EU and its Member States
Submission of views and information relating to the strategic review and analysis of the current Programme of work on protected areas (PowPA) in the context of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

The EU and its 27 Member States welcome COP decisions 15/4, 15/5 *and* 16/12 *and the opportunity to submit our views related to the strategic review and analysis of the Convention's Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) in the context of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (K-M GBF). In our view, the PoWPA can be a useful instrument to support national activities regarding protected areas (PA) and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs), if it is aligned with the K-M GBF, and embedded within broader implementation tools and processes. Better alignment of the programme with the KM-GBF, especially its Target 3, as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the BBNJ Agreement, ensures that the programme contributes more effectively to implementing global targets. In applying the PoWPA, Parties should retain flexibility to prioritize objectives taking into account local and regional national circumstances.*

The EU and its MS believe that COP 15/4 decision requesting "a strategic review and analysis of the programmes of work of the Convention in the context of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to facilitate its implementation" and, on the basis of this analysis, to prepare draft updates of these programmes of work does not entail renegotiation of the PoWPA or creating new commitments beyond the KM-GBF, but strengthening the implementation and alignment with the KM-GBF to fulfil the COP decisions 15/4, 15/5 and 16/12 is necessary. The PoWPA provides relevant guidance, but the gaps should be considered as was done for the marine and coastal biodiversity work programme, especially to reinforce its implementation in order to contribute to fulfil the KM-GBF.

The EU and its MS welcome the SBSTTA 25 rapid analysis of the alignment of adopted programmes of work with the K-M GBF targets and support the strategic review and analysis of the PoWPA in the context of the K-M GBF. We understand the views submitted pursuant to the present notification make part of that strategic review.

Purpose and scope of a review of the PoWPA

In our view, an update of the PoWPA should build on an assessment of its implementation, including by assessing submission of Parties within in their 7th National Reports. Therefore, it should be assessed to what extent the PoWPA is being used, its effectiveness as well as to guide implementation.

Aligning the PoWPA with the K-M GBF, through a focused addendum or a technical update, would allow addressing gaps, identifying potential additional objectives, or bringing in additional partners and stakeholders. It should be kept in mind that any update of the PoWPA adopted by the COP

provides a framework of objectives and activities to be chosen by Parties according to their specific needs and circumstances.

What aspects should be incorporated or reinforced in the current review of the Programme of Work to improve alignment with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework?

The EU and its Member States consider that the existing elements of the PoWPA remain relevant and should be retained and reinforced in order to ensure alignment with the KM-GBF. This includes aspects and activities of the PoWPA which are based on the rapid analysis contained in SBSTTA/25/INF/1.

The existing PoWPA can contribute to the implementation of K-M GBF targets including activities related to Target 1, 2 and 3 as well as 21 and 22.

Also taking into account the gap analysis from SBSTTA 25, the EU and its MS consider the following to be elements that could be strengthened and enhanced to align with the K-M GBF, such as:

- Target 3:
    - Interpretation or further guidance on the following elements of the target; "*recognizing indigenous and traditional territories where applicable"* and "*while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes*" (Activities 1.1.4, 1.1.7, 2.1.2 and 1.4.3, 3.3.1, 3.3.3.), as well as OECMs to complement what is provided in Decision 14/8, notably its Annex III (no current activities in the PoW, even if other lines of work ongoing).
    - Effective conservation should be highlighted in the context of the current Target 3 of K-M GBF, focusing on a science-based designation of conservation objectives of each PA or OECM, adoption of proper measures to achieve each objective and the establishment of a solid monitoring, supported by continuous knowledge generation and scientific research. Adequate consideration should be given to both land and marine PAs.
- Target 4: Securing the most threatened species and critical habitats for endangered species, while sustainably managing human-wildlife interactions and minimizing human-wildlife conflict (Activities 1.1.2, 1.3.1)
- Target 5: Ensuring that the usage, harvest and trading of wild species and resources from PAs and OECMs is sustainable, safe and legal, while respecting and protecting the customary sustainable use by indigenous peoples and local communities (Activity 1.5.6)
- Target 6: Eradication or control of already established invasive alien species in PAs and OECMs, and in their areas of influence, as well as preventing the introduction of invasive alien species at the outset (Activity 1.5.4).
- Target 7: Reducing pollution risks by 2030 to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services in and around PA and OECMs, including guidance on excess nutrients, pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals in the context of various biomes and guidance to identify which types and sources of pollution are of particular concern for each biome, and means to address these. Guidance should take into account

the land-sea continuum and the role of terrestrial, freshwater and marine PA and OECMs as interconnected systems, so as to ensure coherent approaches to managing pollution sources and pathways across these environments (Activity 1.5.2)

- Target 8/11: The role of nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches should be prioritzed in PAs and OECMs as nature's contributions to people is extremely relevant both for local management, local acceptance and political support; management effectiveness and the maintenance of ecological integrity of PAs and OECMs is key to delivering nature's contributions to people. This would not only help to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, as well as climate change, but also contribute to other targets of the K-M GBF (such as target 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.).
- Target 12: Increasing the amount and quality of green and blue areas in different biomes, including urban spaces. The PoWPA does not touch on urban planning and green and blue spaces and its relation to protected areas. Further, the PoWPA should recognise the contributions of PAs/OECMs to human health and well-being, provide related guidance and ensure links to the Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health (16/19).
- Target 15: Enhancing disclosure of biodiversity related risks, dependencies and impacts in PA and OECMs, especially regarding the operations of large actors of the business and financial sectors
- Target 16: provide suggestions on how Protected Areas and OECMs can contribute to encouraging sustainable consumption choices
- Target 21: strengthening the use of remote sensing and making best use of available data and satellite imagery to monitor land cover and land cover changes within protected areas globally, over time.
- Target 22: Given the central role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the GBF and acknowledged in the PowPA (Tasks 1.1.4, 1.5.6, 2.1.2., 2.1.3., 2.2.4, 2.2.7), the participation in decision making of Indigenous Peoples and local communities is relevant for the update of the PowPA, taking into account relevant items of the GBF Monitoring framework, such as protected areas that have completed a site-level assessment of governance and equity (SAGE) or the new four traditional knowledge indicators (CBD/SBSTTA/26/INF/11).
- Target 23: Gender analysis on roles, responsibilities, uses, rights and practices to address underlying social and gender inequalities and adopting a gender-responsive approach in conserving, sustainably managing and restoring biodiversity to achieve gender equality and inclusive governance (Activity 2.2.1).

IPBES Global Assessment findings and the latest Protected Planet Report demonstrate that territories and areas governed or managed by Indigenous peoples and local communities —both within and beyond protected and conserved areas—often maintain higher ecological integrity. This underscores the critical contribution of Indigenous peoples and local communities to PA planning and management. This is directly relevant for the implementation of Target 3 and closely linked to the rights-based provisions under Target 22 and in section C. In addition, proposed activities in PoWPA regarding the role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and the areas managed and conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities in implementing the GBF should be reinforced and aligned with the KM-GBF, specifically Target 3. This work could cross-refer to and

complement the Guidelines on Tasks 1.1 and 1.2 of the programme of work on Article 8(j) and other provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity related to indigenous peoples and local communities to 2030.

Accordingly, Section C and other relevant provisions of the KM-GBF—including those related to the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities, participation and equitable governance—should be adequately reflected in the updated PoWPA. In this context, the explicit integration of a human-rights-based approach is essential. The EU and its Member States therefore request that available information on the human-rights-based approach be fully taken into account when preparing the revision of the PoWPA. Equitable governance and secure tenure are proven to reduce conflicts, enhance stewardship, and improve conservation outcomes. Consequently, integrating human-rights principles into the revised Programme of Work on Protected Areas is essential to ensure that area-based conservation is both effective, participatory and socially responsible.

PA and networks of PA that have an inclusive approach to reach conservation goals (such as UNESCO biosphere reserves and the man and biosphere (MAB)-programme), through e.g. a broader engagement of people, communities and culture can serve as model sites in implementing the K-M GBF and especially help countries reach targets 3, 11 and 22. These protected areas integrate biodiversity and ecosystem services into territorial planning and management while simultaneously fostering their sustainable use. Especially buffer zones and transition areas of UNESCO biosphere reserves contribute to a variety of targets of the KM-GBF (see the recently adopted Hangzhou Strategic Action Plan).

To the extent possible, the review of PoWPA should be in line with the systematic approach for reviewing Programmes of Work that SBSTTA asked the Secretariat to prepare (SBSTTA 27 recommendation 4 paragraph 1). This could be complemented by any conclusions or recommendations deriving from the 7th National Reports, the Global Report and the Global Review of Collective Progress in Implementation of the GBF at COP17.

A focused addendum or clear, technical update could foster alignment of the PoWPA with the K-M GBF, supporting integration into national implementation processes, and ensuring synergy and complementarity with related international frameworks. A technical update could include an opening section with the latest and most relevant scientific findings on biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in relation to PA, to guide towards an effective implementation of the PoWPA.

Lessons learned from the ongoing discussion on the update of the expanded programme of work on forest biodiversity should be considered, proposals for potential complementary activities to close gaps in the PoWPA should include clear rationales how they help to align the PoWPA with the KM-GBF.

How could the approach to implementing the Programme of Work be revised to better contribute to achieving Target 3 of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework? In your response, consider potential actors and timeframes.

- Involvement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities: In order to operationalize equity and benefit-sharing in spatial planning for PA, and to enhance the quality of PA and their effective management, full and effective participation, integration of traditional knowledge, as well as recognition and respecting the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities in management and decision-making processes around PA/OECM, including over their traditional territories should be ensured.
- Mobilize sustainable financing: In order to provide funding opportunities for the sustainable management and expansion of PA, long-term financing strategies may be developed, including for biodiversity funds, private sector partnerships, and payment for ecosystem services.
- Monitoring, reporting and adaptive management: PoWPA monitoring builds largely on qualitative factors. Supporting and strengthening the use of Target 3's headline, component and complementary indicators – as well as their optional disaggregation – and developing standardized, outcome-oriented indicators aligned with Target 3 would contribute to biodiversity reporting and ensure that PA management and planning remains ecologically effective. Moreover, strengthening the use of remote sensing for the monitoring of protected areas globally would be beneficial, making use of the latest publicly available data regarding protected area boundaries and satellite imagery (optical and radar) with a view to monitor land cover and land cover changes within protected areas over time, and making this information publicly available in the most suitable formats. Extending this action to the global level can support other Parties, contributing also to Target 20.
- Mainstreaming of biodiversity into relevant sectors: To ensure the conservation and effective management of PA systems and avoid perverse incentives, key sectoral policies and laws should be harmonized according to and aligned with Target 3 objectives, in accordance with parties own procedures and competencies, considering the previous mainstreaming decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth and fourteenth meetings (Targets 10, 14, 15 and 16).
- Enhance spatial planning and ecological connectivity: Using systematic conservation planning to create and select PA that could be linked to improve ecological connectivity by corridors, buffer zones, and ecological networks, can help designing resilient networks of PA and OECMs.
- Continue raising the profile of marine and freshwater biomes in the PA theme: To successfully reach the targets of the GBF, equal emphasis needs to be given to terrestrial, as well as marine and freshwater biomes. This can be done by further aligning the work within different themes and PoWs (Inland waters, Island and Marine and coastal biodiversity) and decisions (as CBD/COP/DEC/16/17 Conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity and of island biodiversity), and continued co-operation of the CBD with other MEAs and bodies, such as the BBNJ agreement. Complementary actions could include the

development of guidance on how to better report on freshwater biomes as part of PAs and OECMs.

- Guidance on OECMs: The requirements for an area to count as an OECM, beyond the definition and guidance provided in Decision 14/8, needs to be further developed. Providing more detailed guidance on OECMs would enhance stakeholder communication and pave the way for areas that meet the criteria to count towards Target 3, while recognising that the identification and recognition of OECMs remains under the responsibility of the parties.
- Explore synergies with other Conventions and programmes, such as the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and especially the UNESCO MAB Programme, the BBNJ Agreement, the Ramsar Convention but also regional conventions such as the Carpathian or the Alpine Convention, as these provide powerful tools to reinforce Target 3 and PA related targets including management effectiveness, monitoring, involvement of Indigenous peoples and local communities etc. With the upcoming entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement, numerous opportunities for synergies are emerging – particularly in light of the extensive scientific and technical groundwork already undertaken by the CBD, e.g., through the EBSA process, and the contribution that future marine protected areas under the BBNJ Agreement can make toward achieving target 3 of the K-M GBF. The revision and updating of the PoWPA as well as its implementation would benefit from taking into account the latest scientific findings on climate change and biodiversity, as well as the most recent MEAs decisions, while maintaining efforts that focus on implementation to achieve the K-M GBF targets by 2030.

Which goals, targets, or activities of the Programme of Work should be prioritized to support national implementation of the Framework by 2030?

It may not be relevant to point out any specific goals, targets and activities to be prioritised within the PoWPA since they are interlinked. When implementing the PoWPA, we encourage Parties to prioritise actions that maximise the contribution to the Goals of the GBF, whilst maximising co-benefits to other global objectives, such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, resilience and sustainable livelihoods. Parties should furthermore be encouraged to identify national priorities for PoWPA implementation based on their updated NBSAPs, National Reports and the Global Review of Collective Progress. Furthermore, the Global Review of Collective Progress, scheduled for COP-17 will assess collective advances towards the K-M GBF targets and, in accordance with Decision 15/6, paragraph 19, the COP will provide any additional recommendations, as necessary, with a view to achieving the goals and targets of the GBF.

Concluding remarks

The establishment and effective and sustainable conservation, restoration and management of PA and OECMs is essential to safeguarding natural and cultural heritage, as well as to provide sustainable livelihoods, ecosystem services and human well-being. Therefore, the EU and its

Member States remain committed to supporting capacity building and development and knowledge sharing, especially with developing countries and those most affected by biodiversity loss.

The EU and its Member States are open to the views of other Parties to jointly explore the most efficient and effective way forward with a clear focus on implementation rather than re-negotiation of existing commitments.