



## Convention on Biological Diversity

Distr.  
GENERAL

UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/17/INF/10  
10 October 2013

ENGLISH ONLY

SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC,  
TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE

Seventeenth meeting

Montreal, 14-18 October 2013

Item 3 of the provisional agenda\*

### **KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS: IDENTIFYING AREAS OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE FOR BIODIVERSITY IN SUPPORT OF THE AICHI TARGETS**

*Note by the Executive Secretary*

1. The Executive Secretary is circulating herewith, for the information of participants in the seventeenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, a report entitled: “Key Biodiversity Areas: Identifying Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity in Support of the Aichi Targets”.
2. The report, which is submitted jointly by IUCN and BirdLife International, contributes to the work of the Secretariat undertaken in response to decision XI/13 B on the identification of scientific and technical needs related to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, in particular to Strategic Goal C.
3. This document provides information related to policy support tools and methodologies to help achieve Aichi Biodiversity Target 11, as discussed in document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/17/2/Add.3, section 11.2, paragraphs 12 and 19.
4. The report is presented in the form and language in which it was received by the Secretariat.

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\* UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/17/1.



## Key Biodiversity Areas:

### Identifying areas of particular importance for biodiversity in support of the Aichi Targets

**Aichi Target 11** calls for an increase in the coverage of protected areas “... *especially of areas of particular importance for biodiversity...*”. Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) identify and document such areas, according to standardised criteria. Ensuring that KBAs are covered by Protected Area systems is a key step towards achieving Target 11. KBA information can be valuable for achieving a number of other Aichi Targets too.

### Target 11 and Key Biodiversity Areas

**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 landscapes and seascapes.*

A key element of Aichi Target 11 is the call for an increase in the coverage of protected areas “... *especially of areas of particular importance for biodiversity...*”. Such areas should be a priority when expanding protected areas coverage, as it is recognised that current protected area systems have many gaps.

But how can such sites be identified? This is the aim of the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) approach. Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are sites that contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity. They are identified using globally standardised criteria and thresholds applied by national and international constituencies. KBAs are sites, which could potentially be managed as Protected Areas or by other effective means to conserve biodiversity. They therefore 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 instead identify the most important sites for biodiversity within each country or region.

### How KBAs can help CBD Parties

Key Biodiversity Areas provide fundamental information to CBD Parties and others to inform a wide range of decision-makers and help achieve the Aichi Targets, for example:

- Mapping potentially sensitive areas that need to be considered in **and integrated with development strategies and planning processes (Aichi Target 2)**
- **Supporting private and financial sectors** to manage their environmental risks related to biodiversity impact (e.g. IFC 2012 paragraph 16) **(Aichi Target 4)**
- **Gap analysis of Protected Area networks**, and informing the selection of sites for protection under national and also international legislation (e.g. World Heritage Natural sites, Ramsar sites, Natura 2000 sites in Europe) **(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: KBAs are being used for monitoring progress towards (**Aichi Target 11**; see [www.bipindicators.net/paoverlays](http://www.bipindicators.net/paoverlays)).
- Taking steps to prevent the **extinction of known threatened species** and **improve their conservation status**. In particular, conservation of Alliance for Zero Extinction sites – which hold the only populations of highly threatened species – is an essential step in meeting (**Aichi Target 12**).
- Restoring and safeguarding **ecosystems providing essential services** – since KBAs have been shown to be particularly important for providing ecological services to people, as well as for biodiversity (**Aichi Target 14**)
- **Guiding and catalysing conservation investments by donors**, e.g. the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund uses KBAs to direct their funding efforts (CEPF 2007) (**Aichi Target 20**)

The development of KBA methodology began with the identification of important sites for birds and was later adapted and extended to other taxa (Eken et al. 2004, Langhammer et al. 2007, Foster et al. 2012, Holland et al. 2012). IUCN is now convening a process to consolidate and build on the existing criteria.

### Accessing KBA information

Most KBA data are freely accessible to Governments via the Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool for Research and Conservation Planning, at [www.ibat-alliance.org/ibat-conservation](http://www.ibat-alliance.org/ibat-conservation)

### KBAs identified to date include:

- **Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs)** - KBAs identified using information on birds - have been identified in nearly all countries across the world, and on the oceans (including the high seas). Over 12,000 IBAs have so far been identified, mapped and documented by BirdLife International ([www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org))
- **Alliance for Zero Extinction - AZE sites** are KBAs holding the sole remaining population of any Critically Endangered or Endangered species. So far, 587 sites have been identified for 920 species in groups that are comprehensively assessed on the IUCN Red List, comprising mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, conifers, and reef-building corals. This effort is coordinated by the Alliance for Zero Extinction ([www.zeroextinction.org](http://www.zeroextinction.org))
- KBAs have been identified less comprehensively for a range of other taxonomic groups including mammals, amphibians, reptiles, fish, butterflies, dragonflies and freshwater molluscs.
- Plantlife International has compiled Important Plant Areas (IPAs) inventories for 36 countries with another 30 in progress ([www.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk)), mainly in Europe, the Mediterranean parts of North Africa and the Middle East and parts of Asia.
- Identification of globally important freshwater sites is in progress in more than 90 countries, including continental Africa, continental Europe and the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot.
- Marine KBA identification is complete or in progress in several marine regions including: Philippines, Melanesia, Polynesia-Micronesia, and the Eastern Tropical Pacific.



Overall, around 80 countries have KBAs identified for multiple taxonomic groups with another 73 partially complete or in progress. Nearly all countries have KBAs identified using birds – Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas. IBAs are not a completely comprehensive set of KBAs, but are still very useful to inform decision-making. IBAs thus represent an excellent first-cut of the larger KBA network and can confidently be used for planning purposes.

### **Towards a globally agreed standard for the identification of areas of importance for biodiversity**

Existing approaches to identify areas of particular importance for biodiversity to date have delivered substantial benefits for biodiversity (Larsen *et al.* 2012, Butchart *et al.* 2012). These approaches have however had a restricted taxonomic focus.

At its members' request, IUCN is leading a global consultation process involving a wide range of stakeholders to build on existing approaches and develop a consolidated globally agreed standard on KBAs (IUCN 2012). This consultation is being led by the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas and the Species Survival Commission Joint Task Force on Biodiversity and Protected Areas. More information is available at [www.iucn.org/biodiversity\\_and\\_protected\\_areas\\_taskforce](http://www.iucn.org/biodiversity_and_protected_areas_taskforce).

The new consolidated KBA standard will be launched at the World Park Congress in November 2014, in Sydney, Australia.

### **Call to parties: contribute to the development and implementation of a global standard**

Work to develop the new standard is referenced in *Identification of scientific and technical needs for the Attainment of the targets under strategic Goal C of the Strategic plan for biodiversity 2011-2020* (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/17/2/Add.3 paragraphs 8b, 12, 19, 20b, 33).

IUCN encourages Parties to integrate existing information on Key Biodiversity Areas into their National Biodiversity Action Plans and Strategies (NBSAPS) and to adopt the upcoming globally agreed KBA standard to identify additional areas of particular importance for biodiversity at a national level.

For further information:

*Dr. Jane Smart, Global Director, Biodiversity Conservation Group, IUCN* [jane.Smart@iucn.org](mailto:jane.Smart@iucn.org)

*Dr. Leon Bennun, Director of Science, Policy and Information, BirdLife International*  
[leon.bennun@birdlife.org](mailto:leon.bennun@birdlife.org)

*Diego Juffe Bignoli, IUCN Aichi Targets and Knowledge Products Officer, IUCN* [diego.juffe@iucn.org](mailto:diego.juffe@iucn.org)

*Annabelle Cuttelod, IUCN Conservation Planning Officer, IUCN* [annabelle.cuttelod@iucn.org](mailto:annabelle.cuttelod@iucn.org)

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