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Regional Seas Programme Progress Towards Global Targets for Marine and Coastal Conservation and Restoration

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Foreword

Protecting our marine and coastal environments goes beyond the establishment of MPAs. Various targets and indicators have been adopted that assist in determining quantitative and qualitative progress. To date, an overall baseline for RSCAP efforts in this area has not been developed, particularly since the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), adopted in December 2022. Other relevant targets under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have expired but have been instrumental in establishing focal areas of conservation and restoration under the Regional Seas Programme and continue to guide our work.

Restoration is an additional approach to protecting our marine and coastal environments, particularly in strengthening resilience of coastal and marine environments to climate-induced change. As the report notes, most RSCAPs have strategic objectives to restore degraded marine and coastal ecosystems, establishing baselines and tracking progress remains limited. This is an area that will become a greater focus for the Regional Seas in coming years.

It is pleasing to note that the RSCAPs have initiated targets and indicators that go beyond the globally adopted frameworks, illustrating the need for regional approaches to the protection and conservation of marine and coastal environments. The re-establishment of the Regional Seas Indicator Working Group will need to consider all existing frameworks as well as developments by individual RSCAPs to provide a universal set of indicators that can be adopted across all RSCAPs to strengthen aggregated reporting on our efforts to conserve and restore our ocean.

RSCAPs play a key role in promoting marine and coastal conservation, working across diverse legal and institutional contexts. We will continue to work with countries and strategic partners to ensure our ocean is healthy, diverse and resilient for those communities who depend on it for livelihoods and for generations to come.

Executive summary

The objective of this report is to provide a comprehensive review of progress by Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) towards global targets for the conservation and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems, with a particular focus on Target 2 and Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM GBF) for 2030. The report also considers progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Target 14.5 and Aichi Target 11, noting that both had a 2020 deadline but have nonetheless shaped regional marine and coastal conservation efforts. The report has been developed by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to help RSCAPs to expedite measuring of progress towards achieving global conservation and restoration targets set for 2030.

The baseline for assessing conservation and restoration efforts in marine and coastal areas is defined by the **following 12 indicators**:

A. Quantitative global conservation and restoration indicators (linked to KM GBF Targets 2 and 3)

1. Marine protected area (MPA) coverage.
2. Other effective area-based conservation measure (OECM) coverage.
3. Area under restoration.

B. Qualitative global conservation indicators (linked to KM GBF Target 3)

1. Protection of areas of biodiversity importance.
2. Ecological representativeness.
3. Connectivity.
4. Equitable governance.
5. Management effectiveness.
6. Integration into wider seascapes.
7. Protection of traditional territories.

C. Additional qualitative regional conservation indicators (used by select RSCAPs):

1. Level of protection.
2. Vulnerability to climate change.

Overview of results

Table A illustrates the varying extent to which data on conservation and restoration indicators is collected across the 18 RSCAPs. The analysis highlights significant disparities:

- Quantitative global indicators (coverage) are the most consistently reported, particularly indicator A.1 (MPA coverage). In contrast, only four RSCAPs currently assess OECM coverage.
- Qualitative global indicators show greater variability. Several RSCAPs—including Barcelona, Nairobi, and OSPAR conventions—collect comprehensive data across multiple quantitative indicators, emphasizing areas such as ecological representativeness, connectivity, and equitable governance. In contrast, many regions have limited, or no qualitative data reported.
- Additional qualitative regional indicators are the least frequently reported, with only a few regions—such as Barcelona, Cartagena, and Nairobi Conventions—actively collecting this data.

Table A. Summary of data collected on conservation and restoration efforts across 18 RSCAPs.

RSCAPs	A. Quantitative global conservation and restoration indicators			B. Qualitative global conservation indicators							C. Additional qualitative regional conservation indicators	
	A.1	A.2	A.3	B.1	B.2	B.3.	B.4	B.5	B.6	B.7	C.1	C.2
Abidjan Convention												
Antigua Convention												
Arctic Council	✓			✓		✓	✓					
Barcelona Convention	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Bucharest Convention	✓				✓						✓	
Cartagena Convention	✓					✓ ¹			✓			
Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)	✓								✓		✓	
Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA)												
Helsinki Convention (HELCOM)	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓			✓
Jeddah Convention	✓							✓				
Kuwait Convention												
Lima Convention	✓			✓								
Nairobi Convention	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓			✓	✓
Noumea Convention	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓				
Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP)	✓										✓	
OSPAR Convention	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)											✓	
Tehran Convention												

¹ Under development

A. Progress towards quantitative global indicators on protection and restoration coverage

Overall, RSCAPs play a key role in promoting marine and coastal conservation across **diverse legal and institutional contexts**. Their mandates vary: some RSCAPs can legally designate MPAs —such as OSPAR Convention (including areas beyond national jurisdiction) and CCAMLR—while others, including the Barcelona Convention and the Cartagena Convention, support national designations through recognition mechanisms such as Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) and Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) -listed sites. Several RSCAPs, including HELCOM and the Arctic Council, lack formal designation powers but coordinate regional MPA networks and frameworks.

The following indicators deriving from the KM GBF monitoring framework provide valuable information on baseline efforts:

1. MPA coverage

- 15 RSCAPs have adopted indicators to track MPA coverage, but only 112 have published baseline and progress data on surface area or % of sea covered. Eight have not reported such data. Most reports are from 2020 onwards, with some outliers from 2012 and 2019.
- The scope of reporting varies across RSCAPs. While some only assess and report on regionally designated or recognised sites (e.g. Cartagena Convention reports on SPAW-listed MPAs), others also include nationally or globally designated sites, such as Ramsar wetlands.
- Three RSCAPs have exceeded 10% MPA coverage and five have set explicit targets to reach 30% coverage by 2030.
- Data on MPA coverage is disaggregated in various ways—by biome (marine, wetland and coastal), jurisdiction (territorial waters, Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)), and site designation under other MEAs and global frameworks (e.g. Ramsar sites, Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs)).

2. OECM Coverage

- Mapping and reporting on OECMs are nascent for many RSCAPs. Currently, only four have begun assessing or reporting on OECM coverage. In some cases, including those areas with OECM potential significantly increases reported conservation coverage.

2 See Annex 1. Arctic Council/PAME, Barcelona Convention, Cartagena Convention, CCAMLR, HELCOM, PERSGA, Lima Convention, NC, Noumea Convention, OSPAR, For the Black Sea, only 2016 data from the European Environment Agency was found. CPPS' Spincam Atlas which comprised MPA coverage data has been taken down since February 2025.

3. Area under restoration

- Overall, restoration efforts are in early stages, with a lack of consistent information on restoration effort, success rates, trends, and a standardized definition of success. Some regions highlight the need for more quantitative follow-up studies to evaluate restoration outcomes more effectively.
- While most RSCAPs have strategic objectives to restore degraded marine and coastal ecosystems, establishing baselines and tracking progress remains limited.
- Three RSCAPs have set quantitative restoration targets and five have begun mapping degraded or restorable areas. However, none currently report on areas under active restoration.

B. Progress towards qualitative global conservation indicators

KM GBF Target 3 considers additional quality indicators in recognition that coverage alone does not capture the quality or effectiveness of biodiversity conservation in networks of MPAs and OECMs. A substantial number of RSCAPs are already tracking data aligned with optional disaggregations or supplementary indicators under the KM GBF and SDG monitoring frameworks, as follows:

1. Protection of areas of biodiversity importance:

- At least seven RSCAPs report on progress toward protecting areas of high biodiversity importance under KM GBF Target 3, using diverse approaches—including assessing coverage of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs), Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), and Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBAs), as well as tracking protection of key ecosystems.
- While some progress is evident, especially for nearshore habitats like coral reefs and mangroves, significant protection gaps remain for offshore ecosystems and ecologically important areas such as fish spawning grounds and marine mammal habitats.

2. Ecological representativeness:

- At least six RSCAPs have produced assessments on the representativeness of their MPA networks, often highlighting progress in protecting coastal habitats, but persistent gaps exist in offshore and deep-sea ecosystems.

3. Connectivity:

- Despite the absence of globally agreed methodologies, at least seven RSCAPs have developed—or are developing—regional approaches to assess and strengthen MPA connectivity.
- Most report persistent gaps, particularly in offshore and data-poor areas, and highlight the need for greater investment in research, capacity building, and indicator development.

4. Equitable governance:

- While six RSCAPs have acknowledged equitable governance in MPA criteria, only a few are actively monitoring and reporting on relevant indicators such as governance type and quality.
- Overall, decentralized governance and co-management remain limited, but some regions—particularly the Pacific—demonstrate strong community-based and participatory models aligned with local and Indigenous governance systems.

5. Management effectiveness:

- Six RSCAPs are actively monitoring or assessing MPA management effectiveness, using tools such as scorecards, self-assessments, and regional surveys.
- While methodologies vary, findings consistently highlight critical gaps in funding, staffing, monitoring, and enforcement.

6. Integration into wider seascapes:

- Integration in wider seascapes emphasizes the need for protected areas to not be isolated but rather part of broader, ecosystem-based management frameworks that encompass entire seascapes or landscapes. This concept has not yet been widely adopted by RSCAPS yet.

7. Protection of traditional territories

- Currently, no RSCAPs provide disaggregated data by indigenous and traditional territories, in line with KM GBF Headline indicator.

C. Progress towards additional qualitative regional conservation indicators

Several RSCAPs monitor **additional indicators not included in global monitoring frameworks** but which are essential to MPA quality and effectiveness. These include:

1. Level of protection:

- Eight RSCAPs provide detailed information on MPA **protection levels**, but few aggregate this data for a regional overview. Notably, only a small number of MPAs are strictly protected, and challenges remain in defining clear zoning, permitted uses, and enforcement procedures.

2. Climate change vulnerability:

- To ensure long-term biodiversity outcomes, MPA planning must integrate climate considerations—an emerging focus for some RSCAPs in response to rising ecosystem vulnerabilities.

Conclusions

- This baseline assessment underscores significant disparities among RSCAPs in the capacity and prioritization of both quantitative and qualitative data collection for marine and coastal conservation and restoration efforts. The variability in reporting demonstrates clear opportunities to improve data consistency, quality, and harmonization across regions.
- While MPA coverage is the most consistently monitored indicator, gaps persist in reporting and assessing OECM coverage and areas under active restoration.
- Qualitative global indicators, critical to understanding conservation effectiveness – such as inclusion of areas of high biodiversity, ecological representativeness and governance, are tracked unevenly. RSCAPS highlight particular knowledge and data gaps related to offshore and deep-sea areas.
- While global indicators to evaluate protected area connectivity and integration into broader seascapes are not available yet, several RSCAPs have developed regional approaches to evaluating these qualitative aspects of spatial protection.
- Additional regional indicators such as levels of MPA protection and climate vulnerability are not yet widely assessed across RSCAPs, despite their emerging importance for MPA effectiveness.

Recommendations

- Re-establish the RSP Indicator Working Group to align the Regional Seas Core Indicators to the KM GBF indicator framework, developing clear, standardized methodologies and guidelines for data collection and disaggregation for conservation data, ensuring alignment and comparability of global and regional datasets.
- Facilitate capacity-building initiatives among RSCAPs to address identified gaps, particularly in regions with limited data collection capabilities, emphasizing coverage of qualitative indicators such as management effectiveness, connectivity, and equitable governance.
- Consider establishing or strengthening a centralized, accessible platform to aggregate harmonized regional data. This platform could streamline global monitoring, reporting, and analysis, significantly enhancing transparency and international comparability of progress.
- Cooperate with other MEAs and frameworks on indicator development, where globally standardized indicators are not available yet – for example on protected area connectivity in the marine realm, climate vulnerability and integration into seascapes. Priority collaboration should include the CBD and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Strengthening such cooperation would enrich global biodiversity conservation reporting and enable more comprehensive assessments of marine and coastal ecosystem health.
- Increase efforts to clearly define, map, and report on marine and coastal restoration, including establishing restoration baselines, setting clear quantitative targets, and developing metrics for assessing restoration success to ensure meaningful progress toward KM GBF Target 2. There is an opportunity to collaborate on indicator harmonization and data collection with FAO's FERM (Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring) initiative, which has been appointed as data custodian under the KM GBF.

Introduction

Introduction

14.1 Objective

The objective of this report is to provide a comprehensive review of progress by Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) towards global targets to protect, conserve and restore marine and coastal ecosystems. A key focus is to track progress towards the following Kunming-Monreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM GBF) targets:

- **KM GBF Target 2:** at least 30% of degraded marine and coastal ecosystems are under effective restoration by 2030.
- **KM GBF Target 3:** at least 30% of coastal and marine areas are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

The report also consider progress towards the following targets, which, although having a 2020 deadline, have shaped regional marine and coastal conservation efforts:

- **SDG Target 14.5:** at least 10% of coastal and marine areas are conserved by 2020, consistent with national and international law, and based on the best available scientific information.
- **Aichi Target 11:** at least 10% of coastal and marine areas are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of MPAs and OECMs and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

By reviewing regional assessment and progress reports, the report aims to offer a clear understanding of the status of protection efforts contributing to global targets, highlight implementation gaps and opportunities for strengthening regional action.

The methodology for the report can be found in the Appendix.

Table 1. Global and regional targets on area-based marine conservation.

Target	Main indicator	Disaggregations of main indicator / supplementary indicators	Data custodian
KM GBF Target 3 <i>Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas, and of marine and coastal areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories.</i>	Mandatory Headline indicator: 3.1 Coverage of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures Data for Indicator 3.1 is collected through the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) and World Database on Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (WD-OECM).	Potential disaggregations of headline indicator 3.1: (i) by protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (ii) by realm and by ecosystem functional group (Global Ecosystem Typology level 3) (iii) by areas of importance for biodiversity (iv) by effectiveness (Protected Area Management Effectiveness) (v) by governance type (vi) by Indigenous and traditional territories. Optional complementary indicators (relevant for marine and coastal areas): • 3. CY.2 International Union for Conservation of Nature Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Standard • 2. CY.2 Proportion of key biodiversity areas in favourable condition • 3. CY.5 Number of protected areas that have completed a site-level assessment of governance and equity (SAGE) (IIED)	UNEP-WCMC
SDG Target 14.5: <i>By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information</i>	14.5.1. Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas (meta data) Global indicator: Coverage of marine and coastal areas by protected areas. SDG Indicator 14.5.1 is based on the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA), to which countries report coverage of marine and coastal areas by protected areas.	Optional national indicators: 1. Coverage, by protected areas, of areas of importance for biodiversity and derived ecosystem services (meta data): Mean % of each KBA that is covered by protected areas and OECMs (meta data updated in 2024, based on WDPA and WDOECM). 2. Protected Areas Management Effectiveness: See Aichi 11 indicator: “number and area of assessments of management effectiveness completed by countries, and the overall management effectiveness score for each aspect of management.” 3. Connectivity of protected areas: no global methodology available for tracking connectivity of marine protected areas under SDG 14.5. 4. Equity in protected area benefits and costs: no global methodology available for tracking equity of marine protected area benefits and costs under SDG 14.5.	UNEP-WCMC

Target	Main indicator	Disaggregations of main indicator / supplementary indicators	Data custodian
Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 <i>By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, 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.</i>	The Aichi Indicator framework provides a flexible, non-mandatory list of indicators. Main indicators include: • Percentage of marine and coastal areas covered by protected areas. • Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas (indicator for SDG target 14.5).	Additional optional indicators (relevant for marine and coastal areas): 1. Coverage, by protected areas, of areas of importance for biodiversity and derived ecosystem services: Mean % of each KBA that is covered by protected areas and OECMs (meta data updated in 2024, based on WDPA and WDOECM). 2. Protected Areas Management Effectiveness: This indicator records the number and area of assessments of management effectiveness completed by countries, and the overall management effectiveness score for each aspect of management. 3. Protected area coverage of Key Biodiversity Areas (including Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas, Alliance for Zero Extinction sites). 4. Protected area coverage of terrestrial and marine ecoregions	UNEP-WCMC

1. Progress towards quantitative global conservation and restoration indicators

MPA and OECM coverage provide the main quantitative indicators for measuring conservation efforts of marine and coastal efforts, in line with KM GBF Target 3. In addition, area under restoration provides a complementary quantitative indicator for reporting and measuring progress, in line with KM GBF Target 2.

Given the differences in legal authority and jurisdiction, the scope of reporting varies across RSCAPs. While some only assess and report on regionally designated or recognized sites, others also include nationally or globally designated sites, such as Ramsar wetlands. For example:

- **Cartagena Convention** reports on the coverage of SPAW-listed MPAs.
- **CCAMLR** only reports on MPAs it has designated through binding decisions.
- **OSPAR Convention, HELCOM and the Arctic Council** through its working group on Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) report on the coverage of MPAs included in their regional MPA networks.
- **Barcelona Convention's** MAPAMED database includes information on nationally designated MPAs, SPAMI-listed MPAs, and protected areas established under other regional or global frameworks (such as Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites).
- Other RSCAPs, such as the **Nairobi Convention, Jeddah Convention**, and Northwest Pacific Action Plan (**NOWPAP**), track only nationally designated MPAs.

Six RSCAPs provide spatial and non-spatial information on MPAs through **publicly accessible web tools**. These include the Arctic Council, Barcelona Convention, Cartagena Convention, HELCOM, Lima Convention (database inaccessible since March 2025), Noumea Convention, and OSPAR Convention.

Annexes 1 and 2 provide an overview of RSCAP reporting on MPA and OECM coverage, used as a basis for this analysis.

1.1 MPA coverage

While **15 RSCAPS have adopted indicators** to monitor MPA coverage, only 111 RSCAPS have published baseline and progress reports or data on MPA surface area (in KM²) or percentage of regional sea area covered by MPAs. Eight RSCAPS have not published such data. Most progress reports date from 2020 or later. Some outliers exist: NOWPAP last reported in 2012, while the Jeddah Convention's most recent assessment dates from 2019.

The scope of reporting varies across RSCAPS. While some only assess and report on regionally designated or recognized sites (e.g. Cartagena Convention reports on SPAW-listed MPAs), others also include nationally or globally designated sites, such as Ramsar wetlands.

Three RSCAPS exceed 10% MPA coverage, i.e. OSPAR Convention (10.9%), HELCOM (16.8%), and Noumea Convention (20%), actively progressing towards the KM GBF Target of 30% of marine conservation. Four RSCAPS have set a **30X30 marine conservation target at the regional level** (HELCOM, Barcelona Convention, OSPAR Convention and the Nairobi Convention).² The Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) also refers to the 30x30 target in its 2030 Strategic Directions.

RSCAPS provide different **disaggregations** of data on MPA coverage:

- Several RSCAPS distinguish between **biomes**, including marine, terrestrial, and wetland protection (e.g. Arctic Council, Cartagena Convention, PERSGA, HELCOM). The Arctic Council and Barcelona Convention also report the number of Ramsar sites in their respective regional seas.
- Barcelona Convention calculates the portion **of coastal zones** under protection.
- Some RSCAPS differentiate MPA coverage based on **jurisdictional zones**: territorial waters (HELCOM and OSPAR Convention), EEZ (the Nairobi Convention and OSPAR Convention), national jurisdiction without distinction (Cartagena Convention). OSPAR Convention is the only RSCAP reporting on MPAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ).

¹ See Annex 1. Arctic Council/PAME, Barcelona Convention, Cartagena Convention, CCAMLR, HELCOM, PERSGA, Lima Convention, Noumea Convention, OSPAR, For the Black Sea, only 2016 data from the European Environment Agency was found. CPPS' SpinCam Atlas which comprised MPA coverage data has been taken down since February 2025.

² UNEP Regional Seas, Regional Seas Contributions to achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Draft report April 2025)

1.2 OECM coverage

Beyond MPAs, the recognition and reporting of OECMs among RSCAPs is still in its early stages. Only four RSCAPs—Barcelona Convention, HELCOM, the Nairobi Convention, and OSPAR Convention—have made efforts to assess or report on actual or potential OECM coverage:

- OSPAR Convention invited its Contracting Parties to report OECMs within national waters, but many have yet to define a national approach. Together with non-OSPAR MPAs, they only added approximately 0.3% protected coverage of OSPAR's sea area.
- HELCOM and Barcelona Convention reported that no OECMs were recognised in the region in 2023. However, when considering areas with potential OECM characteristics in the Mediterranean —such as Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas and Fisheries Restricted Areas—the combined MPA and potential OECM coverage stands at 9.3% of the Mediterranean Sea (an increase of 1.3% compared to MPAs only).
- The Nairobi Convention's 2021 MPA Outlook reported that community-managed marine areas and OECMs remain underrepresented in regional databases. In 2023, it reported that 173 existing and proposed community-based management systems protect 1,600 km² of nearshore habitats.

1.3 Area under restoration

KM GBF Target 2 aims to place 30% of degraded marine and coastal areas under effective restoration processes by 2030, thereby contributing to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. FAO's **Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring (FERM)** supports planning, implementing, and monitoring restoration, including for marine and coastal habitats like mangroves, seagrasses, coral reefs, and wetlands.

Progress is tracked under **KM GBF Headline Indicator 2.2 Area under restoration**. Optional disaggregations are (i) by ecosystem functional group, (ii) by indigenous and traditional territories, (iii) by protected areas / other effective area-based conservation measures, and (iv) by type of restoration activity.

While most (14) RSCAPs have strategic objectives to restore ecosystems,³ few RSCAPs have set a quantitative target to place degraded areas under effective restoration (Barcelona Convention, South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) and OSPAR Convention).

³ UNEP Regional Seas, Regional Seas Contributions to achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Draft report April 2025)

Five RSCAPs have begun developing inventories of degraded or restorable areas, and some have introduced guidelines, protocols, or best practices to improve restoration effectiveness (Arctic Council).⁴ Yet, currently no RSCAPs report on the total areas under effective restoration, and restoration data are often fragmented:

- **HELCOM's 2023 Holistic Assessment (HOLAS) report** highlights that marine restoration in the Baltic Sea is still in its early stages and primarily focused on coastal areas. It notes a lack of consistent information on restoration effort, success rates, and trends in the region, and emphasizes the absence of a standardized definition of success. As such, it calls for quantitative follow-up studies to evaluate restoration outcomes more effectively.
- **OSPAR's 2023 Quality Status Report** indicates that several Contracting Parties have reported restoration actions, particularly in intertidal zones, and points to growing experience in supporting natural recovery of inshore habitats. It also highlights collaborative efforts to monitor and manage impacts on deep-sea benthic habitats. The report stresses the importance of addressing climate change and other cumulative stressors to enable the effective recovery of degraded habitats.
- While **PERSGA's Biodiversity Protocol** requires periodical monitoring of the effectiveness of restoration programmes, no such data or assessments are publicly available. PERSGA's SOMERSGA report (2020) evaluates the area of restored mangroves and area of restored coral reefs.
- **Cartagena Convention and SACEP** have developed restoration-related indicators—such as restoration activities undertaken at priority sites (Cartagena Convention), area of seagrass, mangrove and coral reef with enhanced ecological integrity and function (Cartagena Convention), and trends in habitat condition (Cartagena Convention and SACEP). However, it is unclear if these indicators are operational, and no data is currently available.
- The **Nairobi Convention** has published information on demonstration projects focused on mangrove restoration carried out under its WIOSAP programme.

⁴ UNEP Regional Seas, Regional Seas Contributions to achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Draft report April 2025)

2. Progress towards qualitative global indicators on conservation

While MPA and OECM coverage is a good indicator, coverage alone does not capture the quality or effectiveness of biodiversity protection and conservation. Therefore, KM GBF Target 3, as well as SDG Target 14.5 and the Aichi Target 11 (both with a 2020 deadline), include additional quality indicators for MPAs and MPA networks, such as protection of areas of biodiversity importance, ecological representativeness, connectivity, equitable governance, and management effectiveness.

RSCAPs vary widely in how they report on these quality indicators, reflecting diverse regional priorities, capacities, and monitoring frameworks. Many have begun tracking data aligned with optional or supplementary indicators under the KM GBF monitoring framework, as well as those developed for SDG Target 14.5 and Aichi Target 11. Annex 3 provides an overview RSCAP reporting on quality indicators for MPAs.

2.1 Inclusion of areas of importance for biodiversity

Protected area coverage alone does not give a full indication of the importance of an area in terms of biodiversity (and derived ecosystem services), for example the diversity of species that have been protected or the number of people who are benefiting from the MPA. As such, a calculation of the relative coverage, by protected areas, of those marine areas which are of particular importance for biodiversity (and derived ecosystem services) is a useful approach to assess the comprehensiveness and value of an MPA or MPA network.

Areas of high biodiversity importance may include CBD's Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs; CBD), Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs; IUCN), Important Bird Areas (IBAs; Birdlife International), Ramsar Sites (Ramsar Convention), Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs; FAO), Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs; IMO), World Heritage Sites (IOC-UNESCO), Natura 2000 sites (EU), Alliance for Zero Extinction sites or – regardless of their official classification - other biodiversity-rich ecosystems such as coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds.

Coverage of KBAs by protected areas is an optional indicator under KM GBF Target 3 (as well as SDG Target 14.5 and Aichi Target 11). “Proportion of KBAs in favourable condition” has been adopted as a complementary indicator under KM GBF Target 3.

RSCAPs report on progress toward KM GBF Target 3 using a range of approaches. Some assess coverage of EBSAs, others evaluate protection of KBAs and IBAs, and several focus on specific critical ecosystems or habitats regardless of their recognition under

global or regional schemes. At least seven RSCAPs monitor the extent to which areas of high biodiversity importance are covered by MPAs, using a variety of approaches with examples provided below.

EBSAs within MPAs:

- The Arctic Council's PAME working group has identified 14 EBSAs covering 4.2 million km², of which less than 2.5% are within protected areas.
- In the Mediterranean, MEDPAN and SPA-RAC reported increased EBSA protection, with MPA coverage rising from 12.2% in 2016 to 16.4% in 2019.

KBAs within MPAs:

- In the **Pacific**, IUCN used the World Database of KBAs and the WDPA to assess protection status of KBAs. It found that 7.9% of KBAs are fully protected, 22.3% partially protected, and 69.8% unprotected (including both marine and terrestrial areas) in 2022.
- The **Nairobi Convention's** Critical Habitat Outlook 2024 found that 6.6% of KBAs in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) fall within MPAs.
- In 2023, MEDPAN and SPA-RAC found that 50% of IBAs in the **Mediterranean** were covered by MPAs.

Protection of key ecosystems and habitats:

Regardless of their classification as EBSA, KBA or IBA, several RSCAPs assess protection of species and critical ecosystems, including mangroves, seagrasses, coral reefs, and offshore features such as seamounts.

- **CCAMLR** has committed to establishing a representative system of MPAs within the Convention Area. An extensive analysis of bioregionalization of the Convention Area was undertaken in the early 2000s, with the aim of protecting areas of high biodiversity and resulting in the definition of nine MPA planning domains. CCAMLR defines areas of high biodiversity in existing MPA documentation and new MPA proposals.
- The **Nairobi Convention's** 2021 MPA Outlook and 2024 Critical Habitat Outlook evaluated protection of nearshore habitats vital to coastal communities and economies. As of 2023, 10% of mangroves, 20% of seagrass beds, and 30% of coral reefs in the WIO were within MPAs. Offshore habitats remain underrepresented—only 7.8% of seamounts are protected, the lowest of all ecosystem types assessed. The Critical Habitat Outlook also examined “fish larvae sinks and sources”—areas essential for fish recruitment and population connectivity—and found them to be insufficiently protected.

- In the **Pacific**, IUCN 2022 analysis (based on UNEP-WCMC data, national datasets, and the Allen Coral Atlas) estimated that 30% of coral reefs are protected (with medium data confidence), while mangrove and seagrass protection remain lower—12% and 17% respectively—with low confidence levels for seagrass data.
- The **OSPAR Convention** evaluates the ecological coherence of its MPA network using the Madrid Criteria: (1) connectivity, (2) representativity, and (3) protection of threatened species and habitats. In 2023, the OSPAR Convention reported that 28 of 58 priority species and habitats receive protection within at least one MPA. However, significant protection gaps remain for marine mammals, and evidence of improvement in population status is still limited.
- In 2023, MEDPAN and SPA-RAC assessed MPA coverage of key feeding and reproduction areas for mobile species in the **Mediterranean**. Nationally designated MPAs cover significant feeding grounds for seabirds (82%), cetaceans (64%), marine turtles (58%), and other species. Reproduction areas are less well covered, particularly for elasmobranchs and marine mammals. Conservation efforts have focused on charismatic and habitat-forming species, such as marine mammals, turtles, Posidonia, and red coral. Still, only 25% of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) and 50% of IBAs are currently protected.
- **HELCOM** maintains an MPA database detailing protected species, biotopes, and biotope complexes, along with their HELCOM Red List status.
- Under its Regional Action Plan for Mangrove Conservation, the **Lima Convention** tracks the conservation and restoration status of mangroves in its region.
- The **Cartagena Convention's** Regional Strategy for the Protection and Development of the Wider Caribbean Region 2023-2030 also proposes an indicator “protected area coverage of important biodiversity areas”, but this is not operational yet.

2.2 Ecological representativeness

Well-designed networks of MPAs and OECMs aim to conserve the full spectrum of marine biodiversity by ensuring that all ecosystem types—across depths, regions, and ecological functions—are adequately represented. Representativity is essential to safeguard not only species richness but also ecosystem processes, resilience to climate change, and the continued provision of critical services such as fisheries productivity, carbon storage, and coastal protection.

While the Aichi monitoring framework aimed to track MPA coverage by marine ecoregions, KM GBF Headline Indicator 3.1 contains an optional disaggregation of MPA and OECM coverage by realm, biome and ecosystem functional group according to the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology.⁵

Many RSCAPs maintain databases detailing the types of natural ecosystems covered by MPAs, providing insight into habitat representation. For at least six regions—the Mediterranean, North-East Atlantic, Baltic, Pacific, Western Indian Ocean and Black Sea—synthesized assessments are available that evaluate the representativeness and ecological coherence of MPA networks.

Several RSCAPs have assessed the representativeness and coherence of their MPA networks through regional evaluations, often taking a slightly divergent approach from the Global Ecosystem Typology or focusing on a specific set of ecosystem functional groups or habitats. These assessments highlight both progress and remaining gaps:

- In 2016, **HELCOM** conducted its first assessment of ecological coherence in the Baltic Sea MPA network. It used four criteria: (1) representativeness, (2) replication, (3) adequacy, and (4) connectivity. Representativeness and replication were found to be at acceptable levels, with broad-scale habitats and key species replicated across the network. A new coherence assessment is scheduled for 2027.
- The **OSPAR** Convention assesses the coherence of its MPA network using the Madrid Criteria: (1) connectivity, (2) representativity, and (3) protection of threatened species and habitats. Representativity is measured against the Dinter Biogeographic Provinces, which divide the OSPAR Maritime Area into 19 ecological regions. As of 2023, seven provinces meet the 10% protection target, but four remain entirely unprotected, and three have less than 1% coverage, particularly in the northern OSPAR region.
- The **Barcelona Convention** highlights significant spatial disparities in MPA distribution across the Mediterranean. Over 90% of MCPAs are located in the western and northern Mediterranean. Deep-sea habitats below 1,000 meters remain especially underrepresented, with less than 4% protected. Some habitat types, such as *Posidonia oceanica* meadows, coralligenous assemblages, and hard substrates, are well-represented in MPAs. However, conservation measures are inconsistent—only 63% of MPAs listing *Posidonia* as a key feature implement active monitoring and conservation efforts.
- **The Black Sea** shows a concentration of protection in shallow waters. According to European Environment Agency (2018) data, around two-thirds of MPAs cover infralittoral zones, while only 20% extend to circalittoral habitats and even fewer include deeper marine environments.

⁵ According to the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology, the marine realm comprises four biomes: (1) marine shelf, (2) pelagic ocean, (3) deep sea floors and (4) the anthropogenic marine biome. There are several marine ecosystem functional groups. Examples include seagrass meadows, epipelagic and mesopelagic ocean waters, sea ice, abyssal plains.

- In the **Pacific**, IUCN's BIOPAMA report found that 14 of 33 marine ecoregions and pelagic provinces (42%) have at least 10% of their extent within protected areas. However, significant disparities remain, with several regions underrepresented. The report recommends that marine spatial planning and stakeholder engagement be used to guide the development of more representative MPA networks. While BIOPAMA primarily evaluates terrestrial connectivity, it notes the importance of including offshore and deep-sea ecosystems in conservation planning.
- The **Western Indian Ocean** region has relatively strong coverage of coastal habitats but limited protection of offshore and deep-sea ecosystems. The Nairobi Convention's 2021 MPA Outlook reported that MPAs protect about 17% of the region's coastline. The 2024 Critical Habitat Outlook confirmed that offshore and deep-sea habitats remain poorly represented due to data gaps and enforcement challenges. Ongoing data collection aims to improve future assessments. The reports emphasize the need for future MPA expansion to reflect the full range of habitat types across the WIO's nine marine ecoregions, including consideration of transboundary MPAs.
- **CCAMLR** has committed to establishing a representative system of MPAs within the Convention Area. An extensive analysis of bioregionalization of the Convention Area was undertaken in the early 2000s, with the aim of protecting areas of high biodiversity and resulting in the definition of 9 MPA planning domains. CCAMLR defines areas of high biodiversity in existing MPA documentation and new MPA proposals.

2.3 Connectivity

Connectivity in the context of MPAs and OECMs refers to the ecological linkages that enable the movement of species, energy, and ecosystem processes across the marine landscape. A well-connected network ensures that MPAs function as part of an integrated system rather than isolated units—supporting species survival, enhancing ecosystem resilience, and sustaining biodiversity. This is especially critical for migratory species that rely on multiple habitats throughout their life cycles.

Most (10) RSCAPs reflect the criteria of **connectivity** in their strategic objectives.⁶ COBSEA's Strategic Directions note: *Increasingly, the establishment of MPA Networks which tackles both social and ecological connectivity of MPAs, is considered as a process that increases the achievement of conservation objectives."*

Assessing connectivity in the marine realm is inherently complex due to dynamic oceanographic processes, the mobility of marine species, and the need to consider vertical, horizontal, and cross-realm linkages (e.g., between marine, freshwater, and

⁶ UNEP Regional Seas, Regional Seas Contributions to achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Draft report April 2025)

terrestrial environments). Unlike terrestrial systems, where methodologies such as ProNet are more established, global marine-specific indicators remain under development. In the absence of global standards, several RSCAPs have taken steps to develop regional approaches.

The following RSCAPs have produced guidance to support the design of ecologically connected MPA networks:

- **The Arctic Council's** PAME working group has modeled oceanographic connectivity in the Arctic by mapping species dispersal patterns and identifying barriers to movement. This work informs the placement and minimum size of MPAs to ensure functional linkages.
- The **OSPAR Convention** uses a proximity analysis of MPAs as a proxy for assessing connectivity (Madrid Criteria). Its 2023 assessment found that the MPA network is well-distributed in Regions II (North Sea) and III (Celtic Seas), but significant connectivity gaps remain in Regions I (Arctic Waters) and V (Wider Atlantic), with smaller gaps in Region IV (Bay of Biscay and Iberian Coast).
- **HELCOM** also evaluates connectivity in its MPA coherence assessments, looking at how well the network supports the migration and dispersal of species. Its first assessment in 2016 found connectivity to be insufficient to ensure ecological coherence in the Baltic Sea, requiring joint efforts from HELCOM countries to improve connectivity when planning new MPAs. The next assessment is expected in 2027.
- A 2023 meeting report of SPA-RAC focal points assesses connectivity of MPAs in the **Mediterranean**, based on case studies. It noted that only 13% of habitat types (infralittoral soft and mixed substrates, Mediterranean biocenosis and Mediterranean Posidonia habitat superclass) can be considered well connected. Least-connected habitats are abyssal soft and mixed substrates, circalittoral habitat, deep-sea beds and deep-sea hard substrate habitats. Most of the connections between MPAs are in the Northern Mediterranean.

In other regions, efforts are more nascent:

- For the **Pacific**, the 2022 IUCN BIOPAMA report currently only evaluates terrestrial connectivity. It highlights the urgent need for marine-specific indicators to better assess the contribution of MPAs to biodiversity in oceanic territories.
- In the Western Indian Ocean, the **Nairobi Convention's** 2021 MPA Outlook stresses limited research on connectivity. It calls for investments in oceanographic and genetic studies to inform the design of MPAs at appropriate spatial and temporal scales. Additionally, efforts are underway to enhance "social connectivity" by establishing a regional network of MPA managers to share best practices and strengthen multi-level governance.

- The **Cartagena Convention** has reviewed connectivity among SPAW MPAs, focusing on cooperation among sites and ecological linkages between critical habitats such as coral reefs, seagrasses, and mangroves. This work aims to support the development of a connectivity assessment framework for the region.

2.4 Equitable governance

Equitable governance is increasingly recognized as essential for effective and lasting biodiversity conservation. Inclusive, participatory systems that respect Indigenous and local rights enhance both legitimacy and ecological outcomes through diverse knowledge and stronger stewardship. To assess equity, indicators such as governance type and site-level governance quality are used. Tools like SAGE (Site-level Assessment for Governance and Equity) support self-assessment of governance and social impacts. At a global level, these assessments currently cover just 0.001% of marine protected areas.

KM GBF Headline Indicator 3.1 includes an optional disaggregation by governance type, while a component indicator tracks the number of protected areas using SAGE.

Six RSCAPs have incorporated equitable governance or management as a criterion for MPAs,⁷ and only a few have undertaken assessments or reported on specific “equitable governance” indicators—such as governance type and the quality of governance at the site level:

- In 2019, The **Arctic Council's** PAME working group hosted a workshop to explore Indigenous involvement in, and leadership of, marine protection in the Arctic. Participants examined how Indigenous, Traditional, and Local Knowledge can inform MPA design and management, and identified ways to support diverse forms of Indigenous participation. The Arctic Biodiversity Data Service provides information on governance types and management authorities for all Arctic MPAs.
- The **Barcelona Convention's** Post-2020 MPA Roadmap outlines indicators to track equitable governance, such stakeholder-inclusive meetings, decentralised MPA governance mechanisms and co-management agreements. A 2023 MEDPAN and SPA-RAC assessment found governance remains largely centralised—30% of MPAs are supervised by national authorities, only 2% have governance councils, and just 11% report co-management. While strict co-management is limited, many MPAs include some level of stakeholder consultation.

⁷ UNEP Regional Seas, Regional Seas Contributions to achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Draft report April 2025)

- In the **Pacific**, the Pacific State of the Environment Report 2020 highlights co-management between communities, governments, and NGOs as the most appropriate model for protected areas in the region, given customary tenure systems. The BIOPAMA 2022 report shows Oceania leads globally in community-based (37.5%) and shared (9.4%) governance. In independent states, nearly half of protected areas are community-governed, while overseas territories rely more on government-led management. However, many community-managed areas remain unrecognised in official data.

2.5 Management effectiveness

The effectiveness of MPAs in achieving conservation outcomes hinges on more than just their designation. Effective management is essential to ensure that a protected area achieves the intended benefits for biodiversity and ecosystem services. The current approach to assess at the global scale, the status and trends in effectiveness of management of protected areas is the Aichi 11 and GBF complementary indicator “Protected Areas Management Effectiveness”, which records the number and area of assessments of management effectiveness completed by countries, and the overall management effectiveness score for each aspect of management.

Several RSCAPs have started developing tools and methodologies to assess management effectiveness, though approaches vary.

Many RSCAPs provide public access to MPA management plans through online databases. Some go further by evaluating the proportion of MPAs with active plans. For example, **HELCOM** reported in 2021 that two-thirds of Baltic MPAs had management plans in place. In contrast, in the **Mediterranean**, a 2023 assessment showed that 23% of MPAs lacked a management plan, and only 7% had fully implemented plans.

While this data is valuable, the presence of a management plan does not in itself guarantee enforcement, adequate funding, or ecological success. To address this, **some (6) RSCAPs are implementing more comprehensive assessments of MPA effectiveness:**

- **HELCOM** is currently developing a methodology to evaluate MPA and network-wide management effectiveness. A 2021 report Methodolgy, test case and recommendations for assessing management effectiveness notes that many sites are “paper parks” with inactive or inadequate management plans, no enforcement, and insufficient resources. The region aims for 30% of its MPA network to be effectively managed by 2025.

- **PERSGA's** 2020 SOMERSGA report used expert-completed scorecards to assess effectiveness across five categories: (1) context, (2) inputs, (3) process, (4) results, and (5) outcomes. Between 2015 and 2017, average scores improved by 13%, and nearly all protected areas in the region have now undergone such assessments.
- The **Nairobi Convention'** MPA Outlook conducted its first regional MPA management effectiveness assessment in 2021, covering about 68% of MPAs. Using the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), which is based on self-assessment, the assessment found that most MPAs were not well-managed and highlighted the need to focus on capacity-building over MPA expansion.
- In the **Mediterranean**, MEDPAN circulates a questionnaire to MPAs every four years to collect management data. The 2019 survey reached 333 MPAs, and the findings were supplemented by workshop and training data to form a comprehensive database on management practices.
- The **Pacific** is at an early stage of assessing effectiveness. According to the Pacific State of the Environment Report (2020), only nine countries had begun PAME (Protected Area Management Effectiveness) assessments by 2020, covering less than 4% of the region's protected marine area. More national-level assessments are planned by 2025.
- **OSPAR** conducts annual assessments of its MPA network. The 2023 report found that while some MPAs have appropriate management, many still lack full implementation. Only 16% are known to be progressing toward or achieving their conservation objectives. The report calls for stronger management efforts and expanded long-term monitoring to better assess progress.

Key Management Challenges Identified Across RSCAPs

RSCAPs that have undertaken effectiveness assessments commonly report several critical challenges undermining effective MPA management:

- **Inadequate financial and human resources** (Nairobi Convention, Barcelona Convention, NOWPAP): For example, Barcelona Convention reports only 5% of MPAs have sufficient budgets, with a stark divide between EU and non-EU countries. Moreover, 23% of national MPAs are understaffed, and 8% report having no dedicated on-site staff.
- **Limited staff knowledge** about the ecological importance of MPAs, alongside **insufficient training and capacity-building programs** (Nairobi Convention).
- **Poor infrastructure and equipment maintenance**, undermining enforcement and day-to-day management (Nairobi Convention).

- **Weak or inconsistent monitoring and evaluation systems** (HELCOM, NOWPAP, Barcelona Convention): in 2021, HELCOM reported that challenges remain in ensuring consistent monitoring across the network. In the Mediterranean, fewer than 25% of MPAs have baseline habitat maps or robust monitoring systems. In the NOWPAP region, monitoring is hampered by budget constraints and uneven national implementation.
- **Inflexible legislative frameworks** that restrict adaptive management in response to changing ecological or social conditions (Barcelona Convention): MEDPAN found that MPA legislation is more flexible in EU countries (21%) than non-EU countries (11%).

2.6 Integration into wider seascapes

Integration into wider seascapes emphasizes that protected areas should not be isolated but rather part of broader, ecosystem-based management frameworks that encompass entire seascapes or landscapes. This integration ensures that conservation efforts are effective even beyond the borders of protected areas, considering the interactions between ecosystems and human uses in these spaces.

Despite its importance, no indicator has been developed under the KM GBF to track progress on this criterion. The concept has also not yet been widely adopted by RSCAPS. However, a few RSCAPS have begun to assess the extent to which MPA and OECM planning is integrated into broader seascape-level strategies:

- The **Nairobi Convention**: The Western Indian Ocean MPA Outlook addresses the issue of integration, noting that only Seychelles and South Africa have developed marine spatial plans that incorporate MPAs into relevant policy frameworks. It identifies integration as a priority for the region, emphasizing that the experiences of these two countries offer valuable opportunities for shared learning, while also recognizing the importance of adapting to national contexts.
- The **Noumea Convention**: SPREP's State of the Environment Report defines integration as the inclusion of protected areas within broader landscapes and seascapes, as well as alignment with sectoral plans and policies—such as National Sustainable Development Plans or equivalent frameworks. The report concludes that in many Pacific Island countries, habitat mapping and long-term monitoring to support integration remain limited.

- The **Barcelona Convention**: The Post-2020 Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas Strategy promotes the integration of MPAs into coastal and marine spatial planning to reduce potential conflicts between conservation and development (Recommendation 1.4). It includes indicators such as the number of countries with legal review processes that ensure all relevant laws, decisions, and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) concerning MPAs are consistent with marine spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management.

2.7 Protection of traditional territories

KM GBF Headline Indicator 3.1 can be disaggregated by indigenous and traditional territories. Currently, no RSCAPs provide this data.

As previously noted, while six RSCAPs have incorporated equitable governance or management as a criterion for MPAs, only a few (3) have undertaken assessments or reported on specific “equitable governance” indicators—such as governance type and the quality of governance at the site level.

Further, some RSCAPs have adopted indicators to measure the socio-economic benefits of MPAs to local communities. For example, the Nairobi Convention’s 2025-2028 Programme of Work aims to track the socio-economic benefits of MPAs and OECMs. Cartagena Convention, in turn, tracks improved ecological, social, economic and administrative benefits and impacts.

3. Progress towards additional qualitative regional indicators on conservation

Several RSCAPs monitor additional indicators not included in global monitoring frameworks, focusing on other key aspects of MPA quality and effectiveness including the level of protection, MPA integration into wider seascapes and climate change vulnerability.

3.1 Regulating sustainable use

GBF Target 3 emphasises that all allowed use of marine resources must be sustainable and consistent with conservation outcomes. No indicator is available under the KM GBF to track progress on this. RSCAPs have adopted different approaches to assess compatibility of MPA uses and conservation outcomes.

The level of MPA protection (IUCN categorisation) identifies which uses are allowed. Eight RSCAPs provide information on the level of MPA protection, e.g. by using the IUCN categorization (the Arctic Council, HELCOM, OSPAR Convention, Barcelona Convention, Noumea Convention, Cartagena Convention, NOWPAP, PERSGA and Lima Convention). However, few RSCAPs aggregate and analyze this information to obtain a higher-level, regional view. For example, Barcelona Convention reports that only 0.06% of MPAs are designated as strictly protected (i.e., no-go, no-take, or no-fishing areas).

In addition, CCAMLR, Barcelona Convention, Cartagena Convention (for SPAW-listed MPAs), OSPAR Convention, and HELCOM provide detailed descriptions of regulated activities within MPAs, such as tourism, fisheries, aquaculture, and flood protection. However, some RSCAPs report challenges in defining clear zoning, permitted uses, and enforcement procedures. For example, only 42% of national MPAs in the Mediterranean have legally defined boundaries and zoning, while just 31% have explicit regulations on permitted activities.

3.2 Integration of climate change considerations

While not explicitly referenced in KM GBF Target 3, integrating climate considerations into MPA planning and management is essential to ensure their long-term effectiveness in conserving biodiversity. The dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss demand a more forward-looking and adaptive approach—such as adjusting levels of protection in response to climate impacts or prioritizing the protection of climate refugia.

At least two RSCAPs are actively assessing climate impacts on MPAs:

- **HELCOM's** 2023 HOLAS report emphasizes that MPAs must be designed with climate change in mind to avoid investing in areas that may not remain ecologically viable. Data from the HELCOM MPA database highlights growing pressures, including rising sea temperatures and the spread of non-indigenous species, underscoring the need for climate-resilient MPA networks.
- The **Nairobi Convention's** *Critical Habitat Outlook* highlights the increasing vulnerability of coral reefs to climate change, particularly those already classified as highly sensitive. Despite their importance, many of these reefs remain unprotected, reinforcing the need for targeted, climate-informed conservation planning.

Annex 1. Table on Regional MPA and OECM coverage

Convention	Regional sea	Total Convention Area (km2)	MPAs					OECMS				Total area of regional sea covered by MPAs and OECMS	Notes
			Baseline year	Scope	No	Total protected area size (km2)	% regional sea covered	Baseline year	No	Total size (km2)	% Regional sea covered		
Abidjan Convention	Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region												
Antigua Convention	Northeast Pacific												
Arctic Council	Arctic	18,400,000	2022	National			5.24%					5.24%	In 2021, CAFF and PAME launched a 4-year project to provide a description of how OECMs are applied in the Arctic.
Barcelona Convention	Mediterranean Sea	2,513,905	2020	National, Regional (SPA-listed) and Global (e.g. Ramsar sites)	1,126	209,303	8.3 %	2019		34,032	1.4%*	9.3%*	In 2020, there were no OECMs reported for the Mediterranean. Combining areas that could be potential OECMs (i.e., 1 Particularly Sensitive Sea Area and Fisheries Restricted Areas) the total MCPA and potential OECM coverage currently stands at 9.3% of the Mediterranean Sea.
Bucharest Convention (Black Sea)	Black Sea		2016	Regional (Natura 2000)			14.2%					14.2%	The 14.2% MPA coverage includes only Natura 2000 sites.
Cartagena Convention	Wider Caribbean Region	5,300,000	2024	Regional (SPAW-listed)	37	380.093	7.2%					7.2%	The 7.2% MPA coverage includes only SPAW-listed sites, no other nationally or multilaterally designated sites
CCAMLR	Antarctica	35,716,100	2024	Regional (designated by CCAMLR)	2	2,184,000	6.1%					6.1%	
COBSEA	East Asian Seas												
Helsinki Convention	Baltic Sea	420,000	2021	National, Regional (incl. Natura 2000) and Global (e.g. Ramsar)	188	56,082*	16.5%	2022	0	0	0	16.5%	The Baltic MPA network includes HELCOM MPAs, Natura 2000 sites and Ramsar sites. The HELCOM MPA database provides the surface area only of HELCOM MPAs, which cover approximately 13.3% of the Baltic Sea Area. The protected area size total includes terrestrial and marine areas. In 2023, there were no recognized OECMs in the region, although several countries are exploring the possibility to recognize measures as OECMs.

Convention	Regional sea	Total Convention Area (km2)	MPAs					OECMS				Total area of regional sea covered by MPAs and OECMS	Notes
			Baseline year	Scope	No	Total protected area size (km2)	% regional sea covered	Baseline year	No	Total size (km2)	% Regional sea covered		
Jeddah Convention	Red Sea and Gulf of Aden		2019	National	15	69,717*	4.5%					4.5%	The protected area total includes marine and terrestrial. In 2019, the % of the EEZ that is legally designated as marine biodiversity protected area is approximately 4.5%. This 4.5% figure excludes coastal protected areas above the high-water mark since the coastal area is not clearly defined and measured. If the terrestrial protected area, adjacent to marine protected area, is included then coverage goes up to 8.6%.
Kuwait Convention	ROPME Sea Area												
Lima Convention	Southeast Pacific		2020		246	111.001.623*							This protected area total excludes Colombia, for which figures are not available in the Atlas Spincam database. The database has not been accessible since February 2025.
Nairobi Convention	Western Indian Ocean	30.000.000	2021	National	143	555.437	1.9%*	2021	173	1.600	0.01%%	1.9%	The whole Nairobi Convention area is approximately 30M km2, of which 15,500,000 is ABNJ and 6,000,000 is EEZ. The total percentage of EEZ covered by MPAs is 7% for nine WIO countries (excluding Somalia). Community-managed marine areas and OECMs are currently under-represented in the regional MPA database used to assess the regional progress towards the GBF target. Currently, there are 173 existing and proposed community-based management initiatives (LMMAs or CFMAs), which translate to protection of at least 1600km2 of nearshore habitats.
Noumea Convention	South Pacific	58,994,235	2020	National	822		20%					20%	Out of the total Convention Area, 27,878,160 km2 is EEZ. As the 2021 WD-OECM version did not yet contain data for the Pacific region, the BIOPAMA report only covers MPAs.
NOWPAP	North-West Pacific		2012	National	277	67,483	4%					4%	

Convention	Regional sea	Total Convention Area (km2)	MPAs					OECMS				Total area of regional sea covered by MPAs and OECMS	Notes
			Baseline year	Scope	No	Total protected area size (km2)	% regional sea covered	Baseline year	No	Total size (km2)	% Regional sea covered		
OSPAR Convention	North-East Atlantic	13,548,111	2023	National and Regional (OSPAR designated) *	597	1,473,100	10.9%	2023	8	38,723	0.3%*	11.2%	The OSPAR network of MPAs consists of MPAs in areas within national jurisdiction of the Contracting Parties to OSPAR which are nationally nominated to the network, and of MPAs in the Area Beyond National Jurisdiction of the OSPAR maritime area which are collectively designated by OSPAR. In 2021 Contracting-Parties to OSPAR were invited to voluntarily provide information about OECMs in their national waters. Most Contracting Parties had not yet developed a final view on OECMs nationally and therefore did not report. Reported OECMs included inter alia areas where seasonal restrictions on the use of active systems intended for underwater exploration activities, whale watching and specific measures on fisheries regulation are in place which are assumed to support conservation, and areas of fisheries restrictions. The 0.3% OECM coverage includes both OECMs and non-OSPAR MPAs.
SACEP	South Asian Seas												
Tehran Convention	Caspian Sea												

Annex 2: Table on Protected area size broken down between biomes (marine, wetlands and terrestrial), coastal zones and jurisdiction (territorial waters, EEZ, national jurisdiction, high seas and ECS)

Convention	Regional sea	Baseline year	Total protected area size (km2)	Marine area	Wetlands	Terrestrial areas	Coastal zones	Territorial waters	EEZ	National jurisdiction	High seas and ECS
Abidjan Convention	Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region										
Antigua Convention	Northeast Pacific										
Arctic Council	Arctic	2022		5.24% of the CAFF marine area is protected	81 Ramsar sites are included in the CAFF Area	20.77% of the CAFF terrestrial area is protected					
Barcelona Convention	Mediterranean Sea	2020	209.303	8.3%			Protected areas covered 20% of coastal zones in 2012, reaching 37% in 2018.				
Bucharest Convention (Black Sea)	Black Sea	2016									
Cartagena Convention	Wider Caribbean Region	2024	380.093	270.946	126.599	9.793				380.093	
CCAMLR	Antarctica	2024	2.184.000	2.184.000							
COBSEA	East Asian Seas										
Helsinki Convention	Baltic Sea		56.082	50.807		5.274		42.151	8.655		
Jeddah Convention	Red Sea and Gulf of Aden	2019	69.717	36.871		32.846					
Kuwait Convention	ROPME Sea Area										
Lima Convention	Southeast Pacific	2020	111.001.623*								
Nairobi Convention	Western Indian Ocean	2021	555.437,00						MPAs in the WIO region cover 7% of the total EEZ for nine WIO countries (all NC members excl. Somalia)		
Noumea Convention	South Pacific	2020									
NOWPAP	North-West Pacific	2012	64.483								
OSPAR Convention	North-East Atlantic	2023	1.473.100				"Good coverage of coastal waters with about 21.2% of the territorial waters protected."	209.903 (21.2%)	206.928 (2.9%)	416831 (24.1%)	1.055.043 (19.5%)
SACEP	South Asian Seas										
Tehran Convention	Caspian Sea										

Annex 3. RSCAP reporting on quality indicators for MPAs

Convention	Regional sea	Inclusion of areas of high biodiversity importance and key for ecosystem services (SDG Target 14.5; Aichi Target 11; KM GBF Target 3)			Ecological representativeness (SDG Target 14.5; Aichi Target 11; KM GBF Target 3)	Connectivity (SDG Target 14.5)	Equitable governance (SDG Target 14.5; Aichi Target 11; KM GBF Target 3)	Effective management (SDG Target 14.5; Aichi Target 11; KM GBF Target 3)	Level of protection	Regulated/sustainable use	Climate change vulnerabilities and impacts
		EBSAs	KBA	Other critical habitats							
Abidjan Convention	Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region										
Antigua Convention	Northeast Pacific										
Arctic Council	Arctic	✓				✓	✓				
Barcelona Convention	Mediterranean Sea	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Bucharest Convention	Black Sea				✓				✓		
Cartagena Convention	Wider Caribbean Region			Under development		Under development				✓	
CCAMLR	Antarctica								✓	✓	
COBSEA	East Asian Seas										
Helsinki Convention	Baltic Sea				✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Jeddah Convention	Red Sea and Gulf of Aden							✓			
Kuwait Convention	ROPME Sea Area										
Lima Convention	Southeast Pacific			✓							
Nairobi Convention	Western Indian Ocean		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓
Noumea Convention	South Pacific		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			
NOWPAP	North-West Pacific								✓		
OSPAR Convention	North-East Atlantic			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
SACEP	South Asian Seas								✓		
Tehran Convention	Caspian Sea										

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Appendix

Appendix: Methodology

The analysis focuses on target regions under specific Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs). The conventions, action plans and their coverage are summarized below:

Convention	Region	Convention	UNEP
1. Abidjan Convention: Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region	Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region	Yes	UNEP
2. Cartagena Convention: Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region	Wider Caribbean Region	Yes	UNEP
3. Nairobi Convention: Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Western Indian Ocean	Western Indian Ocean	Yes	UNEP
4. Barcelona Convention: Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution	Mediterranean	Yes	UNEP
5. Tehran Convention: Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea	Caspian Sea	Yes	UNEP
6. COBSEA: Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia	East Asian Seas	No	UNEP
7. NOWPAP: Northwest Pacific Action Plan	North-West Pacific	No	UNEP
8. Antigua Convention: Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Northeast Pacific	Northeast Pacific	Yes	Non-UNEP
9. Jeddah Convention: Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment	Red Sea and Gulf of Aden	Yes	Non-UNEP
10. Kuwait Convention: Regional Convention for Cooperation on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Pollution	Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME)	Yes	Non-UNEP
11. Lima Convention: Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Zones of the Southeast Pacific and its associated protocols	Southeast Pacific	Yes	Non-UNEP
12. Bucharest Convention: Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution	Black Sea	Yes	Non-UNEP
13. Noumea Convention: Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region	Pacific	Yes	Non-UNEP
14. SACEP: South Asian Conservation Environment Programme	South Asian Seas	No	Non-UNEP
15. CCAMLR Convention: Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources	Antarctic	Yes	Independent
16. Helsinki Convention: Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area	Baltic Sea	Yes	Independent
17. OSPAR Convention: Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic	North-East Atlantic	Yes	Independent
18. Arctic Council	Arctic	No	Independent

A. Scope of reporting

As RSCAPs have different competences related to MPAs, the scope of reporting was first determined, i.e. nationally designated, regionally designated and/or designated under global frameworks such as the Ramsar Convention.

For restoration activities, the scope in terms of restored ecosystems and habitats was first determined (e.g. mangroves, coral reefs, benthic habitats).

B. Indicator framework

Next, relevant indicators related to area-based conservation and restoration efforts by RSCAPs were determined, with reference to the KM GBF and SDG indicator frameworks as well as regional indicator frameworks:

1. Identify relevant indicators for conservation efforts within each RSCAP:
 - a) Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)
 - Percentage MPAs designated (GBF, SDGs).
 - Number of MPAs (Regional Seas).
 - MPA size with disaggregations (total, marine size, terrestrial size, territorial water, exclusive economic zone, high seas and extended continental shelf) (GBF, regional seas).
 - b) Number of Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)
 - Percentage OECMs designated (GBF).
 - Number of OECMs (Regional Seas).
 - OECMs size with disaggregations (total, marine size, terrestrial size, territorial water, exclusive economic zone, High seas and extended continental shelf) (GBF, Regional Seas).
 - c) Qualitative indicators
 - Inclusion of areas of biodiversity importance (GBF, SDGs, Regional Seas).
 - Ecological representativeness (GBF, Regional Seas).
 - Protected area connectivity (GBF, Regional Seas).
 - Equitable governance (governance types) (GBF, Regional Seas).
 - Management effectiveness (GBF, Regional Seas).
 - Protection of traditional territories (GBF).
 - Integration into wider seascapes (GBF, Regional Seas).
 - Levels of protection (Regional Seas).
 - Inclusion of areas vulnerable to climate change (Regional Seas).
2. Identify relevant indicators related to restoration efforts:
 - a) Area under restoration (GBF).
 - b) Number of restoration projects (both active and completed) (Regional Seas).

Table 1. Global targets and indicators on area-based marine conservation.

Target	Main indicator	Disaggregations of main indicator / supplementary indicators	Data custodian
KM GBF Target 3	Mandatory Headline indicator: 3.1 Coverage of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures Data for Indicator 3.1 is collected through the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) and World Database on Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (WD-OECM).	Potential disaggregations of headline indicator 3.1: (vii) by protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (viii) by realm and by ecosystem functional group (Global Ecosystem Typology level 3) (ix) by areas of importance for biodiversity (x) by effectiveness (Protected Area Management Effectiveness) (xi) by governance type (xii) by Indigenous and traditional territories. Optional complementary indicators (relevant for marine and coastal areas): • 3. CY.2 International Union for Conservation of Nature Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Standard • 2. CY.2 Proportion of key biodiversity areas in favourable condition • 3.CY.5 Number of protected areas that have completed a site-level assessment of governance and equity (SAGE) (IIED)	UNEP-WCMC
SDG Target 14.5	14.5.1. Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas (meta data) Global indicator: Coverage of marine and coastal areas by protected areas SDG Indicator 14.5.1 is based on the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA), to which countries report coverage of marine and coastal areas by protected areas.	Optional national indicators: 5. Coverage, by protected areas, of areas of importance for biodiversity and derived ecosystem services (meta data): Mean % of each KBA that is covered by protected areas and OECMs (meta data updated in 2024, based on WDPA and WDOECM). 6. Protected Areas Management Effectiveness: See Aichi 11 indicator: “number and area of assessments of management effectiveness completed by countries, and the overall management effectiveness score for each aspect of management.” 7. Connectivity of protected areas: no global methodology available for tracking connectivity of marine protected areas under SDG 14.5. 8. Equity in protected area benefits and costs: no global methodology available for tracking equity of marine protected area benefits and costs under SDG 14.5.	UNEP-WCMC
Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 <i>integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.</i>	The Aichi Indicator framework provides a flexible, non-mandatory list of indicators. Main indicators include: • Percentage of marine and coastal areas covered by protected areas • Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas (indicator for SDG target 14.5)	Additional optional indicators (relevant for marine and coastal areas): 5. Coverage, by protected areas, of areas of importance for biodiversity and derived ecosystem services: Mean % of each KBA that is covered by protected areas and OECMs (meta data updated in 2024, based on WDPA and WDOECM). 6. Protected Areas Management Effectiveness: This indicator records the number and area of assessments of management effectiveness completed by countries, and the overall management effectiveness score for each aspect of management. 7. Protected area coverage of Key Biodiversity Areas (including Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas, Alliance for Zero Extinction sites) 8. Protected area coverage of terrestrial and marine ecoregions	UNEP-WCMC

C. Data collection

The analysis gathered data from relevant sources, endeavoring to establish a baseline by quantifying protection (MPA and OECM) and restoration efforts.

The data sources consulted for this report include the following:

- UNEP reports.
- Global and regional indicator frameworks (KM GBF, SDGs).
- RSCAP websites, reports and evaluations.
- Regional protected areas databases established under RSCAPs (e.g. HELCOM Marine Protected Areas database⁸).
- Other regional and global datasets and outlooks (e.g. the 2024 IUCN Protected Planet report).

8 <https://mpas.helcom.fi/apex/f?p=103:1>

