بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Ministry of Tourism and Environment
Male', Republic of Maldives

Date: 15 December 2025 No: 88-ENV/PRIV/2025/1854

Astrid Schomaker,
Executive Secretary,
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD),

Subject: Review of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) in the Context of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Dear Executive Secretary,

The Government of the Republic of Maldives presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and has the honour to submit, pursuant to Decision 15/4, paragraph 9, the views and information of the Maldives on the strategic review and analysis of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) in the context of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF).

The Government of the Maldives appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this important process and respectfully conveys the submission attached as an annex to this letter.

The Government of the Republic of Maldives avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity the assurances of its highest consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisama Sabry,
National Focal Point,

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Ministry of Tourism and Environment
Male', Republic of Maldives

Submission of the Republic of Maldives

Strategic Review of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) in the Context of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

(Submitted in accordance with CBD Decision 15/4, paragraph 9)

1. Introduction

The Maldives underscores the continued importance of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) as a central mechanism for supporting Parties in establishing, managing, and monitoring protected and conserved areas. With the adoption of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), the PoWPA must evolve to effectively guide Parties in achieving Target 3 and other relevant GBF goals.

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) highly dependent on healthy marine and coastal ecosystems, the Maldives places particular emphasis on effective management, equitable governance, ecological connectivity, and sustainable financing of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). The Maldives considers the PoWPA a foundational instrument that should now be updated and strengthened to support Parties in implementing the Framework by 2030.

2. Views on Strategic Needs for Updating and Aligning PoWPA with the GBF

2.1 Reinforcing alignment with Target 3 of the KMGBF

The updated PoWPA should explicitly incorporate the full scope of Target 3, including:

- The 30% area-based quantitative conservation ambition for 2030, explicitly incorporating the 30% of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas;
- Ecological representativity and coverage of critical ecosystems, including but not limited to coral reefs, seagrass meadows, mangroves, and climate-resilient ecosystems;
- Ecological connectivity across seascapes and landscapes;
- Effective management grounded in measurable indicators;
- Effective and equitable governance, including full participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, youth, and resource users;
- Explicit recognition and integration of OECMs as complementary to protected areas.

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2.2 Enhancing clarity on planning, monitoring and reporting

The PoWPA should provide operational guidance for:

- National-level spatial planning aligned with KMGBF indicators;
- Monitoring and evaluation systems including management effectiveness, socio-economic indicators, governance quality, and biodiversity outcomes;
- Consistency with the GBF Monitoring Framework and Protected Planet reporting processes;
- Integration of climate resilience and restoration into protected area system planning.

2.3 Strengthening Management Effectiveness

The Maldives emphasizes that achieving Target 3 requires not only expanded coverage but demonstrable management effectiveness. In this regard, the revised PoWPA should:

- Incorporate existing and internationally recognized management effectiveness assessment tools, including:
    - the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) and IMET; and
    - the IUCN Green List Standard for Protected and Conserved Areas;
- Provide clear operational guidance on the application of these tools in different national contexts, including marine and SIDS settings;
- Enhance capacity-building support for Parties to regularly assess, report, and improve management effectiveness using these tools;
- Promote alignment of management effectiveness assessments with the GBF Monitoring Framework, Protected Planet reporting, and national biodiversity reporting processes.

2.3 Strengthening enabling conditions

The Maldives highlights the importance of strengthening enabling conditions within PoWPA through:

- Sustainable financing mechanisms, including innovative finance, removal of perverse incentives, and access to climate and biodiversity funds for SIDS;
- Capacity development and technical assistance, particularly for SIDS and developing countries;
- Technology transfer across borders;
- Cross-sector integration with fisheries, tourism, spatial planning, infrastructure development, and climate adaptation frameworks;
- Policy coherence and removal of incentives harmful to biodiversity;
- Guidance for long-term maintenance of marine and coastal ecosystem services;
- Long-term institutional support for protected area authorities.

3. Proposed Priority Areas for PoWPA Revision

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3.1 OECMs

The Maldives highlights the need for clearer, practical guidance on:

- Identification, recognition and reporting of OECMs, particularly in community-managed areas, locally managed marine areas, and traditional use zones, in accordance with CBD criteria;
- Governance safeguards that ensure rights, participation, and benefit-sharing for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including resource users;
- Monitoring that demonstrates long-term sustained biodiversity outcomes;
- Integration of OECMs into national planning and reporting systems;
- Capacity support for Parties to apply OECM criteria in marine and small island developing states contexts.
- Capacity-building and monitoring frameworks to demonstrate long-term biodiversity outcomes.

3.2 Ecological Connectivity

The revised PoWPA should:

- Define connectivity requirements aligned with KMGBF indicators;
- Promote regional and national ecological network planning, especially in marine migratory corridors, reef–seagrass–mangrove systems, and climate refugia;
- Provide technical guidance for identifying and mapping connectivity pathways;
- Encourage incorporation of connectivity considerations into marine spatial planning, environmental impact assessment, and sectoral decision-making;
- Recommend monitoring frameworks for ecological linkages and functional connectivity.

3.3 Sustainable Financing

The Maldives recommends strengthening PoWPA guidance on:

- Developing sustainable and innovative financing mechanisms, including conservation trust funds, tourism-based financing, debt-for-nature swaps, blue carbon finance, and blended finance;
- Tools for identifying and phasing out harmful subsidies inconsistent with Target 18 of the KMGBF;
- Support for SIDS-specific financing windows under the GEF, Green Climate Fund, and multilateral/bilateral partners;
- Identification and reform of incentives harmful to biodiversity;
- Equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms that reinforce local stewardship and long-term sustainability;
- Protocols for integrating socio-economic benefits, community co-management, and climate adaptation benefits into proposals.

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4. National Priorities of the Maldives for Implementation to 2030

The Maldives identifies the following priority areas for PoWPA impementation:

1. Systematic conservation planning to achieve ecologically representative and well-connected marine and coastal networks;
2. Recognition and support for OECMs, including community-managed areas;
3. Strengthening management effectiveness and long-term monitoring;
4. Mobilization of sustainable and climate-resilient financing mechanisms;
5. Integration of biodiversity objectives and conservation values across sectors, including fisheries, tourism, climate adaptation, coastal development and national development planning.

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