshop addressed the unique regional significance of the Arctic (page 28), challenges related to the use of traditional knowledge (page 34) and socio-cultural information (page 43) and scientific information needs and knowledge gaps (page 49).
- This workshop also illustrates how different types of areas can be described as EBSAs, from small static features to large spatially and temporally dynamic features such as the Arctic ice edge ecosystem.

Article on Results of Efforts Under the CBD to Describe EBSAs
http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cobi.12649/full

- Provides an update on the EBSA work and characterizes different types of EBSAs that have been described

Compilation of Experiences and Lessons Learned from Scientific Methodologies and Approaches for the Description of Areas Meeting the EBSA Criteria (SBSTTA information document)
https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-20/information/sbstta-20-inf-20-en.pdf

Other resources are available on the CBDs EBSA website (https://www.cbd.int/ebsa).