

## Identifying Key Biodiversity Areas to support implementation of the Aichi Targets

This document complements previous INF documents<sup>1,2</sup>. It is intended to inform Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) of the value of identifying KBAs, as a contribution to the achievement of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 - 2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets. In particular, the identification of KBAs is highly relevant for the full and effective implementation of Aichi Targets 11 and 12.

### WHAT ARE KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS?

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) are '*sites that contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity*', including vital habitat for threatened plant and animal species in terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems. To date, more than 18,000 KBAs have been identified worldwide.

### THE KBA PARTNERSHIP AND SUPPORT FOR PARTIES AND PARTNERS TO THE CBD

In September 2016, eleven of the world's leading nature conservation organisations launched a new partnership to map, monitor and conserve the most important places for life on earth. The KBA Partnership will mobilise the expertise, experience and resources of the partner organisations to:

- identify, map and document thousands of Key Biodiversity Areas worldwide;
- promote targeted conservation action in Key Biodiversity Areas; and
- inform and influence public policy and private sector decision-making.

The KBA Partnership will enhance global conservation efforts by systematically mapping internationally important sites and by helping to ensure that scarce resources are directed to the most important site for nature. The impact of this vital work will be enhanced by promoting targeted investment in conservation action at priority sites.

The KBA Partnership comprises eleven founding partners: Amphibian Survival Alliance, BirdLife International, Conservation International, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, Global Environment Facility, Global Wildlife Conservation, IUCN, NatureServe, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Wildlife Conservation Society and the World Wildlife Fund.

### A GLOBAL STANDARD FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS

In 2016, a Global Standard for the Identification of Key Biodiversity Areas (IUCN 2016)<sup>3</sup> was adopted at IUCN World Conservation Congress, in Hawaii, USA (1 – 10 September 2016). The Standard sets out a process for the identification of KBAs worldwide. It is intended to harmonise existing site identification processes **into a single unifying approach**, and to ensure that the process is applicable for elements of biodiversity not considered by existing approaches.

**The KBA Standard can be applied to all taxonomic groups and elements of biodiversity, with the exception of micro-organisms. A single, consolidated list of KBAs identified at the global level and approved by taxonomic experts will be a powerful tool for the conservation and legal protection of these sites.**

The Standard builds on more than 40 years of experience in identifying sites for different taxonomic, ecological or thematic subsets of biodiversity, in particular Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (known as IBAs, over 13,000 sites identified by the BirdLife International Partnership), and Alliance for Zero Extinction sites (AZE sites)) and several others.

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<sup>1</sup> UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/17/INF/10 Key Biodiversity Areas: Identifying areas of particular importance for biodiversity in support of the Aichi Targets'

<sup>2</sup> Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2013) UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/17Add.3

<sup>3</sup> IUCN (2016) A Global Standard for the Identification of Key Biodiversity Areas, Version 1.0. First edition. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

The Global Standard establishes a consultative, science-based process for KBA identification, founded on the consistent application of global criteria, with quantitative thresholds that have been developed through an extensive consultation exercise spanning several years.

Sites qualify as global KBAs if they meet one or more of 11 criteria, clustered into five categories:

- threatened biodiversity;
- geographically restricted biodiversity;
- ecological integrity;
- biological processes; and
- irreplaceability.

The KBA criteria can be applied to species and ecosystems in terrestrial, inland water and marine environments. Although not all KBA criteria may be relevant to all elements of biodiversity, the thresholds associated with each of the criteria may be applied across all taxonomic groups (other than micro-organisms) and ecosystems.

### RELEVANCE FOR THE AICHI TARGETS

In 2011, Parties to the CBD committed to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 – 2020, and its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Progress towards the goals of the Convention and the Strategic Plan is reported in the Global Biodiversity Outlook, through analysis of national reports submitted by Parties and other data provided to the Executive Secretary to the CBD by Partners and other stakeholders. The fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook<sup>4</sup> (GBO4) warns that progress towards the Targets has not been sufficient to date to achieve our agreed goals; considerably more effort is required to get back on course towards our 2020 target.

However, good progress is reported for Aichi Target 11 (*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 landscape and seascape*). Seventeen percent of terrestrial and inland water areas are on track to be conserved by 2020.

The identification of KBAs can aid the identification of sites for conservation, through systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) and therefore supporting Parties to deliver against Aichi Target 11. Identification of a KBA is recognition of a site's significance for biodiversity; it does not on its own imply any particular type of management response. The identification of KBAs can also be used to help processes such as systematic conservation planning and implementation and monitoring of intergovernmental commitments, as well as responsible development plans and applications of safeguards, therefore supporting implementation of other Aichi Targets (see below).

It is important to note that KBAs differ from large-scale conservation priority approaches, such as Ecoregions, Endemic Bird Areas, Wilderness Areas and Biodiversity Hotspots, which identify broad regions of interest, often spanning several countries. KBAs identify the most important sites for biodiversity within each country or region.

### INDICATORS OF PROGRESS TOWARDS TARGET 11

GBO4 notes that while there is good progress in the establishment of terrestrial protected areas, very little of the open oceans are protected, and just 55% of terrestrial ecoregions are protected. Therefore an increase in terrestrial protected areas globally is required in order to reach this Target, with an increased focus on representivity and management effectiveness, and a major expansion of marine protected areas. The identification of KBAs can help to address the issue of representivity, where protected areas fail to provide protection to threatened species and ecosystems. As such "Protected Areas Coverage of Key Biodiversity Areas" is an accepted indicator of progress towards Target 11, for which data is available now, at the national and global scales.

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<sup>4</sup> Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2014) Global Biodiversity Outlook 4. Montréal, 155 pages

## CONTRIBUTION TO AICHI TARGET 12

The protection of KBAs can also assist the achievement of Aichi Target 12 “By 2020, the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained”. Studies have shown that well governed and effectively managed protected areas are a proven method for safeguarding both habitats and populations of species and for delivering important ecosystem services<sup>5,6,7</sup>. However, in contrast to Target 11, progress towards Aichi Target 12 is limited<sup>8</sup>.

## KBAS AND PROTECTED AREAS

While identification of KBAs according to the criteria and thresholds of the Standard is unrelated to site legal protection status, the process can inform the identification of sites for protection. Many KBAs overlap wholly or partly with existing protected area boundaries, including sites designated under international conventions (e.g. Ramsar and World Heritage) and areas protected at national and local levels (e.g. national parks, indigenous or community conserved areas) and other site management approaches. Thus, the identification of a KBA can inform national site prioritisation processes, to ensure the persistence of the biodiversity elements at sites identified as important for biodiversity noting that many protected areas are established for other conservation purposes, and will not be identified as KBAs. Nevertheless, KBAs are highly relevant to the further development and implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA).

## KBAS AND CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

The identification of KBAs can provide information for conservation management decision-making, by identifying key sites for biodiversity, and indicating site vulnerability. This combined with information about management actions needed to safeguard biodiversity within a KBA, and other data such as potential financial costs, likely opportunities for action, site evolutionary history and connectivity, can also inform site selection and prioritisation for conservation action. Thus KBAs do not necessarily equate to conservation priorities, but are invaluable for informing systematic conservation planning and priority-setting.

## USES OF INFORMATION ABOUT KBAS

A preliminary overview of potential end-users<sup>9</sup> of information about KBAs, based on consultations with private sector and industry associations, international agencies and donors, intergovernmental conventions and an Indigenous and Local Communities, has highlighted that the process of identifying sites of importance for biodiversity at the global level, will have multiple benefits for Parties and partners to the CBD including:

- mapping of potentially sensitive areas that may be integrated within development strategies and planning processes (Aichi Target 2);
- supporting private sector decision making: e.g. risk management and informing Environmental Impact Assessments (Aichi Target 4);
- helping to identify “Critical Habitat” within the World Bank’s Environmental and Social Framework (Aichi Target 4);
- providing information about sites of global significance, to aid decision making related to site protection at the national level (Aichi Target 11);
- describing the CBD’s Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) (Aichi Target 11);
- monitoring progress towards global and national biodiversity targets (Aichi Target 11);
- taking steps to prevent the extinction of known threatened species and improve the conservation status (Aichi Target 12);
- restoring and safeguarding ecosystems providing essential services; KBAs have been shown to be important for providing ecological services to people, as well as for biodiversity (Aichi Target 14); and
- providing information for donors (e.g. GEF or the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund) so that investments may be directed to areas or the world identified to be the most important for biodiversity (Aichi Target 20).

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<sup>5</sup> Ervin, J, *et al.* 2010. Making Protected Areas Relevant: A guide to integrating protected areas into wider landscapes, seascapes and sectoral plans and strategies. CBD Technical Series No. 44.

<sup>6</sup> Langhammer, P.F. *et al.* (2007) Identification and Gap Analysis of Key Biodiversity Areas: Targets for Comprehensive Protected Area Systems. IUCN World

<sup>7</sup> Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2008). Protected Areas in Today’s World: Their Values and Benefits for the Welfare of the Planet. Technical Series No. 36.

<sup>8</sup> Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2014) Global Biodiversity Outlook 4. Montréal, 155 pages

<sup>9</sup> Dudley, N., Boucher, J.L., Cuttelod, A., Brooks, T.M., and Langhammer, P.F. (Eds). 2014. Applications of Key Biodiversity Areas: end-user consultations. Cambridge, UK and Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

## KBA AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

KBAs are directly relevant to the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda, most notably to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 (*Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, marine resources for sustainable development*) and 15 (*Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss*). “Protected Area Coverage of KBAs”, considered one of the most informative of indicators about protected areas<sup>10</sup>, has been proposed as an indicator of progress towards Targets: 6.6 (relating to the protection of water-related ecosystems); 14.2 (sustainable management and protections of marine and coastal ecosystems towards healthier and more productive oceans); 14.5 (conservation of coastal and marine areas); and 15.1 (conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems).

Also see a comprehensive mapping of ‘*Areas important for biodiversity*’ inform the SDGs<sup>11</sup>.

## RESOURCES

KBA information can be accessed through the following portals:

- **A World Database on KBAs:** <http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/kba-data-use> is under development. It will include an interactive online map of KBAs with links to detailed documentation for each site. KBA shapefiles will be available to all for non-commercial use.
- **The Global Standard for the Identification of KBAs:** [https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/a\\_global\\_standard\\_for\\_the\\_identification\\_of\\_key\\_biodiversity\\_areas\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/a_global_standard_for_the_identification_of_key_biodiversity_areas_final_web.pdf)
- **IBAT Country Profiles:** IBAT Country Profiles provide information important features of biodiversity within national boundaries including: key biodiversity areas; species extinction risk, and the coverage of protected areas. The Country Profiles are available here: [www.ibat-alliance.org/ibat-conservation](http://www.ibat-alliance.org/ibat-conservation)

### Tools developed specifically for the business sector:

- The KBA partners are currently developing **Guiding Principles and Recommendations for Responsible Business Operations in and around Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs)** applicable to all business sectors. The goal is to identify a common framework for business to operate responsibly in and around KBAs, based on the best available conservation science and site management experience, and developed through a multi-stakeholder consensus-based process.
- **IBAT for Business**<sup>12</sup>: The Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT) is a decision-support tool designed to help businesses understand and manage environmental risks. IBAT compiles critical biodiversity data in accordance with globally accepted standards and in an online mapping format.

Annex 1 to this document provides, a selection of tools and resources available to Parties to enhance progress towards Aichi Target 11 include:

**For more information about Key Biodiversity Areas,  
please see: [www.keybiodiversityareas.org](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org) or contact:**

Jane Smart (IUCN) – [jane.smart@iucn.org](mailto:jane.smart@iucn.org)  
Natasha Ali (IUCN) – [natasha.ali@iucn.org](mailto:natasha.ali@iucn.org)  
Pepe Clarke (BirdLife International) – [pepe.clarke@birdlife.org](mailto:pepe.clarke@birdlife.org)

<sup>10</sup> Butchart SHM, *et al.* (2015) Shortfalls and Solutions for Meeting National and Global Conservation Area Targets. Conservation Letters, 8, Issue 5, pp 329–337

<sup>11</sup> UNEP/CBD/COP/13/INF/19 developed by the CBD Secretariat.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ibatforbusiness.org/>

## Annex 1: A selection tools and resources available to Parties to enhance progress towards Aichi Target 11.

- **Protected Planet®** - powered by the World Database on Protected Areas, maintained by IUCN and UNEP-WCMC, provides a global list of the world's protected areas. It documents over 215,000 protected areas in 238 countries and territories. Protected Planet also includes the **Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas Registry**, which includes areas where governance is by local communities or jointly by communities and with government/ the private sector.
- **IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas**<sup>13</sup> - a new global standard for protected areas, to improve the contribution that protected areas make to sustainable development through nature conservation and provision of associated social, economic, cultural, and spiritual values.
- **Training Materials and Guidance in Applying EBSA Criteria**<sup>14</sup>
- **FAO technical guidelines on marine protected areas and fisheries**<sup>15</sup>
- **FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security**<sup>16</sup>
- **Azores Scientific Criteria and Guidance** for identifying ecologically or biologically significant marine areas and designing representative networks of marine protected areas in open ocean waters and deep sea habitats<sup>17</sup>
- **Enhancing our Heritage toolkit**<sup>18</sup> - a management effectiveness tool for World heritage sites, developed by UNESCO World Heritage Centre, IUCN and partners<sup>18</sup>:
- **IUCN's Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series**<sup>19</sup> - includes guidelines for protected areas related to ecological restoration, staff training, sacred natural sites, sustainable financing, indigenous and local communities, sustainable tourism, and transboundary protected areas
- **Red List of Ecosystems**<sup>20</sup> – a global standard to help assess the conservation status of ecosystems, applicable at local, national, regional and global levels. This information will help to identify areas at risk of ecosystem collapse, in order to assist the prioritisation of sites for protection
- **The Nature Conservancy quick guide series** - highlighting how to plan for protected area systems, expand them into wider land and seascapes, and how to conduct gap and management effectiveness assessments.
- **IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas Best Practice Guidelines**<sup>21</sup>

There are also a number of highly relevant support tools available under the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas, including: e-learning curricula; a comprehensive database of documents and tools created by the Executive Secretary and partners; and CBD technical series.

<sup>13</sup> More information accessible at: <https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/our-work/green-list>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/ebsa/resources?tab=training-materials>

<sup>15</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (2011) Fisheries management. 4. Marine protected areas and fisheries. FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries. No. 4, Suppl. 4. Rome, FAO. 2011. 198p

<sup>16</sup> FAO (2012) Voluntary guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2801e/i2801e.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/mar/ebsaws-2014-01/other/ebsaws-2014-01-azores-brochure-en.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Hockings, M *et al.* (2008) Enhancing our Heritage Toolkit Assessing management effectiveness of natural World Heritage sites, World Heritage Papers 23, accessible at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/series/23/>

<sup>19</sup> Series available at: <https://www.iucn.org/protected-areas/world-commission-protected-areas/publications/best-practice-guidelines>

<sup>20</sup> Information accessible at: <http://iucnrle.org/>

<sup>21</sup> Accessible at: [http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/gpap\\_home/gpap\\_capacity2/gpap\\_bpg/](http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/gpap_home/gpap_capacity2/gpap_bpg/)