



Report on the Regional Workshop on “Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures” (OECMs) in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Region

Identifying, advancing and reporting OECMs. Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations. Tunis, Tunisia, 10th-11th of February 2020



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Abbreviations

AT11	Aichi Target 11
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FRAs	Fisheries Restricted Areas (under the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean)
GFCM	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
MAPAMED	Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean
MPA	Marine Protected Area
OECM	Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures
POWPA	Programme of Work on Protected Areas (under the Convention on Biological Diversity)
SPA/RAC	Regional activities Center for Specially Protected Areas (under the UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan)
UNEP-WCMC	UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Areas
WDPA	World Database on Protected Areas

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Background

1. Protected areas are an important element of national biodiversity conservation strategies in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries. In the last few years, countries have particularly focused on advancing the Aichi Target 11 (AT 11) which states: “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”.
2. Since the adoption of the Aichi target in 2010, parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have only agreed a definition, guiding principles, common characteristics and criteria for identification of ‘other effective area-based conservation measures’ (OECMs) in 2018 at the 14th Conference of the Parties (COP).
3. An “OECM” is defined as: “A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in situ conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values”¹. Examples of possible OECMs can be permanent fishing closures, natural sacred sites or natural military sites (where no active action compromising nature conservation is taking place).
4. Since the CBD COP 14, the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas Task Force on OECMs has recently published a Technical Report on “Recognising and Reporting OECMs”² and is finalizing an OECM Assessment Methodology. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has also organized an expert meeting in 2019 to guide the identification of OECM in fisheries conservation areas³.
5. State agencies, private entities, civil society organisations and local communities are now turning to assess the extent of their existing area-based conservation

¹ [Decision 14/8](#)

² Available at <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/48773>

³ The meeting report can be found at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca7194en/CA7194EN.pdf>.

measures that have the potential to be classified as OECMs and to begin to recognize and report them.

6. The main objective of the workshop was to support southern and eastern Mediterranean countries to learn about advances in the international arena on ‘other effective area-based conservation measures’ and to share guidance about how to identify, support and report OECMs in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. The workshop aimed to first inform government officials and key stakeholders about the CBD decision regarding OECMs and the main guidance and initiatives by global organizations and agencies, like IUCN and FAO, to support in the identification of OECM.
7. The workshop facilitated a discussion on OECMs within the regional context, covering both terrestrial and marine aspects (with a particular attention to fisheries conservation measures and areas) and discussed specific examples and case studies of potential OECMs in the region.
8. The following sections of this report highlight the main conclusions, recommendations and questions that have risen from the workshop discussions.

Workshop sessions

9. The meeting commenced with opening remarks by Mr. Maher Mahjoub (North Africa Programme Coordinator, IUCN-Med), Ms. Imèn Meliane (Vice Chair for North Africa, Middle East and West Asia, IUCN-WCPA), Ms. Vera Agostini (Deputy-Director Fisheries and Aquaculture, FAO) and Mr. Hedi Chebili (Director-General for Environment and Quality of Life at the Tunisian Ministry of Environment).

Session 1: Setting the scene

10. Ms. Imen Meliane (IUCN-WCPA) gave an opening presentation⁴ on “the evolution of the concept of *Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures* in the CBD process”. She highlighted the original intention of the CBD Parties in adding OECMs alongside protected areas in Aichi Target 11, which was mainly to capture areas providing high level of conservation which are often not managed

⁴ Most workshop presentations can be accessed online at: <https://www.iucn.org/news/mediterranean/202006/tapping-oecms-potential-advance-aichi-target-11-southern-and-eastern-mediterranean-countries>

by environment and/or nature conservation ministries (e.g. fisheries), and therefore not included in national protected area databases. She stressed the need for effectiveness both of protected areas and of OECMs in conserving biodiversity, and therefore the inclusion of OECMs should not be towards a race to simply increase coverage. She added that good governance had been identified as an important factor for effectiveness at a recent (January 2020) workshop in Vilm (Germany), and that this element remains one of the main challenges in protected areas in the North African region, and considering that OECMs provide an opportunity for more inclusive governance. She finally mentioned the ongoing discussions for negotiating the new post-2020 biodiversity targets, which would most likely call for an increase of protected areas and OECMs in terrestrial and marine environments up to 30%, covering at least 60% of the important areas for biodiversity, according to the draft document by the CBD.

11. Following that, Harry Jonas (IUCN-WCPA & Future Law) gave a short presentation on the CBD Decision 14/8 that adopted an official definition for OECMs: “a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values”. He also presented two guidance documents on OECMs: the recently released IUCN-WCPA Technical report on “Recognizing and reporting OECMs”; and the draft version of a “Step-by-step methodology for identifying, reporting, recognising, and supporting OECMs.” He mentioned that OECMs are a step forward in the informal recognition of important areas for biodiversity beyond protected areas. He emphasised that whereas protected areas have a primary conservation objective, OECMs deliver effective conservation of biodiversity regardless of their objectives and their types of governance, (governmental, private, or indigenous or local communities’ areas). He suggested that OECMs could become a new international legal designation that provides official recognition towards state authorities. In this sense, he added, new OECM-related regulations and policies may lead to an improvement in sectoral practices.
12. The third presentation was on “OECMs in the fishery sector” by Amber Himes Cornell (FAO). She presented the main conclusions of a recent FAO-led workshop on OECMs in the marine capture fishery sector that took place in Rome in May 2019. She noted that an important factor for fisheries related OECMs is permanence, as a number of fishing restrictions are temporary. She added that

OECMs are not expected to perform better than marine protected areas in fisheries. She reflected on some of the questions that were raised in their previous workshop: How should management of fisheries OECMs be performed? Across the fishing sector, across all sectors or at seascape level? What needs to be reported? To whom? Or How to define effectiveness? were other of the questions she posed.

Session 2: Identifying potential OECMs within the regional context

13. During this session a number of presentations were made to highlight potential OECMs that are present in the region. These were:

- GFCM-Fisheries Restricted Areas (FRAs) by Ms. Aurora Nastasi (GFCM);
- Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve in Lebanon, the Nile Delta cold hydrocarbon seeps FRA in Egypt and El Bibane lagoon and Ramsar site in Tunisia by Mr. David Rodríguez-Rodríguez (ETC-UMA) ;
- The Ahaggar Cultural Park in Algeria by Mr. Salah Amokrane (ministry of Culture, Algeria);
- The M'Hamid El Ghizlane Permanent Hunting Reserve in Morocco by Mr. Zouhair Amhaouch (Water & Forest Department, Morocco);
- The potential of sacred sites as OECMs by Ms. Liza Zoghib (DiversEarth).

14. The presentations highlighted the main characteristics and elements of these sites and discussed how they meet the OECM criteria and the gaps in information when present. The discussion that followed helped clarifying some questions on OECM identification and to spark the discussion on the suitability of the sites to become OECMs.

15. The questions raised during this session related mainly to the criteria and particularly if an OECM needs to meet all the sub-criteria listed in Annex III-B of the CBD Decision 14.8. The Decision clearly states that “The guiding principles and common characteristics and criteria for identification of other effective area-based conservation measures are applicable across all ecosystems currently or potentially important for biodiversity and should be applied in a flexible way and on a case-by-case basis”. However further guidance on how these would be applied is needed.

16. Other questions raised related to who has the authority to assess and “declare” that an area is an OECMs, if ultimately this is the focal point of the CBD or could be done by any main stakeholder, and who should be involved in the assessment.
17. Three thematic Working Groups were set up to carry further discussions on the details of the case studies. The three groups were on: Fisheries OECMs, Forest and wetland OECMs and Cultural OECMs. Two rounds of group discussions took place.

Salient points from the Working Groups’ Discussions

18. *Fisheries related OECMs:*

- OECMs were seen as an opportunity to help meet the post-2020 biodiversity targets, particularly as MPA coverage in this region is very low (around 1%), mainly due to conflict with the fisheries sector.
- It was not clear if all criteria and sub-criteria needed to be met for an area to be an OECM. Moreover, they suggested that thresholds for meeting OECM criteria should be established.
- Given that an important OECM criterion is to ensure long term conservation and sustainability of the resources, the question of monitoring is important, particularly as there’s an important lack of data for the monitoring of fisheries areas. The monitoring of and within OECM still need to be further addressed and participants highlighted the need to clarify who should be responsible for monitoring, who should collect data and do the monitoring/ and pay for it.
- A number of challenges related to potential fisheries related OECM has been highlighted, such as: Protection of three-dimensional boundaries in the water column as opposed to traditional two-dimensional terrestrial boundaries; data availability, particularly for small scale fisheries stocks; financing; political will; or determination of the main objective of these sites, whether protection or sustainable use, were also mentioned.
- A particular challenge is for areas that are co-managed by several stakeholders (e.g. Fisheries department, Ministry of Environment and local communities). This raises questions such as if the country needs to

define a national regulation or guidelines to orientate each actor on its role and responsibilities?

- It was noted that equitable management was likely to be unmet in this type of sites, however, OECMs could provide an opportunity to enhance governance through decentralized management regimes.
- It was agreed that a feasible thing to do by the countries would be to identify and propose one or two fisheries OECMs in the short term. Those sites could serve as examples to other countries and also provide incentives to increase conservation and recognition within countries. Fishers' proposed voluntary no-take zones in Tunisia and Morocco were suggested as potential OECMs.
- The FAO Regional Office for MENA and/or the GFCM, in collaboration with the Fisheries and Aquaculture department, could support an exercise of identifying potential OECMs in the fisheries sector.
- A final important point of discussion was whether OECMs should be "Declared" or "Recognized". It was suggested that OECMs should not be a formal designation but rather a label that recognizes the site as such. However, in the future, new OECMs could be designed to meet the criteria.

19. *Forest and wetland OECMs:*

- Participants discussed that for several countries in the region, Ramsar Sites do not have a status of protected areas as they lack specific regulations and management provisions. However, it was agreed that wetlands in general and in particular Ramsar sites that do not overlap with a protected area could be potential OECM candidates as they often provide conservation outcomes.
- Fauna reserves and (permanent) hunting reserves have also been raised as potential OCEM candidates. Participants highlighted the issue of managing reintroductions of endangered herbivores within these areas where predators have been lost so that expanding herbivores will not degrade existing vegetation was raised.
- Other candidate OECMs that were also proposed were community-managed "Himas" and ecotourism trails (in Lebanon). For the second

case, the size of the site (integrity) was discussed as it could help or not reach the conservation outcomes, which is among the principle criteria to be recognised as OECM.

- It was noted that meeting all of the OECM criteria and sub-criteria was challenging and probably not possible. The case-by case assessments may need some guidance to harmonize approaches and standards at least at the national level.
- At the national level, the group also raised the issue of the institutional arrangements and the validation process of OECM applications. Who should launch the consultation process and who should validate the potential sites? Should a new committee be established or should we use already established national committee like the CBD one or others, for example?
- It was recommended that IUCN/WCPA should plan some trainings and capacity-building events in the region to help countries understand and progress on OECMs assessment and identification. In addition, participants emphasized the need for political will across all sectors to join the OECM process.
- Finally, a number of questions were posed by the participants: Should Key Biodiversity Areas be designated as protected areas or as OECMs? Can OECMs have the same conservation objectives as protected areas? Should OECMs evolve into protected areas status or should they remain as OECM (which imply less expected administrative burden)?

20. *Cultural OECMs:*

- Participants discussed the example of the cultural parks in Algeria highlighting the benefits of recognizing these as OECMs. In addition to reinforcing the contribution of the cultural parks to conservation, a recognition as OECM helps expanding the understanding that various means contribute to conservation outcomes, not only protected areas. Additionally, an OECM status could help strengthen the governance system, and the institutional management.

- Participants also discussed governance issues, in particular the consent by local communities when recognizing areas as OECMs. In the case of the Algerian example of cultural parks, the local communities have been strongly involved in the establishment of the cultural parks and are part of their management structure. Participants also raised concern that when multiple actors are involved in the management and governance, requiring the consent of all might complicate the procedure to recognize the site as an OECM and could create further confusion about who will manage the OECM.
- Participants also discussed who can or should start the process for proposing a site as OECM, in addition to government entities. While they recognized that it is possible that civil society organizations or a private entities propose a site as OECM, it would be preferable that this proposition is subjected to consultation at the national level, as this can help legitimize the site and avoid potential conflict with other sectors and other users.
- The participants agreed that the Ahaggar Cultural Park meets most criteria and could start the process to be designated an OECM.

21. Plenary discussions:

- The plenary discussions summarized the points made in each group and discussed general points that were common.
- The question if an OECM needs to meet all criteria and sub-criteria and the need to establish thresholds was raised in all groups.
- The process for starting the identification of OECM was another point of interest to all groups. In particular participants raised the need for a consultative process but also recognized that many stakeholders are unaware of OECMs and the details of the CBD decisions. In this regard, the role of the CBD focal point to communicate and catalyse an OECM identification process at the national level is important.
- Participants also highlighted that the term OECMs (“Other measures”) was little attractive and might give the sensation that OECMs are secondary to protected areas, whereas some potential OECM sites have better governance and

management and achieve better conservation outcomes than some protected areas.

Session 3: Reporting OECMs

22. The session started with a presentation by Mr. David Rodríguez-Rodríguez (ETC-UMA) on the current degree of fulfillment of the Aichi Target 11 criteria by the countries of the region according to the data reported to the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA): Protected area coverage, inclusiveness of important areas for biodiversity, effective management, connectivity and habitat representation in terrestrial and marine protected area networks were assessed. The figures showed raised a lot of interest and discussion among the countries' representatives. This was an opportunity to discuss with government representatives some corrections in the data and insist once again on the need to update the data submitted to WDPA.
23. Regarding WDPA reporting, it was noted that the mechanism for the exchange of information between the countries and the WDPA managers was not clear for everyone and should be clarified. This is particularly the case as the agencies responsible for protected areas management are often not the CBD focal points or even the focal points for the Programme of Work on Protected areas (POWPA) of the CBD.
24. The representative of the Regional activity Center for Specially Protected Areas under the Barcelona Convention (SPA/RAC) suggested that MAPAMED could be used to feed the WDPA with up to date data on marine protected areas (MPAs) for non-European Mediterranean countries.
25. All the countries agreed to strive to update their WDPA data by the end of February 2020.
26. Ms. Marine Deguignet (UNEP-WCMC) gave a presentation on "International advancements in reporting OECMs" where she highlighted the elements of reporting OECMs and the new OECM database established by WCMC. The presentation raised a lot of ideas and discussion.
27. There was a lot of confusion from participants as to who is responsible for deciding whether an area is an OECM or not and ultimately reporting it to WCMC, and whether or not there would/should be a validation process to confirm that the OECM complies with the CBD criteria. While participants recognized the need

and possibility for other governmental sectors and other actors (civil society, etc.) to start an OECM process, there was a consensus in the room that a coordination on reporting on OECM is needed and that such coordination role should probably be best played by the CBD focal points as they can help explain the details about OECMs.

28. It was noted that the OECM Database currently only includes the OECM criteria as an optional open field and that database managers assume that it is each countries' decision to designate and report sites as OECMs. Some countries' representatives requested that the OECM criteria were added to the OECM Database so they can consider each of them properly when reporting.
29. Participants expressed concern about capturing the level of conservation objective of an OECM (if primary, secondary or ancillary) in the database, because this could be discouraging and disincentivizing some OECMs/sectors, "as if they are second class citizen" (as one participant put it). The purpose for capturing this detail is also not clear and may be creating unnecessary confusion (as was the case for the IUCN management categories) and possibly even distracting from the main points. In contrast there was much stronger interest for capturing information on how the area meets the CBD Criteria, particularly those relating to Biodiversity Values and outcomes.
30. Participants also raised the question if there will be a regular review process once an OECM is listed in the database, to ensure that is still effective and delivering biodiversity outcomes.
31. Ms. Deguignet (UNEP-WCMC) agreed that the WCMC would prepare a reporting template for the countries before the World Conservation Congress in June. It was said that the countries could update their reported OECM data to the WCMC if they so wished. It was also suggested that any governance authority, be it governmental, local communities or other, can report sites to the OECM Database.
32. Participants agreed to start an assessment process for one or two pilot OECMs per country by the end of April.

Session 4: Sector strategies for supporting OECMs

33. In this session, the facilitators, Ms. Imen Meliane (IUCN-WCPA) and Mr. Maher Mahjoub (IUCN-Med) initiated the discussion on the main challenges, gaps and shortcoming of potential OECMs, as well as on ways in which OECMs can be appropriately supported. Ms. Meliane encouraged participants to think on what additional conservation value OECMs could bring. The participants split in the previous three groups to discuss sectoral approaches to identify, assess, support and report OECMs in the region, and a plenary discussion followed.
34. Harry Jonas (IUCN-WCPA & Future Law) stated that a first step forward regarding OECM identification and assessment should be taken by the countries without the need for huge infrastructure.
35. Participants agreed that OECMs provide a good opportunity to capture and strengthen areas that are contributing to biodiversity conservation, and can also strongly contribute to advancing the AT11 in the region.
36. Participants have identified several areas as potential OECMs (See Annex II) and that would most likely meet many of the OECM criteria. A case by case assessment would need to be done in a coordinated fashion with key stakeholders at the national level to confirm the sites as OECMs.
37. Given the novelty of the concept, and given that not many stakeholders are aware of OECMs at the national level, participants agreed that training and capacity-building on OECMs by the IUCN, WCPA, FAO and other interested organisations would be needed for assistance in implementation and data validation.
38. The need to agree on whether all the OECM criteria and sub-criteria or just few essential ones must be met for a site to be officially designated as an OECM or whether there would be some flexibility at applying the criteria was reinforced again.
39. Many participants stressed that several sites or categories of conservation meet some of the OECM criteria, but there is an opportunity to strengthen their contribution to conservation and “bring them to an OECM standard”. This may require significant political will from the main stakeholders.
40. A pending question was whether once OECM are “recognised”, they remain as such forever or whether their status should be periodically revised. It was suggested that any relevant stakeholder could do the monitoring of sites to check whether they keep meeting the criteria.

Future steps

41. The countries agreed to update their data in the WDPA by the end of February.
42. Each country will identify and assess one or two potential OECMs by the end of April. The Ahaggar Cultural Park in Algeria committed to start the process to be designated an OECM through consultations with the CBD focal point and relevant stakeholders.
43. A template for the countries to report on OECMs will be prepared by the WCMC and info should be sent back to the WCMC by the countries by the end of May for the WCMC to populate the database before the World Conservation Congress (June 2020).
44. The IUCN/WCPA will circulate the OECM Guidelines for the countries to share them with their colleagues. Both the CBD focal points and the ministries of environment's representatives should be copied when sending those copies.
45. The IUCN should act as a catalyser on training and capacity-building. The countries agreed that further training, capacity-building actions and assistance for OECM implementation and data validation by the IUCN/WCPA will be needed. IUCN-led national training workshops for assessing OECMs were strongly suggested.
46. With regard to fisheries OECMs, support should be provided by the FAO Regional Office and/or the GFCM, with additional support possible from the FAO Headquarters. A regional follow-up workshop was suggested in a year's time.

ANNEX I - Questions on OECMs

- Can OECMs have the same conservation objectives as protected areas?
- Should unprotected KBAs/EBSAs be protected areas or OECMs?
- Should OECMs “evolve” to protected areas or is it enough with recognizing them as OECMs?
- Should OECMs be “designated” or “recognised”?
- It remains to be discussed whether, once recognized as OECMs, OECMs should remain the same forever or they need to be re-evaluated periodically to be maintained in the list.
- Is it necessary to meet all the OECM criteria and sub-criteria 100%? Are there any critical criteria to be always met? Should thresholds be established for a site to qualify as OECM?
- Can OECMs also be proposed and/or reported by stakeholders other than governments?

ANNEX II - Potential OECM in the region

Algeria: Cultural Parks, Artificial reefs, Regulated or controlled fisheries areas.

Tunisia: Ramsar sites and other important wetlands; Oases; Voluntary no-take fishing areas, artificial reefs.

Morocco: Permanent Hunting Reserves; Biosphere Reserves.

Lebanon: Private protected areas; Ecotourism trails, Himas, Areas with fisheries restrictions, buffer zones of Biosphere Reserves not declared as protected areas.

Egypt: GFCM-Fisheries Restricted Areas.