

TERMS OF REFERENCE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES HIGH SEAS SPECIALIST GROUP

Background

Accounting for almost two-thirds of the global ocean, the high seas and seabed areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction (ABNJ) play a critical role in maintaining life on Earth. But, the current framework of governance related to conservation of marine biodiversity in ABNJ is weak and is characterized by large gaps. Gaps include the absence of rules to establish cross-sectorial marine protected area (MPAs) and other effective conservation tools.

Growing threats to marine biodiversity in ABNJ stem from fishing practices, shipping and land-based sources of pollution like plastics, nutrients and noise, and the potential effects of seabed mining. In addition, increases in CO₂ have resulted in rising ocean acidity, declining oxygen levels, warming waters and shifting current patterns. These combined stressors are undermining the health and resilience of marine ecosystems and species around the world. The ecological connectivity between the high seas and the waters of coastal states means that impacts on high seas ecosystems and biodiversity will harm social and ecological systems closer to shore, and that the impacts may be felt globally and across jurisdictional boundaries.

MPAs are now perceived as among the key tools for conserving biodiversity, increasing productivity and improving the resilience and ability of marine ecosystems to respond to changing oceanic biophysical conditions. The WCPA High Seas Specialist Group (SG) has been working to inform the creation of high seas MPAs for over a decade. The WCPA High Seas MPA Task Force was officially established in 2003 following the 5th IUCN World Parks Congress where marine experts formulated a 10-Year High Seas MPA Strategy. The WCPA High Seas MPA Specialist Group now contains over 150 individual experts from around the world.

Recent developments at the United Nations have created an unprecedented opportunity for the WCPA High Seas SG to inform the development of a new international treaty to help safeguard marine biodiversity in ABNJ. In June 2015, the United Nations agreed on the need to develop a new international legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to improve how we conserve and manage marine biodiversity in ABNJ. Over the past two years (2016-17) of preparatory committee meetings, UN Member States have discussed some of the initial elements of the new instrument, which would address area-based management tools including MPAs, as well as environmental impact assessments, capacity building and technology transfer, and marine genetic resources, among other issues. In 2017, the Preparatory Committee recommended the UN decide as soon as possible to launch formal negotiations for the new treaty.

Purpose of Task Force/Specialist Group

The purpose of the High Seas Specialist Group is to advance awareness of the importance and vulnerability of the ocean beyond national boundaries and its connection to the ocean within national jurisdiction; advance the emerging global agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea for conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in ABNJ through the development of options for area-based management tools including MPAs; advance existing initiatives, tools and approaches to protect key ABNJ ecosystems and species; and foster dedicated scientific research, observation and exploration.

Integration in GPAP/WCPA's Quadrennial Programme 2017-2020

The High Seas SG 2017-2020 plan contributes to a large number of GPAP/WCPA's Quadrennial programme, but it most directly works towards achieving the following 2020 targets:

Result area 1: The risk facing species and ecosystems is reduced

- IUCN knowledge, including gender-specific knowledge as appropriate, on the value and conservation of nature is generated and communicated to influence key global, regional and local decisions and actions.
- The implementation of commitments under biodiversity-related conventions and international agreements is accelerated.
- Protected area networks are expanded to conserve areas of particular importance for biodiversity through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.

Result area 2: Natural resource governance at all levels enables effective conservation and equitable outcomes by integrating principles and rights-based approaches.

- International governance mechanisms for marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, Antarctica and the Arctic are strengthened including the establishment of cross-sectoral marine protected areas.

Result area 3: Societies recognize and enhance the ability of healthy ecosystems to contribute to meeting societal challenges of CC, food, health, economic dev.

- Legal, customary and institutional mechanisms and resourcing are effectively implemented to maintain intact, natural and semi-natural ecosystems that deliver benefits to society, including existing and new protected areas.

The goals and activities described below are designed to meet these 2020 targets. They are grouped within four broad objectives, matching the structure by which the High Seas SG has tracked its achievements in recent years, and they correspond to the broad categories of the group’s purpose. While the goals are listed under the objective they most closely link to, most of them are cross-cutting.

Objective 1: Advancing Awareness

Goals and activities: (List these paying attention to SMART objectives see below)

- Improve understanding of connectivity between the high sea and coastal ecosystems (e.g., provide information on migratory and oceanographic connectivity) through research, workshops, data sharing and publications.
- Present and galvanize interest at relevant meetings including IMPAC4 (Chile, September 2017); Our Oceans, (Malta, October 2017); World Conference on Marine Biodiversity (Canada, May 2018); Deep Sea Biology Symposium (California, September 2018), among others
- Work with a variety of media outlet such as Facebook, Twitter, and traditional journalistsList

Objective 2: ADVANCING GLOBAL AGREEMENT

Goals and activities: (List these paying attention to SMART objectives see below)

- Convene at least two workshops, funds permitting, with government representatives, academics, NGOs and other experts to explore options for designating MPAs and establishing other areas-based management tools under the new agreement
- Solicit and develop suggestions from state delegations, NGOs, and researchers to populate the IUCN marine biodiversity matrix, an online discussion and collaboration forum, to inform the development of an ILBI. https://marinebiodiversitymatrix.org/wiki/Main_Page
- Convene side events on ABMT to convey results of prior workshops
- Continue to work with states, academics, NGOs and others List

Objective 3: ADVANCING HIGH SEAS PROTECTION

Goals and activities: (List these paying attention to SMART objectives see below)

- Provide a forum to enhance understanding and facilitate collaboration of MPA research and improved governance including a focus on transboundary connectivity issues,
- Convene SG members as possible at relevant events such as IMPAC 4.
- Continue promoting awareness of the need for adequate understanding and protection of EBSAs in relevant international fora including the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), regional fisheries management organizations, and regional seas programmes.
- Engage CMS in raising awareness in IGC delegations and others for the need to conserve connectivity and develop ecological networks that include ABNJ.
- Continue efforts to pursue MPAs and large-scale marine managed areas in ABNJ of importance for biodiversity, such as the Sargasso Sea; the Costa Rica Thermal Dome and the Southern Ocean
- Examine the utility of vessel-tracking systems to support the development, monitoring and enforcement of MPAs in ABNJ.
- Prepare and publish at least two articles on relevant legal, scientific and policy issues related to MPAs and marine spatial planning in ABNJList

Objective 4: ADVANCING SCIENTIFIC BASIS

Goals and activities: (List these paying attention to SMART objectives see below)

- Promote scientific efforts to understand high seas ecosystems, and coordinate research to improve our understanding of high seas ecosystems in ways that can inform more effective governance.

- Help write the terms of reference for IOC's Decade of Exploration, a project to galvanize support, funding, and effort for global marine research.
- Work with ocean observing programs including GOOS, GEOBON, GEOS, DOOS, etc. to promote greater observation of ABNJ in support of the development and monitoring of ABMTs.
- Work with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and States Parties to advance the CBD EBSA process for describing significant areas in ABNJ
- Support Duke's Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab and partners in promoting and using the Migratory Connectivity in the Ocean (MiCO) system, a tool to provide actionable knowledge on migratory corridors and connectivity for species utilizing the high seas support of the development of ABMTs in ABNJ, including marine spatial planning.
- Hold workshops to brainstorm and develop understanding of potential interactions of different uses of ABNJ resources. Depending on funding availability, publish policy briefs summarizing workshop findings and governance implications.
- Hold workshops (or otherwise support efforts to) analyze the utility and benefit of dynamic management approaches to the conservation of high seas biodiversity. Depending on funding availability, publish policy briefs summarizing workshop findings and governance implications.
- Promote open access papers and online platforms that highlight high seas issues.

Leadership, membership and organization

Kristina Gjerde continues as SG leader, but is seeking skilled and energetic co-leaders to assist.

Membership is expanding to include the many WCPA members interested in high seas MPAs, as well as through active recruitment, with a focus on young researchers and professionals.

Partnerships, funding and fund-raising

Partners include the IUCN Global Marine and Polar Programme, WCEL and the Environmental Law Program; Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat's Marine Programme; Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative; Sargasso Sea Commission; High Seas Alliance, Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative; the Costa Rica Thermal Dome project as well as the WCPA Specialist Groups on Large MPAs and Marine Mammal Protected Areas.

Funding is being sought to underwrite the various initiatives through partners and others.

Communication

See above on advancing understanding

Reporting

Will submit annual reports

***SMART goals are specific (who and what?), measurable (how?), attainable (realistic?), relevant (leads to results?) and timebound (within the planning period?)**

IUCN PROGRAMME GOALS AND ACTIVITIES FOR 2017 - 2020

IUCN WCPA has the following goals within the 3 programme areas of the IUCN Programme 2017-2020. **Please identify which goals your group or region will support by placing an X in the relevant box(es).** Specify only those where you will contribute directly.

IUCN PROGRAMME AREA 1: Valuing and conserving nature

WCPA/GPAP/WH Result 1.1:

(i) Protected Planet includes all relevant information to monitor and report on implementation of Aichi Target 11	x
(ii) Protected area quality enhanced through Green List of Protected Areas	
(iii) Marine protection towards achieving Aichi Target 11 accelerated	x
(iv) Effectiveness of World Heritage Convention and protection of listed sites is enhanced, leadership on performance demonstrated, and nature/culture integration advanced	

WCPA/GPAP/WH Result 1.2:

(i) Parties to the CBD are supported to implement the full scope of Target 11 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity	x
(ii) Institutional and professional capacity to implement the full scope of Target 11 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity is developed	
(iii) Financial capacity to implement the full scope of Target 11 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity is	

enhanced	
(iv) The value of protected areas is communicated to key constituencies including urban dwellers and young people	x
WCPA/GPAP/WH Result 1.3	
(i) The ecological and functional connectivity of terrestrial and marine ecosystems is enhanced	x
(ii) Criteria for the identification of OECMs developed and applied	x
IUCN PROGRAMME AREA 2: Promoting and supporting effective and equitable governance of natural resources	
WCPA/GPAP/WH Result 2.1:	
(i) Governance and equity assessment approaches for protected area systems are developed	
(ii) Pilot governance assessments conducted	
WCPA/GPAP/WH Result 2.2:	
(i) Governance quality and equity of protected areas is enhanced	x
WCPA/GPAP/WH Result 2.3:	
(i) Legal and institutional approaches for enhancing the role of PAs in natural resource governance are piloted	x
IUCN PROGRAMME AREA 3: Deploying nature-based solutions to address societal challenges	
WCPA/GPAP/WH Result 3.1	
(i) Case studies for nature-based solutions involving PAs in a range of sectors are collated	
WCPA/GPAP/WH Result 3.2	
(i) Dissemination and use of PAs as nature-based solutions across a range of sectors	x
WCPA/GPAP/WH Result 3.3	
(i) Cross-sector learning and application of solutions is enabled	