



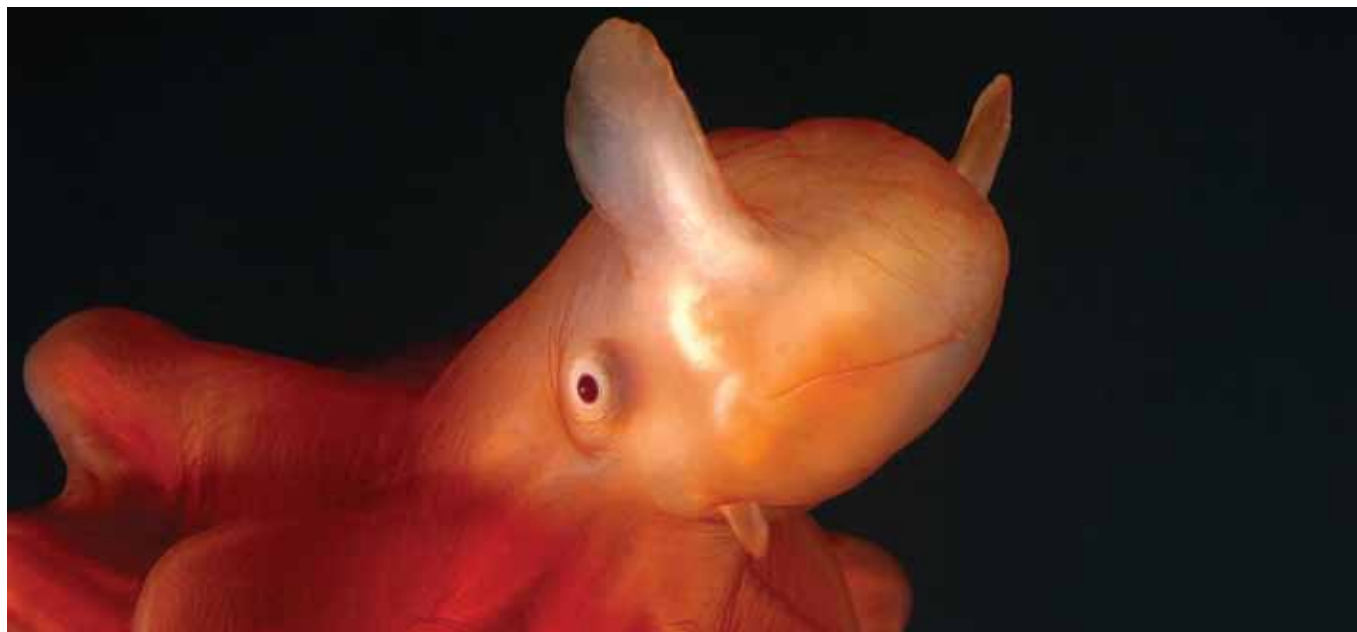
BRIEFING

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Marine

# Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA)



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## A WWF PRIORITY FOR OCEAN LIFE

At the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 10), governments agreed to a process for describing areas that meet the criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), and then notifying the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), governments and relevant international organizations and bodies of these areas and their need for stewardship. This was a great first step, especially for ocean areas beyond national jurisdiction, and the culmination of seven years of work by the CBD.

Since 2010, a number of scientific expert workshops describing areas that meet the EBSA criteria have taken place in various regions, encouraged and supported by the CBD.

The information contained in the workshop reports can be used as the scientific basis for establishing a globally comprehensive, adequate and representative system of EBSAs under effective protection and management in accordance with

international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Now, the process needs to be developed all the way – to seeing the values through to protection as designated marine protected areas (MPAs) with management plans or other appropriate measures taken by competent bodies.

## WHICH ORGANIZATIONS DO WHAT?

The role of the CBD is to facilitate the organisation of scientific workshops to describe the areas that meet the EBSA criteria, and to maintain a Repository of agreed workshop reports and a complementary information sharing mechanism to pass these reports on to the UNGA and other relevant international bodies.

The actual designation of MPAs and the development of appropriate management plans or adoption of equally effective measures is the responsibility of those competent bodies. In the exclusive economic zones this is the role of the coastal state. In areas beyond national jurisdiction (the high seas and the

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## What area gets the GO as an EBSA?

Seven scientific criteria are to be used when evaluating marine areas as having sufficient 'ecological or biological significance':

1. Uniqueness or rarity
2. Special importance for life history stages of species
3. Importance for threatened, endangered or declining species and/or habitats
4. Vulnerability, fragility, sensitivity, slow recovery
5. Biological productivity
6. Biological diversity
7. Naturalness

Area of the seabed outside national jurisdiction), the relevant sectoral bodies have the mandate to control that use: the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for shipping; the International Seabed Authority (ISA) for seabed mining in the Area; regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) for fishing. In some high seas areas covered by Regional Seas Organizations (RSOs), the RSO may designate a MPA, but it still needs collaborative action by the relevant sectoral bodies to actually adopt management controls over the uses for which they have regulatory responsibility.

In order to ensure a coordinated approach on the high seas, the UNGA has the opportunity to facilitate cooperation to encourage effective application of appropriate conservation tools. But how the UNGA and these bodies should respond to the EBSA reports received from the CBD is yet to be elaborated.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

### The UN General Assembly

It is important to ensure that the roles of the UNGA and sectoral management bodies in dealing with agreed EBSA reports received from the CBD are formally established and agreed by governments. The UNGA needs to agree to develop a process for shepherding the CBD's listed EBSAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction to the competent sectoral and/or regional organizations, for the application of appropriate conservation measures, such as setting licensing conditions, environmental impact assessments (EIA), establishment of high seas MPAs or other measures as necessary.

WWF suggests that the UNGA asks its Open-ended Working Group on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) to formulate advice on how the UNGA can best facilitate appropriate management

responses from relevant competent bodies in receipt of CBD EBSA reports and that these report back to the UNGA on relevant management actions taken in response to issues identified according to that UNGA process (especially with respect to the application of EIAs and area-based tools such as MPAs).

### Workshops

While additional workshops have been tentatively scheduled by the CBD COP11, more need to be organized to cover all marine and coastal areas, resulting in a comprehensive CBD Repository of areas that meet the EBSA criteria.

### CBD Conference of Parties

CBD COP11 endorsed summary reports from the Wider Caribbean and Western Mid-Atlantic and the Western South Pacific workshops for inclusion in the Repository.

The CBD Secretariat must now submit the reports to the UNGA, relevant Parties, RFMOs, and sectoral and/or regional bodies, and make them publicly available. Future COPs must do the same for the EBSAs identified in recent and upcoming regional workshops.

Upcoming COPs must also ensure sufficient resources are committed to allow the Secretariat to facilitate and support additional workshops and to support and train government experts to participate in these workshops. Resources need to be made available to coastal states to ensure that the EBSA networks are extended to adequately include waters both within and beyond national jurisdiction.

The EBSA Repository can help ensure that the designation of areas and adoption of management measures by competent bodies continues to reflect latest scientific knowledge and best practice. To this end, the CBD must ensure that a standing process is established for review and revision of the EBSA reports as new scientific understanding emerges.

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