

Task Force on Reducing the Impact of Fisheries on Marine Biodiversity related to the implementation of WCC 2020 Res 107

Terms of Reference 2023 – 2025

Background

Ocean health depends on thriving biodiversity, and SDG14 recognises the importance of ocean conservation and ensuring that use is sustainable. There are clear evidence that unsustainable and poorly regulated fisheries can exert significant, growing proximate pressure on biodiversity: the high incidence of inadequate fisheries management, overfishing, destructive fishing, catch of non-target marine life and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing are cause for concern and contravene Article 61 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). These negative impacts can extend far beyond those on fish and other marine biodiversity, and entire ecosystems, into social and economic spheres. The effects of fisheries on biodiversity are linked to livelihoods and culture, and exacerbated by corruption, human-rights violations, marine fisheries crime, global markets and perverse incentives. At the same time, conservation policies have often failed to fully acknowledge the role of Indigenous peoples and local communities in preserving biodiversity, sometimes with serious implications on human rights, food security and livelihoods, thus creating a problematic distance between conservation and food security objectives. Reconciling fisheries and conservation requires a comprehensive integrated approach. Further, Aichi Biodiversity Target 6 was largely unsuccessful in stemming the adverse impacts of fisheries on biodiversity or in achieving recovery of depleted species. Reconciling fisheries and conservation is a prerequisite to achieving the recently adopted [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(GBF\)](#).

In the view of the above concerns, the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2021 in its [Resolution 7.107](#) requested the Director General and Commission Chairs to establish a Task Force to reconcile fisheries and conservation that involves all IUCN Commissions and all IUCN Regions; that takes account of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean; and that draws on relevant reports from peer organisations (hereafter ‘the Task Force’).

Context

Since the adoption of Resolution 7.107, significant developments in the efforts aiming to reduce the impact of fisheries on marine biodiversity include the [World Trade Organization’s agreement on ending harmful Fisheries Subsidies](#), adopted in June 2022, the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF) at the CBD COP15 in December 2022, and the [Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Treaty \(BBNJ\)](#), adopted in June 2023. The Treaty seeks to set up a procedure to establish large-scale marine protected areas in the high seas, which will in turn facilitate the achievement of the KM-GBF target to effectively conserve and manage 30% of land and sea by 2030. Meanwhile, a large number of shark species were included in the CITES Appendices at CITES CoP19 in November 2022, and the

35th FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in September 2022 paid special attention to biodiversity mainstreaming in fisheries management, encouraging further work in that direction.

The impact of fisheries on marine biodiversity was also discussed at the IUCN co-convened [5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress \(IMPAC5\)](#) held in February 2023, in Canada, and other international meetings including the [second United Nations Ocean Conference](#) in Lisbon in 2022, and appeared on the agenda of the Our Ocean Conferences. Additionally, the issue is of particular relevance to the growing global aspirations to a sustainable blue economy and the development of national strategies and plans, echoed in recent G7 and G20 ministerial communiqués.

IUCN has also played a role in advancing this issue. The Fisheries Experts Group of the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management has collaborated with CBD, FAO, OECD, and FFI on a range of topics including on reporting on fisheries within the Global Biodiversity Framework, on a redefinition of destructive fishing, on implementing OECMs in marine capture fisheries, and on Area-based Management Tools (ABMTs) in fisheries, among others. Further, IUCN and its World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) have been working on promoting OECM guidelines. Indeed, the management of fishing within MPAs and OECMs is a key concern and of particular interest to the WCPA Marine Thematic Group notably, in terms of providing advice to the MPA community on this topic.

Given this wide range of activities, and the decentralized nature of IUCN's expertise on these issues, it is essential that this Task Force benefits from the participation and representation of key IUCN actors and leaders to ensure coherence, exchanges and collaboration, as well as finding and leveraging synergies with other task forces. The Council has also established a PPC Task Force on Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, of whose work this Task Force should be cognizant.

The Task Force Terms of Reference are hereby proposed as follows:

Objective

Advance the reconciliation of fisheries and conservation, and reduce the impact of fisheries on marine biodiversity, while involving IUCN Members, all IUCN Commissions, and all IUCN Regions, taking account of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, and drawing on relevant expertise and reports from peer organisations.

Tasks

1. Identify relevant reports from peer organisations (e.g. IPCC Special Report on the Oceans and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate).
2. Develop the scope of a scientific and technical Situational Analysis on the effects of fisheries on marine biodiversity, taking an inclusive approach to cover:
 - a. diverse fisheries (e.g. small-scale, industrial, artisanal, women's, Indigenous', non-selective, invertebrate, distant water, pelagic, demersal);

b. diverse issues (e.g. spatial management, Protected Areas and OECMs, efficacy of national and intergovernmental legal instruments, perverse incentives and subsidies, IUU fishing economic dependencies including supply chains, culture, food security, nutrition and diets, human well-being and human rights, the role of women, climate change impacts).

3. Convene a first consultative workshop to bring together expertise from all IUCN constituencies on the subject matter.
4. Produce a Situational Analysis report based on relevant reports from peer organisations (task 1) and the outcomes of the consultative workshop (task 3).
5. Convene a second consultative workshop to consider the findings of the Situational Analysis and to propose a set of policy recommendations to IUCN and implementing parties.

Modus Operandi

- The members of the Task Force will implement their work principally via email and conference calls coordinated by the IUCN Secretariat and lead by the Chair of the Task Force.
- The Task Force will provide regular updates to the Programme and Policy Committee (PPC) of the IUCN Council.

Duration

The Task Force is intended to be active at least until the next World Conservation Congress, in October 2025.

Composition

The Task Force will be composed of up to 30 experts on fisheries and on marine biodiversity conservation, led by a Chair and a co-Chair. Members of the Task Force will be drawn from all IUCN constituencies, notably its Members and experts within its Commissions, ensuring global geographical representation, including polar regions. The Chair and the co-Chair will be nominated by consensus at the first meeting of the Task Force.

A One Programme Approach will be adopted when establishing the composition of the Task Force. This Approach strengthens the delivery and impact of the IUCN Programme, more effectively leveraging the respective roles, capacities and unique features of the constituent parts of the Union – its Members, Commissions, National and Regional Committees and Secretariat.

External individuals may also be invited to contribute from time to time as ad hoc experts to bring in necessary skills and knowledge on specific issues, as needed.