A COMMITMENT TO PROTECT AT LEAST 30% OF OUR OCEAN

WCS Recommendation on the CBD Global Biodiversity Framework

OUR CONSERVATION CHALLENGE, AND POLICY OPPORTUNITY

As detailed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Global Assessment and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on the Oceans and Cryosphere, marine ecosystems are undergoing steady decline as a result of climate change and other anthropogenic impacts. In 2021, the 196 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will adopt a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that will set action-oriented targets for 2030 to provide the momentum for conservation action at multiple scales. To achieve overarching goals on ecosystems for biodiversity and the services provided by nature, Parties have generally agreed to include an ambitious successor to Aichi Target 11 on area-based conservation measures (such as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures). Target 11 may be one of few Aichi Targets within reach, according to national reports submitted to the World Database on Protected Areas, though this effort alone has not been able to halt biodiversity loss.

WE MUST PROTECT OR CONSERVE AT LEAST 30% OF THE OCEAN

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) recommends that Parties to the CBD commit to protecting or conserving at least 30% of the entire ocean by 2030 through area-based conservation measures, including protected areas that effectively mitigate impacts from identified threats, and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) that demonstrate comparable outcomes to protected areas and are identified in line with expert-led technical guidance. To make this commitment both feasible and effective, we urge Parties to:

- Identify and prioritize conservation of areas that are critical for biodiversity - including areas beyond national jurisdiction - to meet an ocean-wide target of 30% through domestic and international actions;
- Improve tools to report on the equitable and effective management of area-based tools, as well as ecological and biological outcomes; to consistently measure progress and improve global implementation;
- Ensure complementarity between area-based measures and other targets on sustainable fisheries, climate change, coral reefs, land-based pollution etc. to sustainably manage 100% of the ocean;
- Recognize the need for community consultation and area-based measures most relevant to local context, which should include recognition of effective traditional and indigenous management systems;
- Support other countries to achieve this target through technical and financial cooperation at different levels; and
- Set shared global goals on biodiversity finance that reflect the ambition of post-2020 conservation targets and assist with long-term implementation of this shared commitment.

1 OECMs are included in Aichi Target 11. Information on identifying and reporting on OECMs, can be found here.
2 WCS is part of a SNAPP working group on "Coastal Outcomes" that examines outcomes and trade-offs of MPAs & OECMs.
WHY AT LEAST 30% OF THE OCEAN?

The efforts made by governments to achieve the CBD Aichi Targets and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including to conserve 10% of marine and coastal habitats through area-based measures, have been tremendous. But scientific evidence is making it clear that 10% of the ocean is insufficient to halt biodiversity loss and protect ecosystem services. There is growing consensus that this figure will need to be higher to achieve shared objectives.

Science: A 2016 meta-analysis, which analyzed 144 peer-reviewed studies, found that a 10% target is insufficient to protect biodiversity and ecosystem services, such as maintaining connectivity, minimizing the risk of fisheries collapse, and maximizing or optimizing fisheries yield. More than half of the literature reviewed suggested that area needed to protect biodiversity and achieve socio-economic goals was at least 30%. A 2020 study used global datasets on marine species, marine habitats identified as Key Biodiversity Areas, and marine wilderness to determine that 26-41% of the ocean needs to be conserved through a combination of site-based measures and other policy responses, with the higher end being more realistic when accounting for species with smaller overall ranges. Recognizing that these reflect a subset of the ecological and evolutionary processes that underpin marine biodiversity, these estimates are very conservative.

Policy: IUCN Members, including over 80% of government Members, adopted Resolution 50 at the 2016 World Conservation Congress, which called on governments to place “at least 30% of each marine habitat in a network of highly protected MPAs and other effective area-based conservation measures.” An ever-increasing number of governments (at least 30 and counting) are signing on to international coalitions supporting a global target to protect or conserve 30% of the global ocean through the CBD’s post-2020 global biodiversity framework, such as the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, co-led by Costa Rica and France, or the Global Ocean Alliance, led by the UK. Indeed, the 30% target for marine protection was included in the zero draft of a post-2020 framework (2030 Action Target 2).

WCS makes long-term commitments to wildlife, wild places and the communities living within and alongside them. Our end goal is not to protect an arbitrary percentage of the ocean (e.g. 30%), but to ensure an ambitious target on area-based measures contributes to protecting wildlife populations and the people that depend on them. We therefore believe that any area-based target must fit into a broader set of goals and targets that drive effective and sustainable management of 100% of the ocean, including for its species, ecosystems and the myriad benefits it provides to people.

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