

Making OECMs Work: Landscape Approaches for Effective Area-Based Conservation

A joint project on landscape approaches for “other effective area-based conservation measures” (OECMs) in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, implemented by Conservation International and the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability

Event Report: CBD SBSTTA-24 / SBI-3 / OEWG2020-3 Side Event “Making OECMs Work: Landscape Approaches for Effective Area-Based Conservation”, 24 March 2020, CICG, Geneva, Switzerland

This event was organized during the first CBD in-person meetings to be held since the OEWG2020 meeting in Rome, Italy in early 2020. As such, there was still a lot of uncertainty among delegates about what form the final mechanisms for area-based conservation would take under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and negotiations on the language of related Targets were ongoing when the event was held. The event was attended by around 30 people in the venue, and a further 35 joined virtually online.

The programme consisted of a short background and introductory presentation by William Dunbar (Conservation International), followed by discussion with a panel consisting of:

- (Moderator) Suneetha Subramanian (UNU-IAS)
- Mirna Ines Fernandez (GYBN)
- Terence Hay-Edie (UNDP GEF-SGP)
- Mrinalini Rai (Women4Biodiversity)
- Lika Sasaki (UNCTAD BioTrade)
- Stephen Woodley (IUCN WCPA Specialist Group on OECMs)



This event was intended to build upon the outcomes of a previous Expert Dialogue held in February 2022, and as such, topic areas for discussion were developed based on the outcomes of the February Dialogue. The three identified topic areas, issues relevant to landscape approaches as they relate to OECMs and beyond, were:

- Connectivity across the landscape. This is a primary concern in any integrated landscape approach, and relates to the CBD Geneva meetings in the stipulation that systems of protected areas and OECMs must be “well-connected and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes” in Draft Target 3 of the GBF.
- Recognition of social-ecological systems as OECMs. While some parks or other PAs are created as new institutions, for existing social-ecological systems to be considered as OECMs, they instead need to be recognized for their delivery of biodiversity outcomes and human well-being. This process of recognition is also related to the ongoing and lively debates about “rights-based” approaches carried on in Geneva.
- Institutionalization of OECMs. In other words, what it means to actually develop OECMs on the ground. In addition to practical matters of governance, economics, and value chains, there are also issues of rights, equity, and representation to be considered in identifying and implementing OECMs.

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Discussion of these issues was wide-ranging and inclusive, with many statements and questions from the audience in addition to insights from the panelists. For the purpose of this report, several main areas of interest arising in the discussion have been identified:

- The relationship between conservation and sustainable use is one of the major ongoing issues here and in biodiversity-related policy discussions in general. Relevant to the current context, the different roles of targets in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework were discussed, with some advocating for a clear division between targets covering conservation areas and places with more impactful production activities, while others suggested that a more integrated approach will result in biodiversity outcomes across the wider landscape.
- The issue of governance, and particularly complexity of governance considering the creation of a new form of area-based conservation in OECMs, brought out a large number of examples. It was pointed out that, while the issue of how to categorize different areas had already been complex, OECMs add yet another layer of complexity. For example, while a registry for indigenous peoples’ territories has been under development for several years, there is now the possibility that these areas could also be considered OECMs, and the same goes for nationally- and locally-specific designations. It was suggested that area-based targets in the Framework could go beyond protected areas and OECMs to even include explicit mention of lands and territories held by indigenous peoples and local communities.
- Several attendees stressed the need for more attention to cultural and spiritual values in the Framework, at least in the indicators and monitoring framework if not in the targets themselves, as this was an aspect missing from the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. This includes the need to address the drivers of biodiversity loss such as extractive industries, and avoid abuses of nature and human rights throughout value chains. In this way, sustainable landscapes can be shaped to include equity for women, youth, and indigenous peoples and local communities.
- Incentives related to OECMs are an ongoing topic, as there is still confusion about why local communities may or may not want their landscapes to be designated as protected areas, OECMs, or others. Participants suggested that the “30 by 30” goal itself is an incentive to develop OECMs, and that recognition of existing good efforts can be an incentive that has been underappreciated to date. Payment for ecosystem services or similar terms like reciprocity or mutual support were raised as examples, while “voluntary sustainable standards” may be an alternative to certification of trade goods that can be easier to comply with. In any case, new mechanisms should avoid creating new administrative or regulatory burdens for local communities, who will be responsible for management of any OECMs.

If done well, an effective OECM mechanism can serve as encouragement for local areas to make a little more effort to become truly sustainable, so a proactive approach encouraging not just recognition of existing efforts but aiming to motivate further effort could have greater effect. A final point of agreement in the discussion was that in any case, existing efforts are not sufficient, and a greater sense of urgency is needed on all fronts and all of the biodiversity targets to reach a nature-positive goal.