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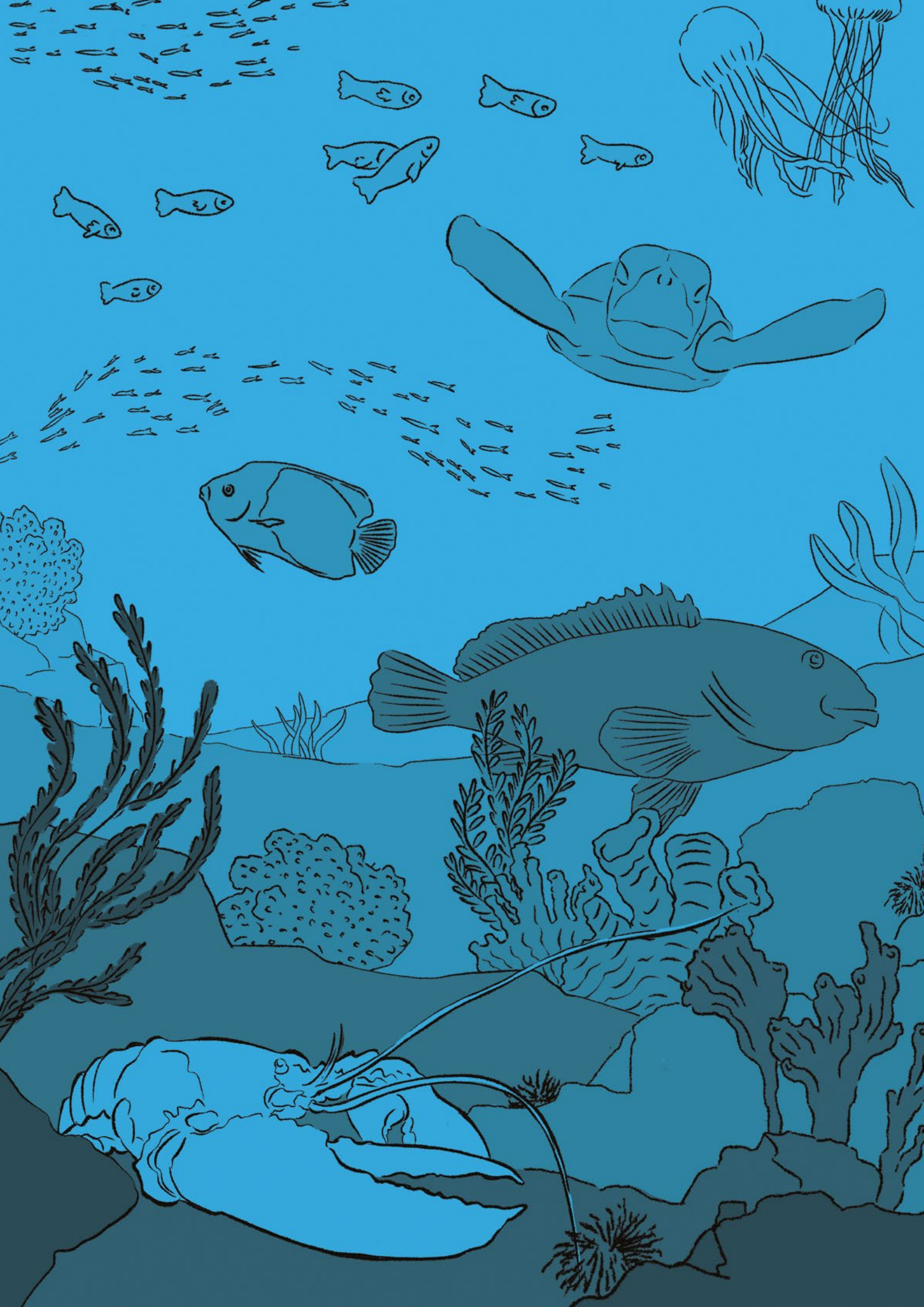
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Report of the

**EXPERT MEETING ON FISHERIES-RELATED OTHER EFFECTIVE
AREA-BASED CONSERVATION MEASURES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN**

Online, 16–17 February 2022





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PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document provides a summary of the discussions, presentations and takeaway messages from the expert meeting on fisheries-related other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean that was held online from 16 to 17 February 2022. The meeting focused on receiving inputs from the participating experts to establish a way forward for the identification of fisheries-related OECMs in the Mediterranean. The report was prepared by Juan Francisco Lechuga Sánchez, Amber Himes-Cornell, Elisabetta Betulla Morello and Aurora Nastasi. The views expressed in this report are those of the participants and do not necessarily reflect those of the participants' affiliated institutions.

ABSTRACT

The expert meeting on fisheries-related other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean was co-organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and held online from 16 to 17 February 2022. It sought to establish a way forward for identifying fisheries-related OECMs in the Mediterranean region and provide technical input to prepare and test FAO's practical guidance for the establishment and management of OECMs in marine fisheries.

The main points covered during the expert meeting included: introducing participants to the OECM concept; the initial application of the criteria for OECMs, as determined by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to a set of case studies and fisheries-related measures in the region; the compilation and discussion of main challenges related to the application of the criteria, with initial recommendations on how to address them; an initial screening of eight Mediterranean case studies against the OECM criteria; agreement on next steps to undertake a more in-depth evaluation of the case studies presented for discussions during GFCM subregional committee meetings; and the assessment of the implications, opportunities and potential difficulties that arise from identifying fishery-related OECMs in the Mediterranean.

Participants concluded that it would be worth performing a more in-depth assessment against the full set of CBD criteria for the case studies in the Adriatic Sea, the Central Mediterranean and the GFCM 1 000 m Fisheries Restricted Area. Participants suggested bringing the results of the expert meeting to the GFCM Subregional Committee for the Adriatic Sea, the Subregional Committee for the Central Mediterranean and the Working Group on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems and Essential Fish Habitats to discuss the possibility of proceeding with a full assessment of the suggested areas. Additional takeaway messages from the expert meeting included the need for a better definition and understanding of biodiversity and biodiversity conservation; the need to study the links between possible OECMs and what surrounds them, including non-fisheries related threats; the need to identify what constitutes activities with significant adverse impact and how to manage threats to enhance protection; and the need to look at the specificities of the Mediterranean governance structure and the further involvement of coastal communities in the OECM discussions.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABMT	area-based management tool
ABNJ	area beyond national jurisdiction
ACCOBAMS	Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COFI	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Committee on Fisheries
EBSA	ecologically or biologically significant marine area
EFH	essential fish habitats
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FRA	fisheries restricted area
GFCM	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
ICES	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUCN-WCPA	International Union for Conservation of Nature World Commission on Protected Areas
MPA	marine protected area
NEAFC	North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission
NFI	Fisheries and Aquaculture Division of FAO
OECM	other effective area-based conservation measure(s)
RFMO	regional fisheries management organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSF	small-scale fisheries
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP-WCMC	UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre
VME	vulnerable marine ecosystem
VMS	vessel monitoring system
WD-OECM	World Database on OECMs
WKTOPS	IUCN Fisheries Expert Group Workshop on testing OECM practices and strategies in the North Atlantic
WWF	World Wide Fund For Nature



Part I



BACKGROUND

In 2010, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) officially recognized the role of area-based management in biodiversity conservation through the adoption of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 (herein referred to as Target 11). Target 11 captured the role of area-based conservation in marine biodiversity and called for 10 percent of coastal and marine areas to be conserved under protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) by 2020. The United Nations General Assembly reinforced this in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda by adopting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.5, which included a similar target to conserve 10 percent of coastal and marine areas.

In 2018, at the 14th Conference of Parties (COP), the Parties to the CBD adopted a definition of OECM and welcomed criteria and guiding principles for identifying and reporting OECMs (CBD/COP/DEC/14/8) (CBD, 2018a). Since then, much attention has been focused on the concept of OECMs which allow sectors that practice sustainable use to contribute to meeting global biodiversity targets and represent a new opportunity for states to recognize biodiversity conservation potential from a wider range of spatial management measures than ever before. Specifically, within the fisheries realm, many area-based fisheries management measures already aim to meet sustainability goals and are well poised to meet the OECM criteria.

In February 2021, the 34th meeting of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Committee on Fisheries (COFI) noted the relevance of OECMs to achieving a number of the SDGs and global biodiversity targets. The Committee requested that FAO produce and disseminate practical guidelines to support Members in the identification and implementation of OECMs (FAO, 2022a, para. 17d and 17e).

Following the request of COFI34, the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI) began to develop practical guidance aimed at: explaining the role of OECMs in mainstreaming biodiversity; providing both a general and technical understanding of OECMs and the CBD Decision 14/8; and providing a step-by-step guide to undertaking an OECM assessment of area-based management tools used in fisheries (the final published guidance can be found in FAO [2022c]).

As part of this effort, FAO began hosting a series of shared learning workshops with the following objectives:

- (1) To support countries, fisheries-related agencies and stakeholders to understand, discuss and apply the CBD criteria for identifying fisheries-related OECMs.
- (2) To synthesize lessons learned from countries' experience in applying the CBD criteria and develop a guidance document on OECMs in the fisheries sector that complements existing global guidance.

Noting the relevance of the OECM concept for biodiversity conservation in the Mediterranean, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), in its forty-fourth session, encouraged contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties “to participate in the ongoing international process of defining and identifying other effective area-based conservation measures, including by organizing Mediterranean-specific expert meetings, in collaboration with FAO and relevant partners” (FAO, 2022b, para. 41). Following this recommendation, the GFCM secretariat partnered with NFI to organize a series of meetings to explore the potential for identifying fisheries area-based management tools (ABMTs) in the Mediterranean as OECMs.

INTRODUCTORY WEBINAR ON OTHER EFFECTIVE AREA-BASED CONSERVATION MEASURES

As a first step, on 14 December 2021, FAO and the GFCM co-hosted an introductory webinar on marine OECMs in the Mediterranean region. The webinar aimed to: 1) provide a general introduction to the concept of OECMs and their evolving scope in global policy and regional strategies; and 2) initiate discussion on the OECM definition and criteria in the Mediterranean context and the role that fisheries-related OECMs can play in the Mediterranean Sea region. During the webinar, a general introduction to the OECM concept, criteria and guiding principles was provided and examples of existing OECMs and potential OECMs were presented.

Participants had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues related to OECMs in the Mediterranean. The following questions and comments predominated in the discussion:

- Could regional organizations report OECMs?
- How should the overlapping of two-dimensional area-based measures with three-dimensional measures be addressed?
- What is the role of fisheries OECMs in addressing overlapping sectoral threats and enhancing the outcomes of other area-based management tools?
- The need to involve stakeholders, including fishing communities, in the OECM process.

The results of the discussions also aimed to facilitate the work of, and help target preparations for, the regional OECM expert meeting, for which this document reports outcomes. Consequently, during the webinar participants proposed to perform preliminary screening exercises of several fisheries ABMTs in the Mediterranean, namely:

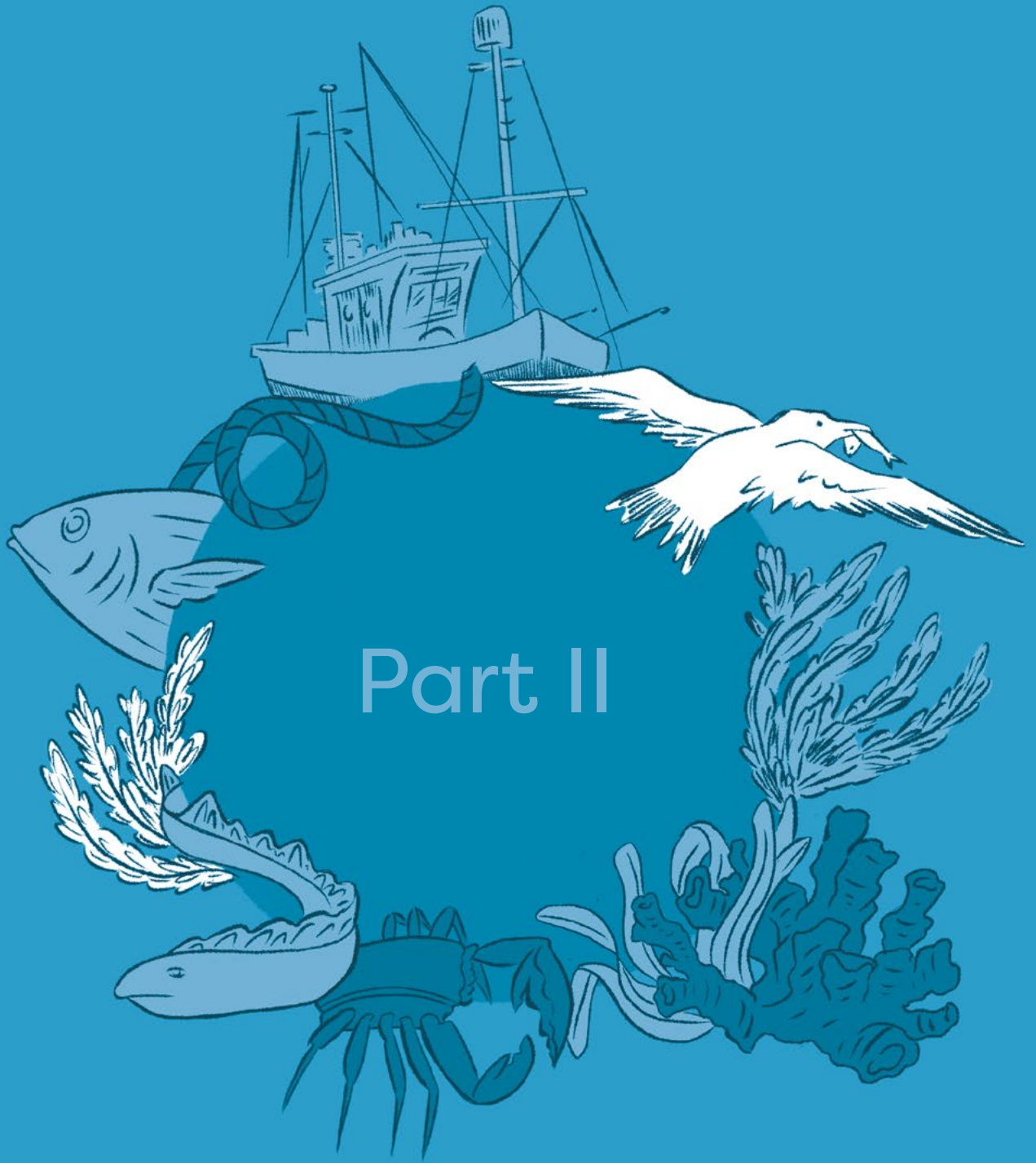
- the GFCM 1 000 m Fisheries Restricted Area (FRA);
- the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA;
- three FRAs in the Strait of Sicily;
- the Velebit Channel demersal fishing ban; and
- three fisheries ABMTs in Lebanon.

MEETING OBJECTIVES

Following the introductory webinar, FAO and GFCM organized the expert meeting on fisheries-related other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean on 16 to 17 February 2022. The meeting took place virtually.

The main objective of the expert meeting was to establish a way forward for identifying fisheries-related OECMs in the Mediterranean, and provide technical input to the development of FAO's practical guidance for the establishment and management of OECMs in marine fisheries. The main points covered included:

- initial application of a set of simplified CBD criteria for OECMs to the case studies and fisheries-related measures identified during the December 2021 webinar;
- compilation and discussion of main challenges related to the application of the criteria, with initial recommendations on how to address them;
- agreement on next steps to undertake a more in-depth evaluation of the case studies for discussion during GFCM technical meetings in 2022; and
- assessment of the implications, opportunities and potential difficulties that may arise from identifying fishery-related OECMs in the Mediterranean.



Part II

OPENING OF THE MEETING

Ms Elisabetta Betulla Morello, GFCM Fishery Resources Officer, opened the expert meeting by welcoming all the participants and describing the meeting goals. She then gave the floor to Vera Agostini, NFI Deputy Director and Miguel Bernal, GFCM Senior Fisheries Officer, who presented the opening remarks.

Ms Agostini expressed her satisfaction at co-hosting the expert meeting with GFCM. She noted the attention attracted by OECMs, particularly given the negotiations for the CBD's Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. She observed that OECMs provide an opportunity to recognize the role of different sectors in supporting biodiversity conservation and, together with marine protected areas (MPAs), in helping to achieve the SDGs and global biodiversity targets. She highlighted FAO's recognition of the critical role of biodiversity in fisheries production and in supporting sustainable livelihoods and ecosystem services. Ms Agostini emphasized FAO's commitment to supporting its Members to report on the ways in which their fisheries contribute to achieving global area-based conservation goals. She hoped that the expert meeting would help participants arrive at a collective understanding of what OECMs are and how they can help the fisheries sector to improve biodiversity conservation outcomes in the Mediterranean. She ended her intervention by expressing her appreciation to GFCM for their partnership and looked forward to a successful meeting and further collaboration with the countries in the region.

Mr Bernal acknowledged the Mediterranean Sea's long history of fishing activities, its high biodiversity value and delicate ecosystems which are vulnerable to combined human pressures. He highlighted the links between fisheries sustainability and biodiversity conservation in the region and their importance for the achievement of the GFCM's mandate. He stressed that such links require strong collaborations between GFCM and its partners in the region, notably the Barcelona Convention, the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre, the Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) and the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS). He emphasized the opportunity that OECMs offer in the interface between fisheries management and biodiversity conservation. Mr Bernal finished his opening remarks by thanking FAO and the NFI for their leadership in the OECM discussion on fisheries. He also thanked the GFCM staff, countries and experts for presenting cases studies and discussing the criteria and IUCN for its support in organizing the meeting.

BACKGROUND PRESENTATIONS

The first session aimed to provide a brief overview of what OECMs are, how they fit in the context of the Mediterranean region, and how FAO is working towards providing practical guidance for recognizing OECMs in marine fisheries.

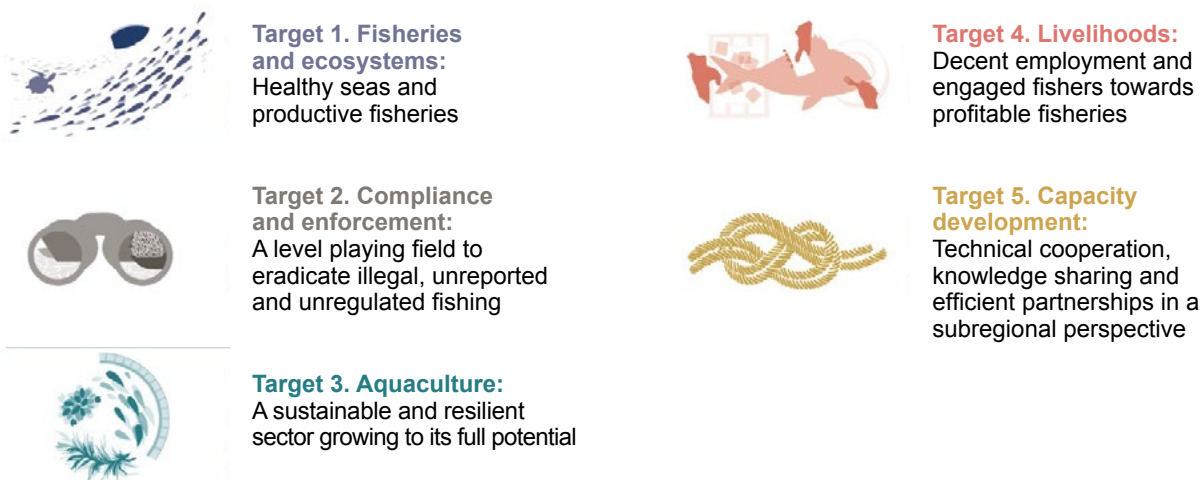
Why identify fisheries-related other effective area-based conservation measures in the Mediterranean?

Ms Morello delivered an overview presentation addressing why OECMs should be identified in the Mediterranean and how the GFCM can facilitate the process of recognizing OECMs.

Fish production is fundamental to the economy, social fabric, culture, food security and nutrition of coastal communities in the Mediterranean. However, challenges regarding the recovery and sustainable use of fisheries resources exist. One way to help fisheries resources to recover is through marine spatial protection. Approximately 9.68 percent of the Mediterranean is protected through MPAs (Gomei *et al.*, 2021), a percentage close to the 10 percent protection target set by the CBD Aichi Target 11 and the SDG 14.5. However, not all MPAs in the Mediterranean are managed effectively and the figure of 9.68 percent could be lower if effectiveness was to be considered. Taking that into account, the area currently conserved in the Mediterranean is not only below the 10 percent target, but also a long way off the 30 percent conservation target adopted by the European Union and proposed in the CBD's draft Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Given the current status of protection in the Mediterranean, other types of ABMTs can help – together with MPAs – achieve the 30 percent conservation target and contribute to biodiversity conservation through their recognition as OECMs.

The recently adopted GFCM 2030 Strategy for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (FAO, 2021), which aims to achieve sustainable fisheries in the region, promotes the use of a wide range of spatial management tools, including FRAs in particular. The Strategy consists of five targets (Figure 1), each supported by outputs and strategic actions. Target 1 and, in particular, its output 1.3 (efficient area-based conservation measures, technical and nature-based solutions strengthened to conserve biodiversity and enhance the productivity of marine living resources) are of special relevance for applying the OECM concept in the region.

Figure 1. GFCM 2030 Strategy targets



Source: FAO. 2021. *GFCM 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea*. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7562en/cb7562en.pdf>

Notably, the work related to output 1.3 aims to identify new FRAs¹ – of which, to date, ten have been implemented – and once implemented, to enhance their efficiency and monitoring. Many FRAs have the potential to be good candidates for OECM recognition due to their contribution to the conservation of deep-sea, vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) and sensitive species. Output 1.3 also considers the establishment and monitoring of other area-based management measures to minimize and mitigate impacts on vulnerable species, sensitive habitats and essential fish habitats to meet international area-based conservation targets (e.g. Target 11, SDG 14.5). To achieve output 1.3, the GFCM 2030 Strategy outlines several actions, including the implementation of a roadmap for the establishment of new FRAs and OECMs; identifying, designating and establishing coherent networks of FRAs; engaging fishers in the participatory management and designation of MPAs and FRAs; designing and implementing FRA monitoring plans; and analysing the impacts of FRAs on the state of marine resources and the productivity of fisheries. In line with these actions, GFCM provides recommendations on how its member countries should set spatiotemporal restrictions, including:

- 1) Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/20 on a multiannual management plan for the sustainable exploitation of small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea (FAO geographical subareas 17 and 18);
- 2) Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/3 which prohibits fishing with trawl nets within 3 nm of the coast in the entire GFCM area of application; and
- 3) Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/4 which establishes a temporal closure to bottom trawlers in the Gulf of Gabès, Tunisia.

Recognizing OECMs in the Mediterranean will not be without challenges. It will require identifying areas where efficient spatial management of fisheries coincides with the highest ecological and biodiversity benefits, resulting in efficient conservation. Noting this, GFCM, following the recommendation from its forty-fourth session, has since participated in international processes related to the OECM concept and partnered with the FAO NFI to explore the role of fisheries ABMTs as OECMs in the Mediterranean.

Understanding the Convention on Biological Diversity's criteria for other effective area-based conservation measures

Ms Imèn Meliane, consultant to the FAO NFI, gave a presentation summarizing the CBD's OECM criteria.

In 2010, the 10th COP of the CBD adopted the 2011–2020 Strategic Plan (CBD, 2018b), which included 20 targets, referred to as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. In particular, Target 11 focused on area-based conservation, calling for 10 percent of coastal and marine areas to be conserved through well-connected systems of protected areas and OECMs, and formally recognized the importance of other area-based measures beyond protected areas. However, it was not until 2018, with Decision 14/8 (CBD, 2018a), that the CBD COP formally adopted a definition for OECMs and welcomed the scientific and technical advice that provided a set of characteristics and identification criteria (see Annex C) for OECMs (to be applied in a flexible way and on a case by case basis). Decision 14/8 defined OECMs as:

“a geographically defined area other than a protected area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values.” (CBD, 2018a)

Together with the agreement of the definition, Decision 14/8 encouraged Parties to identify and submit data on OECMs and invited expert bodies, including FAO, to assist Parties in identifying OECMs and applying the scientific and technical advice (CBD, 2018a).

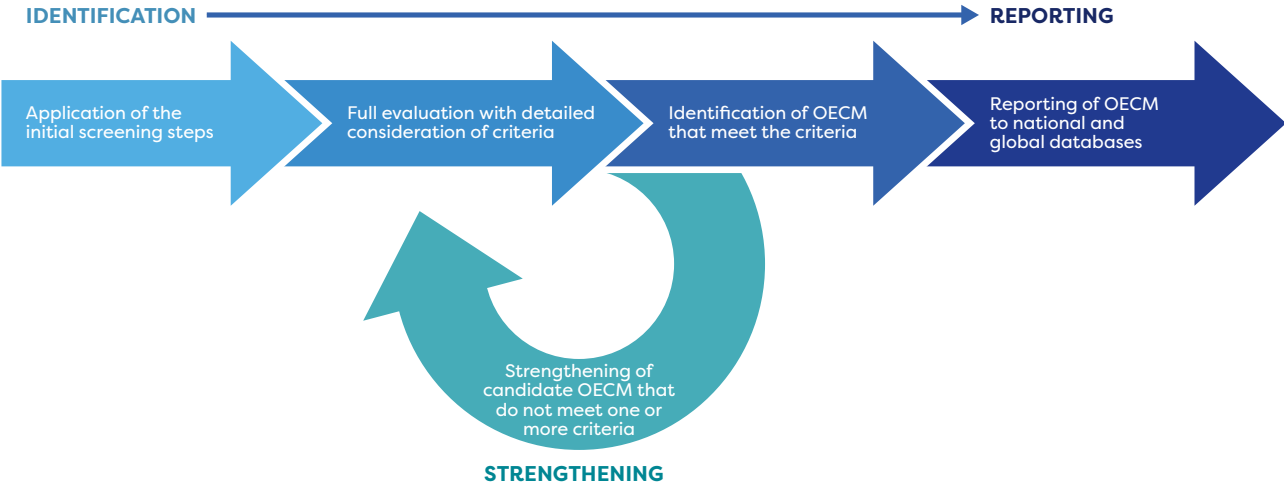
¹ A FRA is a geographically-defined area in which all or certain fishing activities are temporarily or permanently banned or restricted in order to improve the exploitation and conservation of harvested living aquatic resources or the protection of marine ecosystems.

OECMs have a relevant role in conserving biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services. They are complementary to protected areas and can contribute to the coherence and connectivity of protected area networks. Although, given the recent adoption of the OECM definition, stakeholders might have doubts about deciphering the difference between MPAs and OECMs. For MPAs, biodiversity conservation is the primary objective. On the other hand, OECMs may, or may not, have biodiversity conservation as their primary objective. Regardless of their primary objective, OECMs are expected to provide benefits to biodiversity.

As with MPAs, the recognition of OECMs should follow an appropriate consultation process with relevant governance authorities (Figure 2). Reporting OECMs to the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation and Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) for inclusion in the World Database on OECMs (WD-OECM) should follow a standardized process, as with MPAs (UNEP-WCMC, 2019). The reporting process can be undertaken by the relevant legitimate authority, such as national governments, private entities, Indigenous Peoples, or local communities. Data submitted by governmental sources will be considered as state verified and will be included in the WD-OECM after data formatting and quality control. However, data submitted by non-governmental sources will need to go through an expert verification process before the inclusion of the data in the WD-OECM.

The reporting process followed by Colombia in its efforts to recognize and report OECMs offers an example of a formal coordination mechanism at a national level for the recognition and reporting process (Santamaria Gómez *et al.*, 2021). In Colombia, the *Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible* (Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development) acts as the coordinating ministry through which potential OECMs are nominated. The initial review of potential OECMs is performed by a facilitating group composed of the state (Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development), civil society (Foundation Natura) and a research institute (Humboldt Institute). After review, the facilitating group sends the nomination to external evaluators (regional autonomous corporations, research institutes and networks of experts). The nomination is accepted only after the favourable recommendations of the facilitating group and the external evaluators. At that point, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development completes all the documentation required by the UNEP-WCMC for reporting to the WD-OECM.

Figure 2. Suggested steps for identifying and reporting OECMs



Source: FAO. 2022c. *A handbook for identifying, evaluating, and reporting other effective area-based conservation measures in marine fisheries*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3307en>

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations handbook for identifying, evaluating and reporting other effective area-based conservation measures in marine fisheries

Ms Amber Himes-Cornell, Fishery Officer at NFI, delivered a presentation summarizing the FAO practical guidance for identifying, evaluating and reporting fisheries OECMs.

COFI, in its 34th session, noted the relevance of OECMs for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and for achieving a number of the SDGs and global biodiversity targets. The Committee gave FAO the mandate to produce and disseminate practical guidelines to support Members in the identification and implementation of OECMs. To fulfill this request, FAO is developing practical guidance through a knowledge sharing process in which FAO is:

- (1) organizing regional workshops; and
- (2) drafting the guidance composed of multiple volumes.

The first volume of FAO's guidance outlines the process for identifying, evaluating, and reporting existing fisheries ABMTs as fisheries OECMs, including a how-to guide for undertaking an OECM evaluation (FAO, 2022c). Additional guidance will be developed in the future as specific needs are identified. Ultimately, FAO's fisheries-specific guidance will provide tools to ensure the recognition of the contribution of fisheries ABMTs to biodiversity conservation and increase the representation of fisheries agencies in global biodiversity conservation dialogues.

CLARIFYING THE CRITERIA FOR OTHER EFFECTIVE AREA-BASED CONSERVATION MEASURES

This session aimed to start the discussion about the criteria for the recognition of OECMs. To feed the discussion, the session started by providing two examples of assessments against the OECM criteria from a workshop co-organized in 2021 by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the IUCN Fisheries Expert Group on testing OECM practices and strategies in the North Atlantic (WKTOPS). After the presentations, the floor was opened for the participants to ask clarifying questions about the application of the criteria.

Ms Meliane and Mr Juan Francisco Lechuga Sánchez, NFI consultant, summarized the evaluation of two case studies against the OECM criteria during WKTOPS (Table 1). Ms Meliane presented the screening of the Lophelia Coral Conservation Area, a measure established in 2004 to protect Canada's only known living *Lophelia pertusa* reef complex, which had suffered significant damage from previous fishing activities. Mr Lechuga Sánchez presented the screening of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) Haddock Box. The Box, managed by NEAFC, the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was put in place in January 2002 to protect juvenile haddock and bans all fishing gear except longlines. The area also contains some important and relatively untouched benthic habitats. Full summaries of both case studies can be reviewed in the WKTOPS workshop report (ICES, 2021).

Table 1: Summary of the assessment against the OECM criteria for the Lophelia Coral Conservation Area (Canada) and the NEAFC Haddock Box performed during the WKTOPS.

	Lophelia Coral Conservation Area	NEAFC Haddock Box
Is the area a geographically defined space?	Yes. The boundaries are geographically delineated with coordinates that can be mapped, protects sessile benthic feature, and does not apply to the water column.	Yes. The boundaries are geographically delineated with coordinates that can be mapped, although the vertical dimension is not specified. The measure applies to all fisheries in the water column, except longlines.
Is the area currently recognized as a protected area?	No. At the time of WKTOPS, the area was not recognized or reported as a protected area. However, Canada formally reported it as an OECM later in 2021.	No. The area is not currently recognized or reported as a protected area.
Does the area have a legitimate governance authority?	Yes. The Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans has the mandate to manage fisheries and close areas to fishing and is the legitimate governance authority.	Yes. The Rockall Haddock Box falls within the NEAFC Regulatory Area (in international waters). The NEAFC Convention sets out that it can make regulations for national waters subject to the request and affirmation of that party. In 2008, it was agreed that NEAFC regulation covered the entire area, both in the Regulatory Area and in national waters. Since its implementation, all parties have agreed to maintain the Haddock Box. Ireland and Great Britain monitor and enforce the area within their waters.
Is the area contributing, or is it expected to contribute to achieving the <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity?	Yes. The area contributes to biodiversity conservation and there is supporting data available. Three <i>in situ</i> optical surveys in 2003, 2009 and 2015 showed an increase in density and abundance of epibenthic megafaunal species inside the area (increase greater compared to locations outside the closure) over that time period. Although, it is worth noticing that the recruitment of <i>Lophelia pertusa</i> was low.	Yes. The area is contributing to achieving the <i>in situ</i> conservation of several biodiversity attributes. The measure in place – banning all fishing gear except longlines – protects juvenile haddock. The ban on fishing gear protects soft sediment seabed habitats important to fish and sea pens. However, there is a caveat. The Haddock Box will be in place as long as there is a perceived benefit to protecting juvenile haddock.
Are there any existing or anticipated threats to biodiversity in the area?	No, there are no existing or anticipated threats in the area. All immediate threats to the reef (i.e. groundfish fisheries targeting redfish and <i>Hippoglossus hippoglossus</i>) have been removed, although accidental and deliberate incursions can occur due to drifting bottom longline gear. The overall management system addresses reasonably anticipated threats (e.g. offshore petroleum exploration and development) through collaboration with other agencies.	Yes, there are anticipated threats to biodiversity in the area. Fishing is the primary pressure and threat (e.g. haddock fisheries). Also, the pelagic environment is influenced by the strength of the subpolar gyre and other meso- and macro-scale oceanographic circulation patterns, which may be impacted by climate change in the future.
Is any type of monitoring being conducted that could be used to assess the effectiveness of the current management measures with respect to their effect on biodiversity conservation in the area?	Yes. Monitoring of fishing activity occurs regularly. It includes the use of vessel monitoring systems (VMS), observers, aerial surveillance and other tools. However, biodiversity monitoring is opportunistic. Four <i>in situ</i> optical benthic surveys have taken place since the site was established, given that surveys require significant resources due to the remote location and the depth of the reef.	Yes. Marine Scotland has information from inside and outside the Haddock Box (trawl surveys, bycatch of benthos, sediment samples and visual surveys). ICES conducts VME assessments of the area on an annual basis and provides fisheries advice for various stocks, including the Rockall haddock stock. NEAFC and national administrations monitor fishery compliance (VMS and catch reports).
Does the management system in place include measures to support the area's associated ecosystem functions and services?	Yes. Ecosystem services are supported in the form of the provision of habitat for different taxa, including commercially important species of redfish. The remote location suggests that there may be limited cultural or spiritual values, although the area can be considered a traditional commercial fishing ground with significant socioeconomic value.	Yes. Longline fisheries are permitted inside the area and provide socioeconomic benefits. There is no known local cultural or spiritual significance, although fishers have fished at Rockall for centuries and have long-held traditions and knowledge of the region.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Table 2: Key questions and comments emanating from the plenary discussions

Discussion topic	Questions
Recognition of OECMs – identification	If a fisheries ABMT has spatially defined zones with different degrees of protection and management, would the OECM criteria apply to all the zones?
	If an area-based fisheries measure overlaps with existing MPAs, could it be considered as a potential OECM and recognized as such in the future?
	If a fisheries ABMT, such as an FRA, has a primary conservation objective, should not it be considered an MPA instead of an OECM?
Recognition of OECMs – criteria	Would you need to demonstrate the measure’s contribution to biodiversity to achieve criterion C, or would it be enough to justify that biodiversity conservation is expected in the future?
	How much monitoring would be necessary to meet criterion C?
	Should an area meet all the OECM criteria?
	Does a priority ranking for the OECM criteria exist?
Reporting process	Would a submission from a regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) need to be reviewed?
	Who would have the authority to recognize an OECM if it were to fall in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ)?
	Could an OECM be de-notified and removed from the WD-OECM if an area designation changes (e.g. when measures are subject to review and renewal)?

Source: Authors’ own elaboration.

After the presentations, the floor was opened for the participants to ask clarifying questions about the application of the criteria. The key questions and comments emanating from plenary discussions are summarized in Table 2.

Discussion topic:

Recognition of other effective area-based conservation measures – identification

Participants asked how communities could be involved in the identification of OECMs. They considered that existing guidance and tools might not be accessible to local communities and wondered if future guidance could use a more accessible and understandable language. FAO staff noted that the written guidance being produced was meant to be simpler and more easily accessible.

Participants asked if, in the case of a fisheries ABMTs with spatially defined zones and different degrees of protection and management, the OECM criteria would apply to all the zones. It was clarified that all the areas would need to be differentiated, and the criteria would need to be applied separately to each zone.

Participants asked if a fisheries ABMT overlapping with existing MPAs could be considered as a potential OECM and recognized as such in the future. It was pointed out that the purpose of criterion A is to avoid overlapping and double counting. Several examples were given to provide further clarification:

- If the part of an area-based measure falls within the area of an existing MPA, only the area that is not overlapping with the MPA could be recognized as an OECM.
- An area-based measure completely falling inside an MPA could not be recognized as an OECM.
- MPAs within the area of an OECM would not be counted as part of the OECM but as MPAs and should be reported as such to the World Database on Protected Areas.

Participants wondered why, if a fisheries ABMT such as a FRA, has a primary conservation objective, would it not be considered an MPA instead of an OECM? It was explained that it is up to the governing authority to decide if a given fisheries ABMT should be recognized as an MPA or as an OECM. Additionally, it was explained that in the Mediterranean, perfect coordination between potential management entities does not always exist and in some cases, stakeholders might not feel represented in recognizing an area as an MPA. From a technical perspective, the OECM label can help recognize how various measures can contribute to biodiversity conservation.

Participants noted that a possible starting point for identifying OECMs in the Mediterranean could be FRAs that overlap with ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) since they provide evidence of important biodiversity components in areas that are already managed.

Discussion topic:

Recognition of other effective area-based conservation measures – criteria

In the case of the NEAFC Haddock Box, participants pointed out that the contribution to biodiversity conservation was not clear. They wondered if, to achieve criterion C, you would need to demonstrate the measure's contribution to biodiversity, or if it would be sufficient to justify that biodiversity conservation is expected in the future. For the Haddock Box, it was argued that protection could be demonstrated by extrapolation, as the measure in place (a ban on bottom contact fishing gear) is removing the main pressures over benthic habitats. However, this reply also generated subsequent questions. The first one focused on monitoring, as it seemed unclear how much monitoring would be necessary to meet criterion C. The second one concerned the long-term aspect of the conservation given that the measure, focused on protecting juvenile haddock, would be removed if it ceased to be effective.

Participants discussed the concept "long term" and its meaning in the context of fisheries ABMTs. They noted that the duration of most fisheries ABMTs is defined by their implementation objectives, which raised questions about how long a measure should be in place for it to be eligible for OECM recognition. It was suggested that sites should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, being the temporal component considered in relation to the positive biodiversity outcomes that the measure can or is providing.

Participants discussed whether a site should meet all the OECM criteria, given that the assessment has to be done on a case-by-case basis. It was clarified that the definition of OECM was officially adopted in decision 14/8 by the CBD COP (CBD, 2018a). Meanwhile, the criteria were not officially adopted and are part of the guiding principles that should be applied in a flexible way and on a case-by-case basis (see Annex C of decision 14/8) (CBD, 2018a). The relevance of some of the criteria might vary depending on the case. However, it was stressed that, although the OECMs do not have the strictness of a fully recognized MPA, they need to contribute to biodiversity conservation and be effective.

Participants asked if a priority ranking for the OECM criteria exists. It was clarified that none of the criteria has priority over the others. However, it was pointed out that the order of the four criteria, as laid out in Annex C of the decision 14/8 (CBD, 2018a), was established deliberately by the countries, and none can be explicitly neglected.

Participants asked if GFCM's criteria for the designation of FRAs have been compared to those of the OECMs for cross-analysis. The presenters answered that such an exercise had not taken place. It was also specified that although FRAs have no specific designation criteria, an FRA proposal requires clear objectives for the FRA, such as aiming to protect VME or essential fish habitats (EFH), together with technical work, stakeholder involvement and socioeconomic reflections.

Discussion topic: Reporting process

Participants asked about the reporting process for RFMOs. They wondered if a submission by an RFMO would need to be reviewed or not, given that areas reported by the national authority are not reviewed per the reporting process established for the WD-OECM.

Participants wondered about the overlapping of ABMTs implemented in various parts of the water column and the implications for reporting. In addition, they wondered about overlapping governance authorities and jurisdictions. They provided the example of the Mediterranean, where different governing bodies (e.g. GFCM, IUCN, ACCOBAMS, the United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP] and the Barcelona Convention) apply different measures in the same area targeting different parts of the ecosystem as part of a joint strategy. It was considered that, in principle, if the coordination between governing bodies is good, OECMs resulting from such coordination and cooperation would be more efficient. It was clarified that OECMs should be considered as a label given to an already existing fisheries ABMT. The ABMT identity remains the same (e.g. an FRA), but with the addition of a label that recognizes its contribution to biodiversity conservation.

Participants asked who would have the authority to recognize an OECM if it were to fall within ABNJ. It was clarified that in the case of ABNJ, the relevant governance authority would likely be an RFMO or a regional sea convention. In this regard, the GFCM was presented as an example. Given its mandate, GFCM can take binding decisions in any part of the Mediterranean Sea regarding fisheries.

Participants also wondered if an OECM could be eventually removed from the WD-OECM if the status of the measures being applied change and no longer provide net positive biodiversity outcomes (e.g. removal of measures when they are subject to review and renewal). Participants considered that in such cases, the measure should no longer be considered an OECM and should be removed from the WD-OECM.



Part III

QUICK SCREENING EXERCISES OF CASE STUDIES FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN AGAINST THE OTHER EFFECTIVE AREA-BASED CONSERVATION MEASURE CRITERIA

This session aimed to familiarize the participants with the OECM concept by performing screening exercises of case study examples against the characteristics that define an OECM. The first screening exercise – quick screening of the 1 000 m FRA – was performed in plenary for all the participants to understand how the group exercises would work. After the first exercise, the participants were divided into three groups, each of the groups performing screening exercises for ABMTs from three different regions: the Adriatic, the Strait of Sicily, and the Eastern Mediterranean.

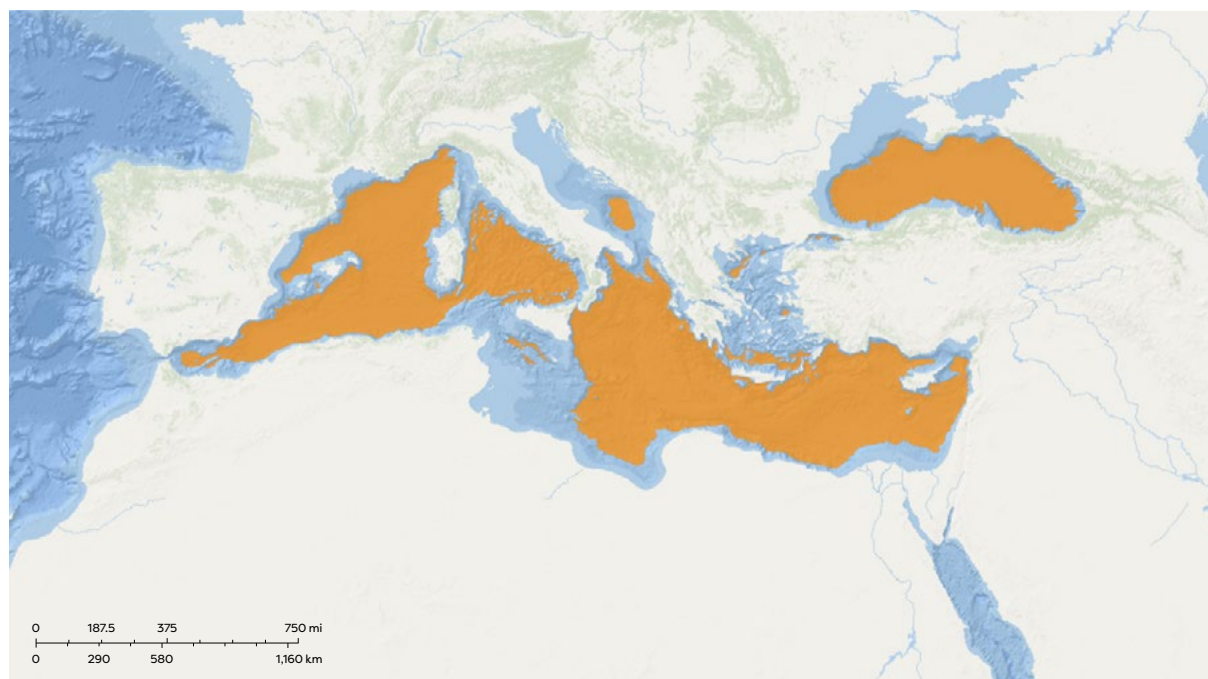
1 000 m Fisheries Restricted Area

Ms Aurora Nastasi, GFCM Fisheries and Environment Specialist, presented an initial screening exercise to evaluate whether the 1 000 m FRA could be a potential OECM.

In 2004, the Scientific Advisory Committee of the GFCM strongly advised limiting deep-water fishing operations in waters deeper than 1 000 m given scientific considerations on the presence of unmapped sensitive habitats, the fragile nature of deep-water fish assemblages and the presence of juveniles of different crustacean species at such depths.

Building upon this recommendation, in 2005 the GFCM adopted Recommendation GFCM/29/2005/1 on the management of certain fisheries exploiting demersal and deep-water species and the establishment of a *de facto* permanent fisheries restricted area below 1 000 m (herein referred to as the 1 000 m FRA) prohibiting the use of towed dredges and trawl nets (see orange areas in Figure 3).

Figure 3. Delineated boundaries of fisheries restricted areas implemented by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean



Source: GFCM (General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean). 2022. GFCM fisheries restricted areas web map application. In: FAO. Rome. Cited 20 November 2022. www.fao.org/gfcm/data/maps/fras/en

Ms Nastasi presented an initial screening of the area to evaluate the potential of the 1 000 m FRA as an OEEM. Given the large area covered by the 1 000 m FRA, which covers 58.55 percent of the Mediterranean Sea, Ms Nastasi considered two scenarios for exploring the potential of the 1 000 m FRA as an OEEM (Table 3):

1. Evaluate the total area of the 1 000 m FRA; and
2. Evaluate only the parts of the 1 000 m FRA that fall within the 12 nm of waters in territorial seas (covering eight percent of the Mediterranean Sea and a high proportion of countries' territorial seas).

Quick screening exercise of the 1 000 m Fisheries Restricted Area

After Ms Nastasi's presentation, further screening of the 1 000 m FRA was performed in plenary for the workshop participants to become familiar with the initial screening exercise.

Is the area a geographically defined space?

Participants considered whether the area was geographically defined. Some participants reasoned that the area was not geographically defined, because of a lack of coordinates. However, other participants noted that the measure is geographically defined by depth. It was argued that in fisheries management it is common to use depth to define the geographic extension of the measures. Depth would provide enough justification for saying that the area is well delimited and geographically defined.

Table 3. Quick screening for the 1 000 m FRA performed by the GFCM Secretariat

	Whole 1 000 m FRA	Sections of the 1 000 m FRA within 12 nm
Is the area a geographically defined space?	Yes	Yes
Is the area currently recognized as a protected area?	No. But might overlap with existing MPAs.	No. Although the areas might contain existing MPAs.
Does the area have a legitimate governance authority?	Yes. The GFCM is the governance authority.	Yes. In this case, the governance would be shared between the responsible countries and the GFCM.
Is the area contributing, or is it expected to contribute to achieving the <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity?	Yes. The area contributes to biodiversity conservation and there is supporting data. The decision in 2005 to implement the FRA was based on the data and management recommendations from a report released by WWF and IUCN in 2004 (WWF and IUCN, 2004)	Yes. The area contributes to biodiversity conservation and there is supporting data for this. The decision in 2005 to implement the FRA was based on the data and management recommendations from the report released by WWF and IUCN in 2004 (WWF and IUCN, 2004).
Are there any existing or anticipated threats to biodiversity in the area?	Yes. There are existing or anticipated threats in the area given that GFCM can only restrict fishing activities and the area is a wide area that can be impacted by climate change, pollution, plastic pollution, oil and gas exploitation and other human activities.	Yes, although in this particular case countries would be better placed to address and/or mitigate those threats.
Is any monitoring being conducted that could be used to assess the effectiveness of the current management measures with respect to their effect on biodiversity conservation in the area?	Monitoring is challenging because of the size of the area covered by the measure. There is no monitoring plan throughout the entire basin below 1 000 m, only in some parts of it.	In this particular case, since the FRA restrictions are under the jurisdiction of the respective countries, monitoring plans could be set up easily and the monitoring of the effectiveness of the measure could be assessed.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Notes: WWF & IUCN. 2004. *The Mediterranean deep-sea ecosystem: an overview of their diversity, structure, functioning and anthropogenic impacts, with a proposal for conservation*. Rome, IUCN Málaga and WWF.

Is the area currently recognized as a protected area?

As confirmed in Ms Nastasi's presentation, the area is not a protected area. However, the measure, given its extent, overlaps with existing MPAs.

Does the area have a legitimate governance authority?

Participants discussed which is the legitimate governance authority of the FRA. It was noted that, as shown in Ms Nastasi's presentation, the governance authority of the FRA beyond territorial seas/national waters is the GFCM, while national governments have governance authority within their territorial seas/national waters.

Participants also discussed the role of other regional organizations in the Mediterranean. It was pointed out that the Barcelona Convention has a mandate to protect and enhance the marine environment in the Mediterranean Sea. However, since the 1 000 m FRA is a fisheries management measure, the governance authority would fall under the GFCM. Participants noted that the cooperation with the Barcelona Convention and other relevant regional organizations (e.g. the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas and ACCOBBAMS) could help to provide extra protection in certain areas.

Is the area contributing to achieving the in situ conservation of biodiversity?

Participants noted that, although the area covered by the FRA is well defined, it is large and contains a wide variety of ecosystems with different biodiversity values. Therefore, although they considered that the area could contribute to achieving biodiversity conservation, this contribution could be uneven across the FRA.

Some participants wondered whether positive biodiversity conservation outcomes could be demonstrated based on the management of the area for the past 15 years. A participant confirmed that the IUCN and WWF proposal for the FRA included a baseline assessment of the area that could be used for comparative purposes against a current or future assessment. The document contained detailed information on why the areas below 1 000 m should be closed to fishing for the protection of important biodiversity features. Additionally, it was pointed out that it would not be realistic to perform such an assessment again given the high cost of conducting studies at such depths. It was argued that the exclusion of bottom fisheries could be assumed to implicitly have had positive effects on biodiversity.

Participants asked about current fishing activity in the area. It was confirmed that there is no fishing activity in the area because trawlers with the capacity to fish at great depths are strictly monitored by their flag states. Additionally, it was clarified that in the event that a vessel ventures into the FRA area, it would be possible to identify if it is fishing (e.g. by monitoring its movement and speed). It was also highlighted that no cases of fishing below 1 000 m have been reported to the Compliance Committee of the GFCM, which suggests that the measure is being effectively implemented and no trawling activity occurs at those depths.

Regarding the effectiveness of the measure, the OECM criteria indicate that an area could be a potential OECM if it is expected to achieve positive biodiversity conservation outcomes. Therefore, participants noted that it is reasonable to expect that the lack of trawling is contributing positively to biodiversity conservation. Finally, it was pointed out that neither OECMs nor MPAs need to protect all elements of biodiversity to be effective, but that there should be a net positive benefit for biodiversity. They pointed out that if the measure is producing net positive biodiversity conservation outcomes, it would be justified to consider it a potential OECM.

Are there any existing or anticipated threats to biodiversity in the area?

Some participants noted that the deep sea is threatened by different sectors and activities (e.g. oil and gas exploration and production) and various sources of pollution (e.g. plastic pollution and lost or discarded fishing gear). Furthermore, there is insufficient knowledge about the extent of their potential impact. Those threats and how they are addressed raised questions about the achievement of the OECM criteria. Participants discussed whether the 1 000 m FRA and fisheries management measures are enough to preserve the biodiversity features of the area covered by the FRA when these other threats are present. It was agreed that banning trawling reduces or negates the threat coming from the fishery side. However, the other activities, such as oil and gas exploration and extractive activities, remain a threat. Participants wondered if threats from different sectors could be mapped and if additional measures addressing non-fisheries-related threats could or should be implemented for the area to be considered an OECM. It was also suggested to focus on threats that can be reasonably managed or mitigated.

Participants pointed out that it is not possible to monitor the whole area covered by the 1 000 m FRA. It was proposed to identify locations such as biodiversity hotspots where the pressure from threats will be higher in the future and try to get information about those sites. Participants also considered that it would be more reasonable to do an assessment of potential OECMs for specific smaller areas of the deep sea and not of the entire FRA.

Does the management system in place include measures to support associated ecosystem services?

Participants pointed out the different ecosystem services provided by deep-sea environments, notably carbon sequestration, nursery habitats and most notably biodiversity, which is itself considered to be an ecosystem service in the strict sense of the millennium assessment (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005).

Conclusion

This initial screening against the OECM criteria reveals that it would be challenging to consider the whole 1 000 m FRA as an OECM, given the lack of dedicated management and a specific monitoring plan. However, the portions of the FRA falling under territorial seas could be potential OECMs, and countries could have the opportunity to perform a more in-depth assessment for its possible reporting. Other smaller areas within the 1 000 m FRA could be considered as potential OECMs; for example, the areas of the FRA overlapping with EBSAs, sea mounts and their summits, mud volcanoes and other areas hosting VME indicators, if those areas were to have additional protection measures restricting other potentially harmful human activities. The Pelagos Sanctuary for Mediterranean Marine Mammals and the Cetacean corridor in the Western Mediterranean were noted as examples.

Mr Miguel Bernal wrapped up the discussion. He emphasized that the GFCM had not discussed moving forward on reporting the 1 000 m FRA as an OECM, but was at the stage of scoping its potential with experts regarding that possibility. This expert meeting was part of that process. He noted that one of the conclusions from the discussion was that more time is needed to understand the criteria and advice on how to move forward. He also highlighted several questions that need to be addressed in the future, notably:

- Should the 1 000 m FRA be discussed as a whole or by segments (e.g. areas overlapping with territorial seas)?
- How many threats exist in the area?
- How can we combine sectoral measures and efforts to protect biodiversity?

Mr Bernal announced that the discussion held during the expert meeting would feed into the discussions during the Working Group on VMEs and EFH and other GFCM meetings during 2022.

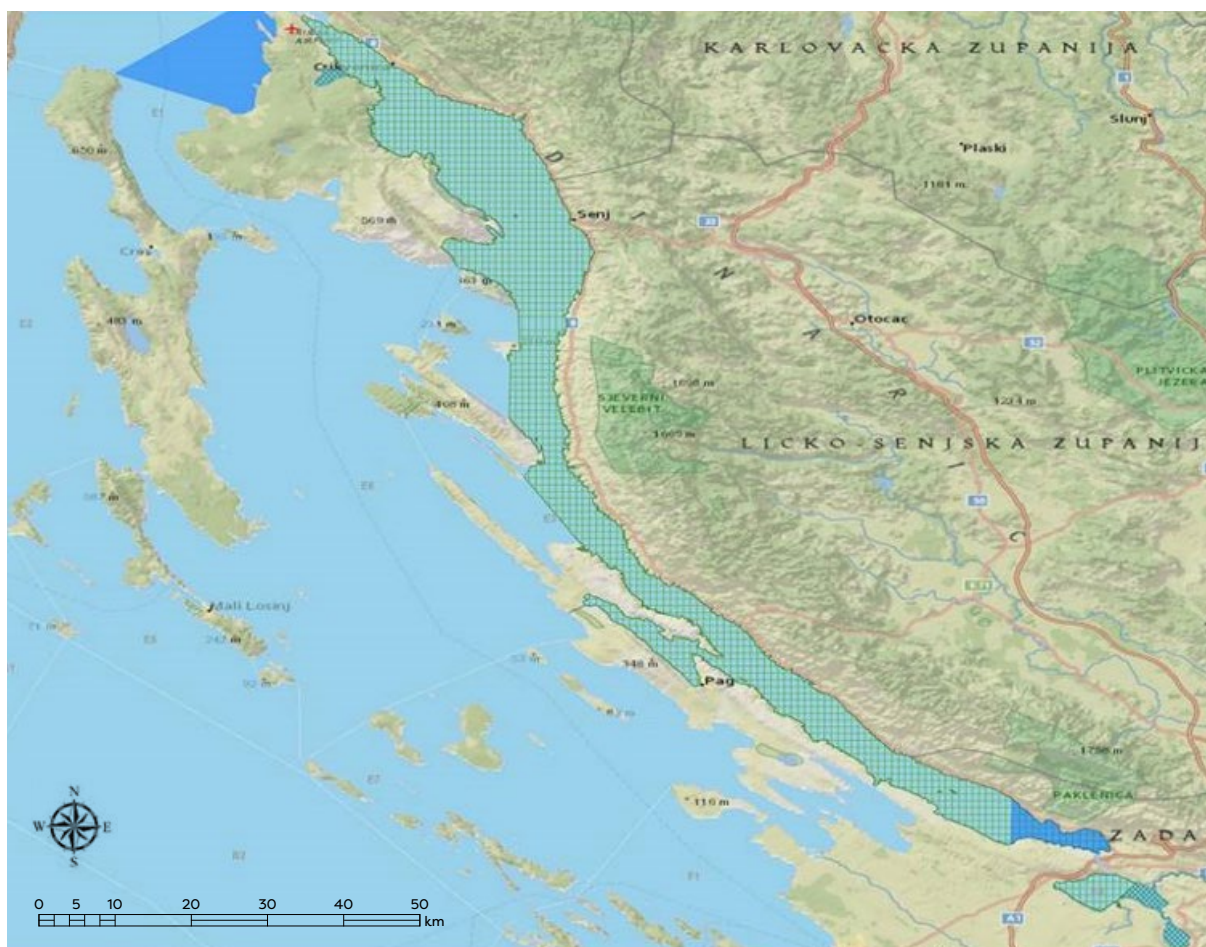
After this first exercise, participants were divided into three groups. Each group focused on a specific region – the Adriatic Sea, the Central Mediterranean and the Eastern Mediterranean – and performed quick screening exercises for case studies of potential OECMs from each of those regions.

The Velebit Channel demersal fishing ban (Croatia)

Mr Nedo Vrgoč, Head of the Laboratory of Fisheries Science and Management of Pelagic and Demersal Resources at the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries, Croatia, gave a presentation on the area-based measures implemented in the Velebit Channel to provide the participants with enough information to evaluate its potential as an OECM.

The Velebit Channel is an elongated channel on the Croatian coast. It is 130 km long and 3 km to 4 km wide and relatively deep, with depths averaging 60 m to 70 m and a maximum depth of 112 m (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Map of the boundaries of the Velebit Channel demersal fishing ban



- Area of spatial restrictions for small pelagics purse seine “srdelara” for vessels from 12 to 18m
- Area of Velebit Channel under special regulation
- Special habitat – mouth of River Zrnanja

Source: Vrgoč, N. 2022. Velebitski kanal [slide deck, unpublished]. Report of the expert meeting on fisheries-related other effective area-based conservation measures in the Mediterranean, 16 to 17 February 2022. Rome, FAO.

The area includes endangered species and also serves as a nursery area for commercially important species, including European pilchard (*Sardina pilchardus*), European anchovy (*Engraulis encrasicolus*), European hake (*Merluccius merluccius*), Norway lobster (*Nephrops norvegicus*), common sole (*Solea vulgaris*), blackbellied angler (*Lopius budegassa*) and smooth-hound (*Mustelus Mustelus*).

The Velebit Channel area is regulated by European Union regulations, and demersal fisheries and bottom fisheries have been forbidden in the area since 1997. Small pelagic fishing activities are allowed for vessels under 12 m, mostly purse seiners targeting sardine and anchovy species, although there are closed seasons during winter. Small-scale fisheries (SSF) operate in the area using passive gears with low impact on the sea bottom (e.g. set nets, longlines, traps, etc.). In addition to fisheries management measures, some shallow coastal areas are protected under Natura 2000 (European Commission, 2022a).

The area is monitored from biodiversity to water parameters through different frameworks:

- the European Commission's Water Framework Directive (i.e. regular monitoring of water parameters throughout the year) (European Commission, 2022b);
- the European Commission's Marine Strategy Framework Directive (i.e. regular monitoring throughout the year of parameters such as biodiversity, fisheries, food web, eutrophication, hydrography and pollutants) (European Commission, 2022c); and
- the European Commission's Data Collection Framework (i.e. monitoring of commercial catch through scientific surveys) (European Commission, 2022d).

There is evidence of positive changes in the status of demersal communities compared to other areas in the North Adriatic Sea. The biomass indices of commercially important species are three to four times greater than in the rest of the North Adriatic Sea. The size of commercial species is higher compared to other parts of the North Adriatic Sea. Also, several species previously found in the North Adriatic Sea are now found only in the Velebit Channel. However, threats to the area exist. These include ghost fishing, increased algal blooms due to global warming, invasive species and marine litter and microplastics.

Initial screening exercise of the Velebit Channel demersal fishing ban

Is the area a geographically defined space?

Participants discussed which components of the Velebit Channel could be considered as a potential OECM. They wondered if it was the area – the whole Velebit Channel – or a particular measure (e.g. demersal fishing ban) that should be assessed as a potential OECM. Participants considered that the demersal fishing ban, which covers the whole Velebit Channel except for coastal areas, could be considered as a potential OECM. As an alternative, participants also proposed considering where measures overlap as potential OECMs.

Participants agreed that the area-based measure is geographically defined, described, mapped, and recognized by national ordinance.

Is the area currently recognized as a protected area?

Participants confirmed that the measure discussed as a potential OECM was not reported as an MPA. However, they pointed out that some of the fishing ban area overlaps with Natura 2000 areas located on the coastline of the Velebit Channel. The Natura 2000 areas, designated by Croatia as MPAs, were implemented for protecting reefs and seagrass meadows (*Posidonia oceanica*). Participants confirmed that it would be easy to distinguish and delineate the fishing ban area and the Natura 2000 areas to prevent double counting.

Does the area have a legitimate governance authority?

Participants agreed that the area has a legitimate governance authority, as it was confirmed that it is under the management of the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture.

Is the area contributing to achieving the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity?

Participants agreed that the measures in the area were contributing to achieving the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity by protecting several biodiversity features. The measure also seems to be contributing to the conservation of the functions and services of critical ecosystems. The Velebit Channel is fundamentally important for key demersal species, such as hake, sole and Norway lobster. Since the implementation of the demersal fishing ban, monitoring efforts have observed significant improvements in biomass for all parts of the demersal community. Additionally, the measure protects communities of rare threatened or endangered species, such as species included in the European Commission's Habitat Directive (European Commission, 2022e) and endangered species, namely picked dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*), blue shark (*Prionace glauca*) or angel shark (*Squatina squatina*).

Are there any existing or anticipated threats to biodiversity in the area?

Participants agreed that there are existing threats to biodiversity in the area coming from abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear – which was considered a significant threat – invasive species, marine litter, microplastics and climate change.

Participants wondered about possible coastal pollution as well. On that note, it was clarified that human population density is not high in the area. Nor is there industrial activity in the area. There is little tourism activity. Additionally, there are no rivers that could cause river-borne pollution. Therefore, it was concluded that coastal pollution is not a relevant threat.

Is any type of monitoring being conducted with respect to biodiversity conservation in the area?

Participants confirmed that the area is heavily monitored (including biodiversity, water parameters and fishing activity). It was pointed out that additional research is conducted to address particular issues, such as with a project at the south end of the Velebit Channel for the co-management of the small-scale Norway lobster trap fishery.

Does the management system in place include measures to support associated ecosystem services?

Participants confirmed that the area provides key ecosystem services supported by the assessed measure. The area provides provisioning services since SSF activities with passive gears are allowed. It also has local socioeconomic value given that livelihood opportunities in the area are not abundant. The area also provides cultural, recreational and educational services, as fishing tourism activities take place there. Finally, the area also provides supporting services as habitat for aquatic species.

Participants suggested the need for an in-depth analysis to clarify how the measures contribute to the biodiversity in the area in the context of the four pillars of ecosystem services.

Conclusion

Given the analysis and the discussion, it was agreed that the area has potential as an OECM and that it would be worthwhile to undertake a full evaluation against the OECM criteria.

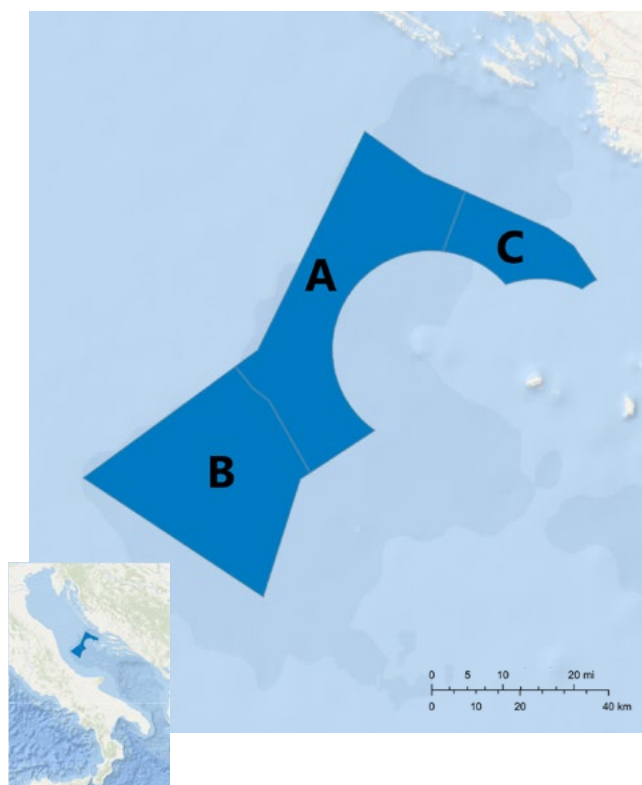
The Jabuka/Pomo Pit Fisheries Restricted Area (Adriatic Sea)

Ms Morello gave a brief overview of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA, its management and its impact on biodiversity, to provide the participants with relevant information to evaluate its potential as an OECM.

The Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA is located in the Adriatic Sea within FAO geographical subarea 17 in international waters between Italy and Croatia, as well as in Croatian territorial waters (Figure 5). Its location is provided in Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/2 on the establishment of a fisheries restricted area in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit in the Adriatic Sea (geographical subarea 17), amending Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/3 (GFCM, 2017). The Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA covers an area of 3 143 km² and was established by the Italian and Croatian governments in a fishing ground historically shared by both countries. The area is considered an EFH for demersal stocks such as European hake and Norway lobster, and VME indicator species such as sea pens, soft corals and hydroids can be found in the area.

The FRA is divided into three zones: zone A, where bottom set gear and recreational fishing are prohibited year-round (no-take zone); and zones B and C, where there is a two-month closure to bottom set gear each year. Purse seiners and pelagic trawlers targeting anchovy or sardine are prohibited in all three zones. In 2021, the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA became permanent and was the first GFCM FRA to be accompanied by a comprehensive scientific monitoring plan. The monitoring plan for the period 2018 to 2020 aimed to assess the effectiveness of the FRA in rebuilding commercial stocks, protecting VMEs and enhancing the densities of organisms within the FRA. The preliminary data resulting from the monitoring activity showed a clear decline in fishing effort and an increase in biomass of commercial and non-commercial species. The overall perception, including of fishers, was that the FRA is contributing to the recovery of the stocks.

Figure 5. Map of the boundaries of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit Fisheries Restricted Area



Source: GFCM (General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean). 2022. GFCM fisheries restricted areas web map application. In: *FAO*. Rome. Cited 20 November 2022. www.fao.org/gfcm/data/maps/fras/en

Ms Morello also shared the results of a study by GFCM and OCEANCARE on the potential effects of underwater noise on demersal fisheries in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA. The study aimed to quantify the noise produced by the demersal vessels to evaluate the potential effects on the marine fauna in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit. It showed that the estimated underwater sound produced by vessels in the area does not, at any location, reach the thresholds that impact pressure-sensitive fish, crustaceans, or marine mammals. However, the study considered only the noise generated from demersal fishing activities and did not account for other significant sources (e.g. cargo ships, tankers, and seismic exploration, etc.).

Initial screening exercise of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit Fisheries Restricted Area

Is the area a geographically defined space?

Participants agreed that all three zones in the FRA are geographically defined (Figure 5). However, participants noted that each area has different management restrictions and different degrees of fishing activity in them, and they considered that the impact on biodiversity might differ from one area to the other.

Given that the three zones that comprise the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA have a different set of management restrictions, participants decided to perform the screening exercise by looking separately at each zone to decide which, if not the whole FRA, could be considered as a potential OECM.

Is the area currently recognized as a protected area?

Participants confirmed that the whole Jabuka/Pomo pit FRA has not been recognized as a protected area, although they noted the existence of a small Natura 2000 site inside zone A.

Does the area have a legitimate governance authority?

Participants agreed that the area has legitimate governance authorities. Zones A and C of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA are located in the Croatian exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Both are managed and enforced by Croatian authorities and participants identified the Croatian government as the governance authority. Meanwhile, zone B is in the high seas and, therefore, the management authority falls under the GFCM. However, it was noted that the Italian government has started the process for the declaration of its EEZ in the Mediterranean Sea, which could change the governance authority of zone B in the future. Participants wondered what would happen with the OECM designation if the governance authority for zone B changes in the future.

Participants also wondered what the governance system should be given the possibility of different reporting approaches. In the case of reporting the whole area as an OECM, they considered that all relevant governance authorities for the FRA would share responsibilities. Meanwhile, if declared separately (each zone of the FRA declared individually as an OECM), they agreed that each area would have a single governance authority.

Is the area contributing to achieving the in situ conservation of biodiversity?

Participants noted that an increase of *Funiculina* and other sea pens have been identified in zone A. *Funiculina* and other sea pens have also been spotted in zones B and C. Participants agreed that the fishing ban in zone A and the reduction of fishing in zones B and C have produced benefits for the conservation of VMEs and EFH.

Participants also pointed out that the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA is a critical area for spawning of European hake (*Merluccius merluccius*) and Norway lobster (*Nephrops norvegicus*) and that an improvement in the overall biomass indices has been observed in all areas, especially in zone A. Participants inquired about the impact of the FRA on the status of *Squalus* and *Mustelus* species, and it was agreed that research on these species will be required in the future.

Participants considered the possibility of considering each zone separately or the whole FRA as an OECEM. It was noted that, before making such a decision, it would be necessary to clarify the expectations of the management regimes responsible for each zone, along with evaluating the intensity and impact of the fishing activity in each area so its pressures and outcomes can be compared. It was agreed that this would be easy to do given the amount of data and the continuous monitoring, including the fishing activity that is taking place in the FRA.

Are there any existing or anticipated threats to biodiversity in the area?

Participants started the discussion by highlighting GFCM Article 18 of the recommendation on the establishment of a FRA in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit in the Adriatic Sea (Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/3) (GFCM, 2017). The recommendation provides a framework within which national and international authorities should protect the area from threats.

Participants identified threats to biodiversity common to all three zones of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA. Threats include illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, pollution from vessels (the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA is located in one of the main traffic routes of the Adriatic Sea), microplastics and litter. Participants also mentioned that changes in the ecosystem have been observed. They identified the substitution of some native species by invasive species as one of the reasons for such change. Invasive species are considered a threat. Climate change was also mentioned as an anticipated threat, as it will affect water mass and the exchange of nutrients.

Is any type of monitoring being conducted with respect to biodiversity conservation in the area?

Participants confirmed that there is monitoring in all three zones of the FRA. The FRA has a monitoring plan, and a spill-over area of 14 000 km² is also monitored. It was also pointed out that fleet monitoring (with automatic identification systems and VMS) and scientific monitoring (from surveys at sea such as the MEDITS and MEDIAS programmes) could be combined to evaluate the impact of the fishing activity on the biodiversity of the area. The participants noted that Italy and Croatia have both funded additional surveys.

Does the management system in place include measures to support associated ecosystem services?

Participants noted that longline fishing activities take place in zones B and C and that these are of particular importance for SSF. They also noted that recreational fisheries are allowed in zones B and C.

Participants also added that the area serves as a nursery area for species like hake and provides supporting services in terms of habitat for aquatic species, biomass production, nutrient cycling and water cycling.

Conclusion

Based on this screening, participants considered the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA to be suitable for a full evaluation against the OECEM criteria.

The Strait of Sicily Fisheries Restricted Areas (Italy)

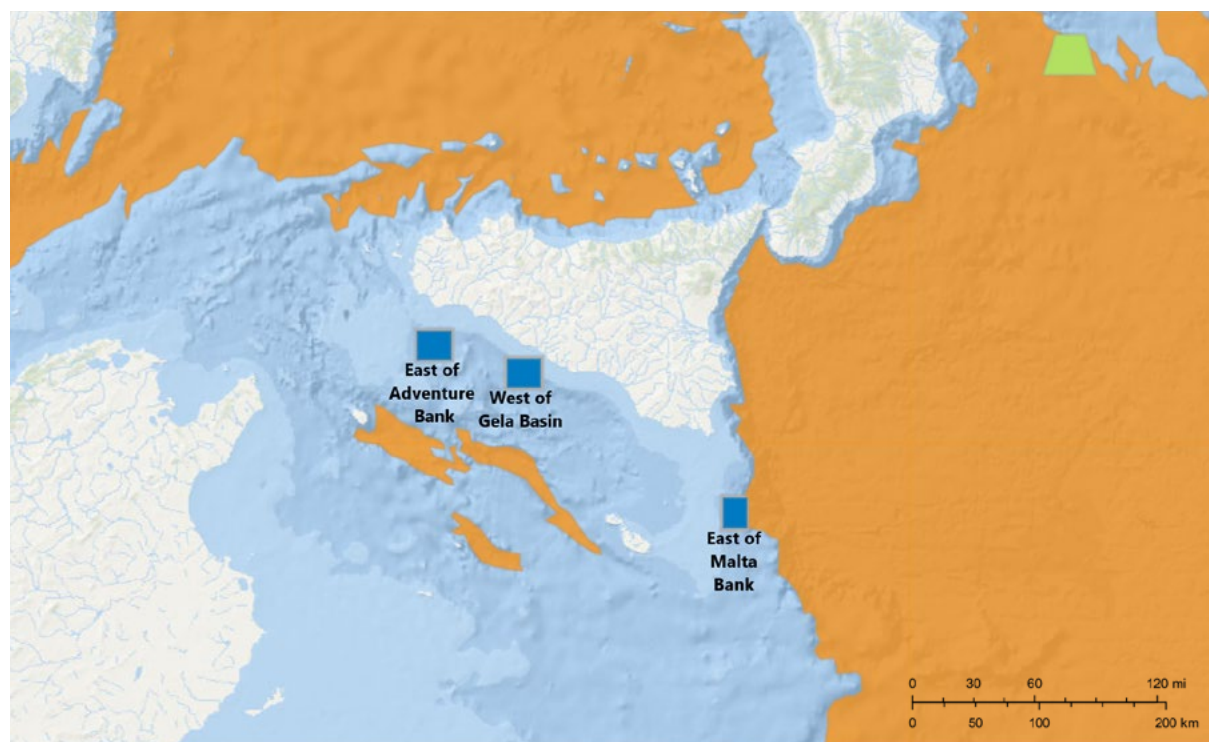
Mr Fabio Fiorentino, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Marine Biological Resources and Biotechnologies of the Italian National Research Council, presented the results of an initial screening against the OECM criteria for the East Adventure bank, the West Gela Basin and the East of Malta Bank FRAs (Table 4) to provide information about the management measures in the area and other important information to be used during the group screening exercise.

The East of Adventure bank, the West of Gela Basin and the East of Malta Bank FRAs were established in the Strait of Sicily along the southern coast of Sicily (Figure 6). They were established to protect nursery areas and EFH important to the stocks of European hake (*Merluccius merluccius*) and deep-water rose shrimp (*Parapenaeus longirostris*). Bottom trawlers are not allowed inside the FRAs and buffer areas with an extension of 1 nm surround the FRAs to avoid accidental access to the restricted areas. (Trawlers fishing in the buffer areas should ensure their frequency of transmission of VMS signals). Vessels not equipped with a VMS transponder must be equipped with another type of geolocation system if they intend to fish in the buffer areas, allowing enforcement authorities to track their activities.

Initial screening exercise of the Strait of Sicily fisheries restricted areas

Before proceeding to perform the initial screening of the areas against the OECM criteria, participants decided to (1) assess the East of Adventure Bank and West of Gela Basin FRAs together because of their similarities (see Table 4); and (2) not to include in the assessment exercise the East of Malta Bank FRA given the lack of available data and its governance structure, which is different from that of the East of Adventure Bank FRA and the West of Gela Basin FRA.

Figure 6. Map of the Strait of Sicily FRAs' boundaries



Fisheries Restricted Areas

- Protection of Essential Fish Habitats (EFH)
- Protection of deep-sea habitats and resources
- Protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME)
- Buffer zone

Source: GFCM (General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean). 2022. GFCM fisheries restricted areas web map application. In: FAO. Rome. Cited 20 November 2022. www.fao.org/gfcm/data/maps/fras/en

Table 4. Quick screening performed by Mr Fiorentino for the Strait of Sicily FRAs

	East of Adventure Bank FRA	West of Gela Basin FRA	East of Malta Bank FRA
Is the area a geographically defined space?	The boundaries are geographically delineated with coordinates that can be mapped.	The boundaries are geographically delineated with coordinates that can be mapped.	The boundaries are geographically delineated with coordinates that can be mapped.
Is the area currently recognized as a protected area?	No	No	No
Does the area have a legitimate governance authority?	The GFCM has authority over the ABNJ. The Italian government has the authority over the area within 12 nm.	The GFCM has authority over the ABNJ. The Italian government has the authority over the area within 12 nm.	The GFCM has authority over the entire area. The trawling ban for European Union trawlers is controlled by European countries according to the Regulation (EU) 2019/982 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 amending the Regulation (EU) No 1343/2011 on certain provisions.
Is the area contributing, or is it expected to contribute, to achieving the in situ conservation of biodiversity?	The area contributes to the conservation of communities of rare, threatened, or endangered species of elasmobranchs, key biodiversity areas (the FRA is located within the EBSA of the Strait of Sicily), VMEs and key biodiversity indicator species. The area also provides an important connectivity service connecting larval flow areas with spawning areas. It also provides critical ecosystem services and functions in terms of protection of nursery and spawning grounds of important commercial species (i.e. European hake [<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>], deep-water rose shrimp [<i>Parapenaeus longirostris</i>] and shortfin squid [<i>Illex coindetii</i>]).	The area contributes to the conservation of communities of rare, threatened, or endangered species of elasmobranchs. It provides an important connectivity service connecting larval flow areas with spawning areas. The area also provides critical ecosystem services and functions in terms of protection of nursery and spawning grounds of important commercial species (i.e. European hake [<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>], deep-water rose shrimp [<i>Parapenaeus longirostris</i>], shortfin squid [<i>Illex coindetii</i>] and giant red shrimp [<i>Aristaeomorpha foliacea</i>]).	The FRA aims to protect areas that are important for the life stages of relevant target species in the area.
Are there any existing or anticipated threats to biodiversity in the area?	Yes. Threats include fishing activities (all allowed inside the FRA except bottom trawling), as well as marine litter accumulation, submarine cables and shipping lanes present inside the FRA.	Yes. Threats include fishing activities (all allowed inside the FRA except bottom trawling), as well as marine litter accumulation, submarine cables and shipping lanes present inside the FRA. Additionally, there are two gas wells at the southeast border of the FRA and the southeast corner of the FRA overlaps with an area of petroleum and gas exploration.	No information available.

	East of Adventure Bank FRA	West of Gela Basin FRA	East of Malta Bank FRA
Is any monitoring being conducted that could be used to assess the effectiveness of the current management measures with respect to their effect on biodiversity conservation in the area?	There is no routine monitoring being conducted that could be used to assess the effectiveness of the current management measures with respect to their effect on biodiversity conservation in the area. Biodiversity monitoring has been opportunistic in nature, with sampling stations of the European Data Collection Framework located within the FRA and a research survey carried out in 2021 as part of the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive.	There is no routine monitoring being conducted that could be used to assess the effectiveness of the current management measures with respect to their effect on biodiversity conservation in the area. Biodiversity monitoring has been opportunistic in nature, with sampling stations of the European Data Collection Framework located within the FRA and a research survey carried out in 2021 as part of the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive.	There is no routine monitoring being conducted that could be used to assess the effectiveness of the current management measures with respect to their effect on biodiversity conservation in the area.
Does the management system in place include measures to support the area's associated ecosystem functions and services?	The trawling ban in the FRA protects habitats critical for completing the life cycle of commercial species and sensitive species, including indicators of VMEs. Additionally, the measure supports, at least, regulating and supporting services.	The trawling ban in the FRA protects habitats critical for completing the life cycle of commercial species and sensitive species, including indicators of VMEs. Additionally, the measure supports, at least, regulating and supporting services.	The trawling ban in the FRA protects habitats critical for completing the life cycle of commercial species and sensitive species, including indicators of VMEs. Additionally, the measure supports, at least, regulating and supporting services.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Are the areas geographically defined spaces?

Participants agreed that the FRAs are geographically defined (Figure 6). Some participants wondered which criteria were used to establish the boundaries of the FRAs. It was explained that the areas of the FRAs were delimited based on densities of hake and shrimp, their persistence over time, and the presence and appropriate coverage of EFH. Additionally, it was clarified that the FRAs had a square shape to make it easy for fishers to respect and follow the boundaries.

Are the areas currently recognized as protected areas?

Participants confirmed that the areas are not currently designated as protected areas.

Do the areas have a legitimate governance authority?

Participants discussed the legitimate governing authority of the measures. Using the example of the 1 000 m FRA, participants agreed that the GFCM was the legitimate governance authority for both the East of Adventure Bank and West of Gela Basin FRAs because they are located outside territorial waters in the high seas. The Italian government would be the legitimate governance authority for any portion of the areas that falls into the country's territorial seas. However, as is the case with the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA, the legitimate authority could change if Italy declares an EEZ because the area could fall inside it.

Participants also discussed the role of other regional organizations in the Mediterranean. As was discussed with the 1 000 m FRA, participants suggested that the areas falling into the high seas could be collectively governed by the GFCM, the Barcelona Convention and ACCOBAMS to manage threats. It was suggested that further research be conducted on this specific topic to determine whether the FRAs could meet the OECM criteria.

Are the areas contributing to achieving the in situ conservation of biodiversity?

Participants noted that the areas are contributing to or are expected to contribute to the conservation of several biodiversity attributes, including local communities of rare, threatened, or endangered species of elasmobranchs (including critically endangered species such as gulper shark [*Centrophorus granulosus*], maltese skate [*Leucoraja melitensis*] and endangered species such as rough ray [*Raja radula*]), representative natural ecosystems, key biodiversity areas, such as the EBSA of the Strait of Sicily, and areas important for ecological connectivity. However, participants worried about the duration of the FRAs and their long-term impact on biodiversity conservation. The FRAs are reevaluated every four years, and the participants questioned whether this period would be sufficient to guarantee positive biodiversity outcomes.

Participants pointed out that the existence of the FRAs is linked to relevant management plans. They worried about the long-term implementation of the measure as the current time in between management reviews – every four years – is too short for the measure to provide long-term positive biodiversity outcomes. Related to these concerns, it was argued that the intent was to have the measure in place in the long term, and the intent of the four-year review period is to evaluate the effectiveness of the measure, improve its management and increase protection, rather than to decide if it should remain in place or not.

Participants debated about whether pelagic fishing could affect demersal and benthic communities, and thus undermine biodiversity conservation. This was a particular concern in the case of the West of Gela Basin FRA, where purse seiners are active in the pelagic ecosystems above the FRA.

Are there any existing or anticipated threats to biodiversity in the area?

Participants identified potential threats in the area linked to the development of offshore wind farms, submarine cables and illegal fishing activities. In particular, they mentioned oil and gas exploration, which is at present close to the area of the West of Gela Basin FRA and could impact the benthos directly, as well as other parts of biodiversity.

Some participants considered that given the threats, both present and anticipated, in the areas surrounding and within the FRAs, the FRAs (which only address fishing activities), could not be considered an OECM without the collaboration of other sectors. Other participants disagreed with this statement and argued that fisheries measures, such as a FRA, could be recognized as an OECM as long as they provide biodiversity conservation outcomes. It was also noted that, as discussed during the conversation about the 1 000 m FRA, the focus should be on threats that can be reasonably managed and mitigated. Participants recognized that multisectoral coordination, collaboration and discussion are necessary to minimize threats to biodiversity and promote sectoral engagement. It was proposed to develop a list of activities that should not be allowed in an OECM.

Is any type of monitoring being conducted with respect to biodiversity conservation in the area?

Participants noted that no specific monitoring is being conducted in any of the FRAs to assess the effectiveness of the FRAs in conserving biodiversity. However, they pointed out that the status of European hake, deep-water rose shrimp and red mullet are monitored in the Strait of Sicily by the countries that jointly manage the area, with surveys assessing the stocks every year. Additionally, the Italian government monitors both areas in accordance with the European Commission Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Does the management system in place include measures to support associated ecosystem services?

Participants indicated that provisioning and cultural ecosystem services are supported by fisheries management. It was also suggested that, if there is a net gain for biodiversity, it should also be considered an ecosystem service.

Conclusion

Participants concluded that both the East of Adventure Bank FRA and the West of Gela Basin FRA deserved a closer look and proper assessment against the OECM criteria. However, they highlighted several aspects that will need to be addressed when performing an in-depth evaluation against the OECM criteria. First, any further evaluation will need to take governance changes into account, especially those related to the ongoing discussions around Italy's EEZ. Second, given that FRAs are renewed every four years, the question of what constitutes a sustained outcome needs to be decided in the Mediterranean context. Third, questions also remain as to the extent to which other (non-fishing) pressures could undermine the FRAs' contribution to conservation.

Lebanese area-based fisheries management tools

In this section, three case studies from Lebanese waters were presented to provide key information about three areas to be used during the group screening exercise. Although none of these three areas had much information available or area-based management measures attached to them, they sparked interesting discussions about OECMs and their future recognition in Lebanon.

Initial screening exercise of the Lebanese case studies

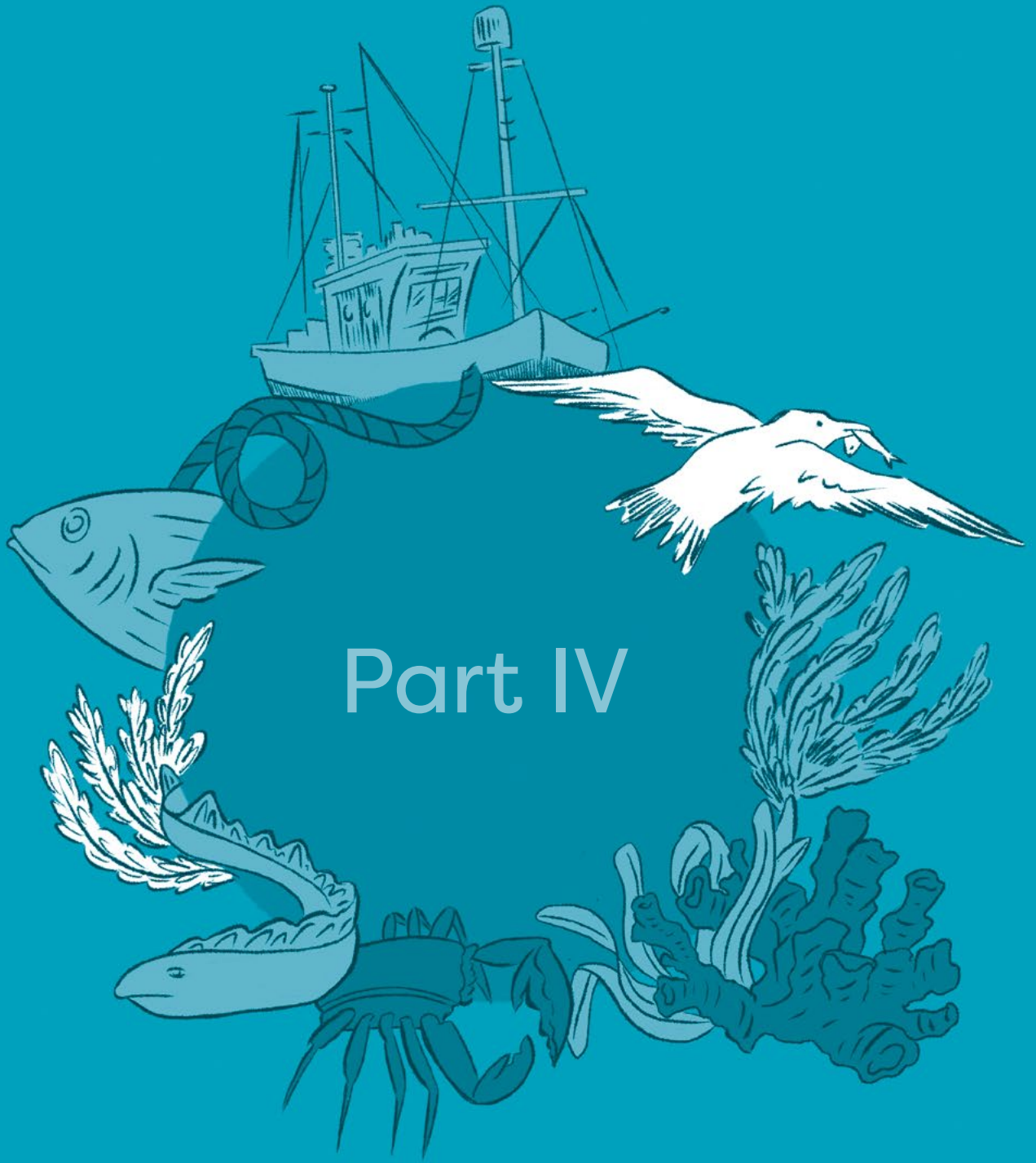
The participants discussed three case studies Lebanese waters. The first case study addressed an artificial reef deployed in 2021 and established 1 km offshore from the village of Barbara in the Keserwan-Jbeil governorate. Although the artificial reef serves as a deterrent for the use of certain fishing gears in the area, no decree or policy tool with management measures has been implemented. The artificial reef has no official governance authority and formal monitoring and data on its impact on reducing fishing pressure or contributing to biodiversity is not available. In addition, participants noted that artificial reefs have the associated risk of hosting invasive species. Participants agreed that it was not possible to conclude if it could be considered a potential OECM or not. They also raised the question of whether artificial reefs could be considered as potential OECMs.

The second case study addressed a pilot measure to limit bycatch and illegal fishing. The measure has not yet been implemented and therefore it was not considered to be a potential OECM.

The third case study addressed was the Batroun Conserved Area, an area under direct jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon. It was unclear whether the Batroun Conserved Area had defined boundaries, or not. Participants also noted the lack of management measures or regulations for the area. It was considered that the lack of defined boundaries would disqualify the area as a potential OECM, given that the subcriterion B "Geographically defined space" would generally be an eliminating criterion. However, participants decided to go through the whole initial screening process to identify elements that could be improved to consider the area a potential OECM. Establishing a formally delimited area would be one of the areas for improvement. Participants also suggested a need to provide more clarity on the important biodiversity values within the area and of the potential positive biodiversity outcomes that the area could provide.

Before finalizing the session, participants discussed other potential OECMs in the Eastern Mediterranean region. They proposed several areas that could be considered for a screening exercise, namely:

- the Eratosthenes Seamount;
- the Finike submarine mountains;
- the Palmahim Disturbance Cold Water Coral Gardens and Cold Seeps (proposed FRA); and
- areas where clams are collected by women in Tunisia.



Part IV

CASE STUDIES: RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, the results from the initial screening were reported in plenary and participants discussed the possibility of performing a full evaluation of the case studies against the OECM criteria.

Ms Morello, Ms Agardy and Ms Meliane reported the discussions from the Adriatic, the Central Mediterranean and Eastern Mediterranean groups. They shared the conclusions of the screening exercise of the different case studies.

- **Adriatic case studies:** Participants suggested it would be worth performing a full evaluation of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA and the Velebit Channel's demersal fishing ban against the OECM criteria.
- **Central Mediterranean case studies:** Participants suggested it would be worth performing a full evaluation of the East of Adventure Bank FRA and the West of Gela Basin FRA against the OECM criteria. However, they considered that any further assessment would need to address: governance changes; the question of what constitutes a sustained outcome in the Mediterranean context; and questions about the extent to which other (non-fishing) pressures could undermine an OECM's contribution to conservation.
- **Eastern Mediterranean case studies:** Participants suggested that, given the information provided, it would not be worth performing a full evaluation of the case studies presented for the time being.

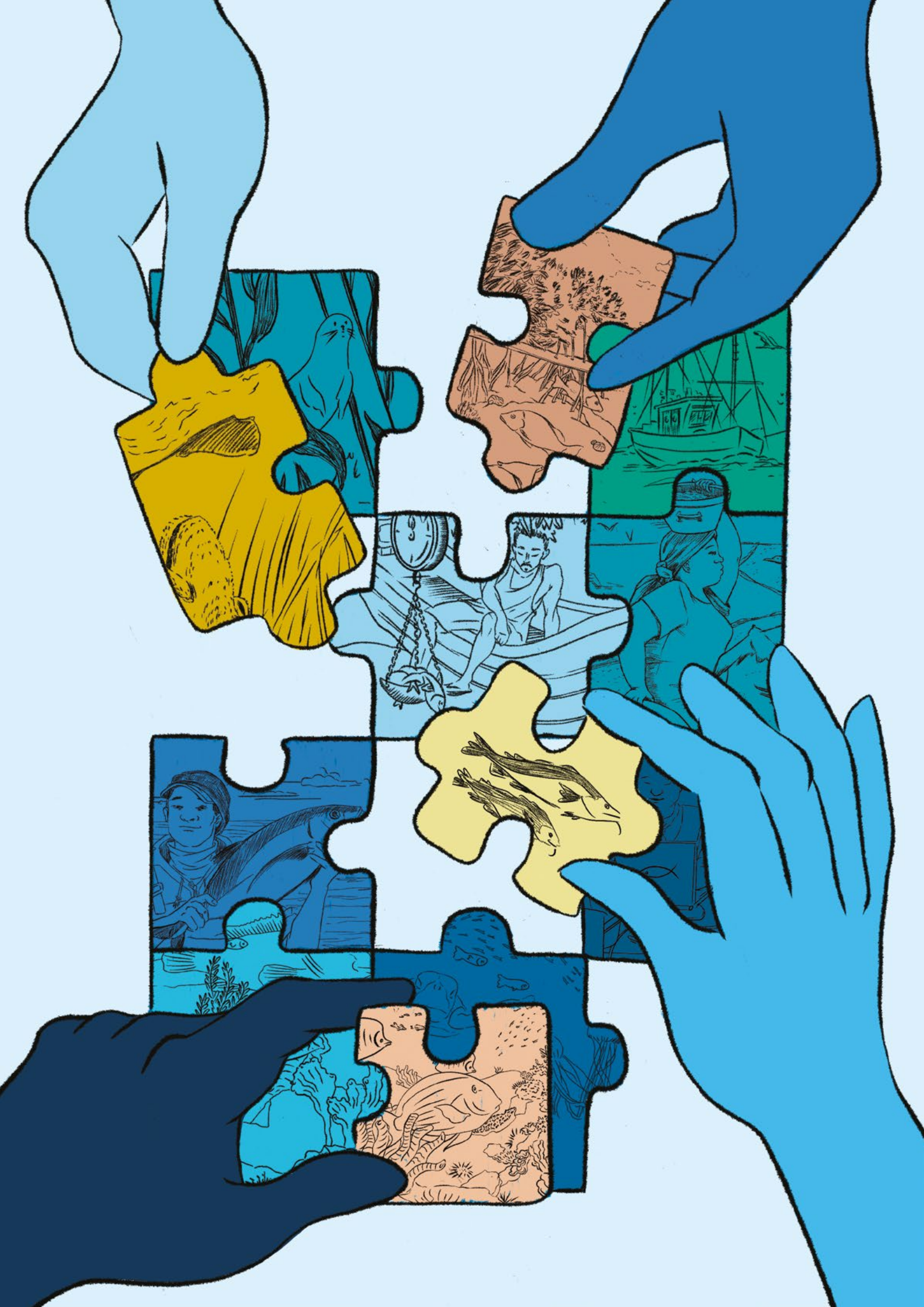
Participants agreed that performing a full evaluation against the OECM criteria of the case studies reviewed during the expert meeting would be highly demanding for the parties involved in the assessment. They recommended bringing the results of the expert meeting, including the screening exercises, to the GFCM Subregional Committee for the Adriatic Sea (Adriatic case studies), the Subregional Committee for the Central Mediterranean (Central Mediterranean case studies), and the Working Group on VMEs and EFH (1 000 m FRA) to discuss the possibility of proceeding with a full evaluation of the suggested areas. It was emphasized the screening exercises performed during the expert meeting, and any further evaluation against the OECM criteria, would be non-binding.

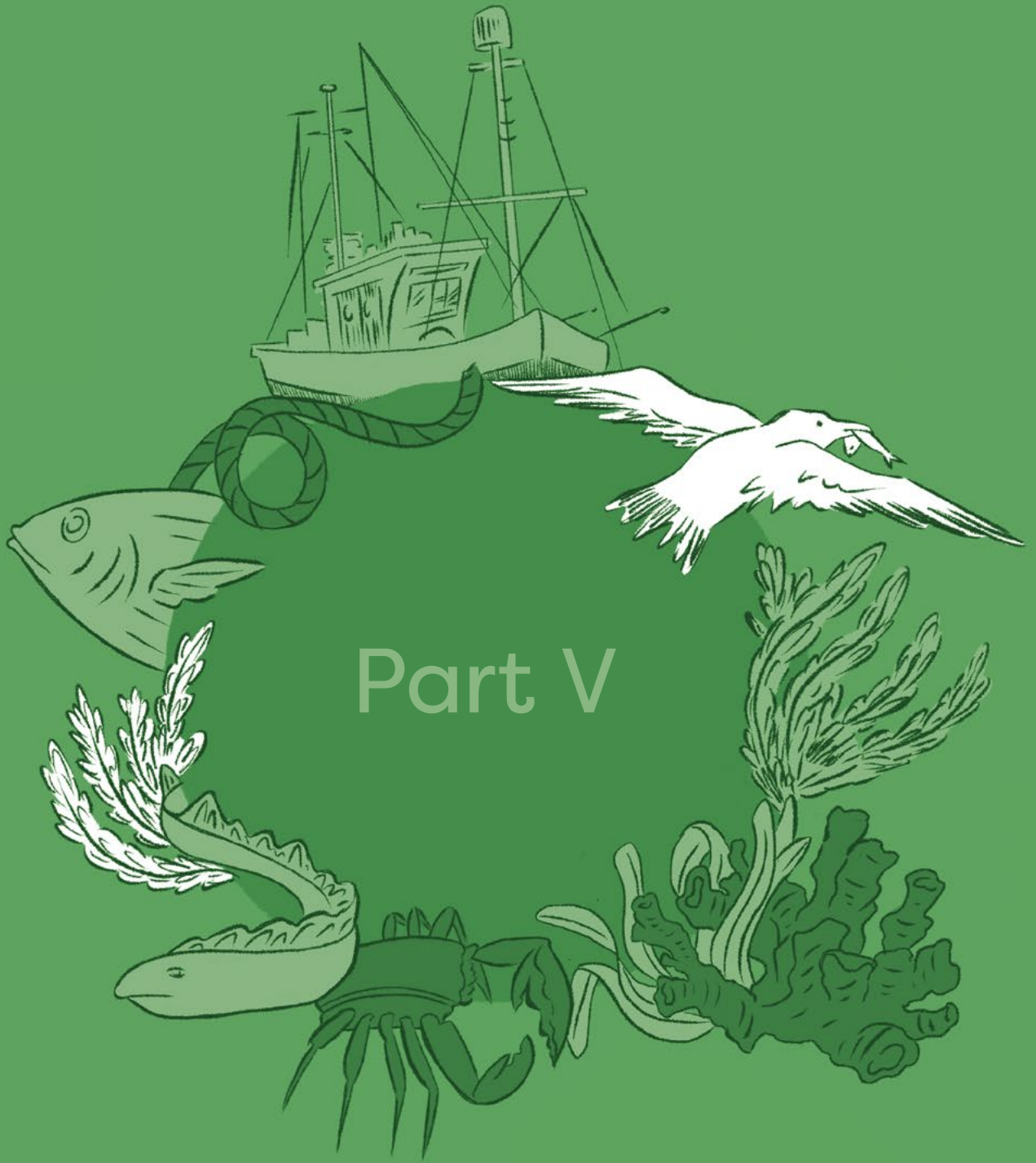
SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC ISSUES IN NEED OF FURTHER DISCUSSION

In this final session of the workshop, participants highlighted specific issues that will require discussion and clarification in the future.

At the end of the meeting, participants noted the following outstanding issues that require additional discussion and consideration:

- **Biodiversity conservation:** Participants noted the need for an improved definition and understanding of biodiversity and biodiversity conservation, particularly with respect to what is meant by the terms and what needs to be measured.
- **Linkages between potential OECMs and their surroundings:** Participants agreed that there is a need to study the linkages between potential OECMs and what surrounds them, including external threats. They highlighted that consistency between the spatial and non-spatial measures inside and outside an OECM is essential for ensuring the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity, as well as for creating connections with MPAs for the creation of conservation networks.
- **Threats:** Participants stressed the need to identify the activities with significant adverse impact and how to manage threats to enhance conservation. They suggested drafting a list of activities that could disqualify measures as potential OECMs if such activities were to take place in the area of a potential OECM.
- **Governance:** Participants highlighted the need to look at the specificities of the Mediterranean governance structure together with further involvement of coastal communities in the OECM discussions.





Part V

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Part VI

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ANNEX B: AGENDA

Day 1: Wednesday, 16 February 2022	
09.30–09.45	Opening of the meeting
09.45–11.00	OECM background <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why identify fisheries-related OECMs in the Mediterranean? (GFCM) • Understanding the CBD OECM criteria (FAO) • Draft of the FAO Guidelines for identifying fisheries-related OECMs (FAO)
11.00–13.00	Group discussion on the CBD criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of two examples of the fisheries-related OECMs and how they have applied the CBD criteria: Examples discussed in the joint ICES/IUCN-CEM FEG Workshop on Testing OECM Practices and Strategies (FAO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Lophelia Coral Conservation Area</i> - <i>NEAFC Rockhall Haddock Box</i> • Group discussion on the CBD criteria for OECMs – which criteria are clear and which are not? Which criteria would be challenging to apply in fisheries-related areas in the Mediterranean and why?
13.00–14.30	Lunch Break
14.30–15.30	Discussion and synthesis of common challenges, and areas that may require additional guidance or clarification
15.30–17.00	GFCM 1 000 m FRA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of 1 000 m FRA (GFCM) • Initial assessment of the case study • Discussion
Day 2: Thursday, 17 February 2022	
09.30–13.00	Participants divided into working groups, each undertaking an initial assessment of a case study against selected CBD criteria. The groups addressed initial areas identified by the webinar (list below) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Mediterranean case studies: Strait of Sicily FRAs • Eastern Mediterranean case study: examples from Lebanon • Adriatic Sea case studies: Velebit Channel (Croatia) and Jabuka/Pomo pit FRA
13.00–14.30	Lunch Break
14.30–16.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting from working groups • Discussion of cases that are more likely to meet OECM criteria • Final conclusions
16.30–17.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement on next steps on how to finalize evaluation and discussion in subsequent GFCM meetings • Closure of the meeting

ANNEX C: CRITERIA AND SUB-CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF OTHER EFFECTIVE AREA-BASED CONSERVATION MEASURES

Criterion A: Area is not currently recognized as a protected area	
Not a protected area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area is not currently recognized or reported as a protected area or part of a protected area; it may have been established for another function.
Criterion B: Area is governed and managed	
Geographically defined space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Size and area are described, including in three dimensions where necessary. Boundaries are geographically delineated.
Legitimate governance authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance has legitimate authority and is appropriate for achieving <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity within the area; Governance by indigenous peoples and local communities is self-identified in accordance with national legislation and applicable international obligations; Governance reflects the equity considerations adopted in the Convention. Governance may be by a single authority and/or organization or through collaboration among relevant authorities and provides the ability to address threats collectively.
Managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained outcomes for the conservation of biological diversity. Relevant authorities and stakeholders are identified and involved in management. A management system is in place that contributes to sustaining the <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity. Management is consistent with the ecosystem approach with the ability to adapt to achieve expected biodiversity conservation outcomes, including long-term outcomes, and including the ability to manage a new threat.
Criterion C: Achieves sustained and effective contribution to <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity	
Effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area achieves, or is expected to achieve, positive and sustained outcomes for the <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity. Threats, existing or reasonably anticipated ones are addressed effectively by preventing, significantly reducing or eliminating them, and by restoring degraded ecosystems. Mechanisms, such as policy frameworks and regulations, are in place to recognize and respond to new threats. To the extent relevant and possible, management inside and outside the other effective area-based conservation measure is integrated.
Sustained over long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The other effective area-based conservation measures are in place for the long term or are likely to be. “Sustained” pertains to the continuity of governance and management and “long term” pertains to the biodiversity outcome.
<i>In situ</i> conservation of biological diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition of other effective area-based conservation measures is expected to include the identification of the range of biodiversity attributes for which the site is considered important (e.g., communities of rare, threatened or endangered species, representative natural ecosystems, range restricted species, key biodiversity areas, areas providing critical ecosystem functions and services, areas for ecological connectivity).
Criterion C: Achieves sustained and effective contribution to <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity	
Information and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of other effective area-based conservation measures should, to the extent possible, document the known biodiversity attributes, as well as, where relevant, cultural and/or spiritual values, of the area and the governance and management in place as a baseline for assessing effectiveness. A monitoring system informs management on the effectiveness of measures with respect to biodiversity, including the health of ecosystems. Processes should be in place to evaluate the effectiveness of governance and management, including with respect to equity. General data of the area such as boundaries, aim and governance are available information.

Criterion D: Associated ecosystem functions and services and cultural, spiritual, socio-economic and other locally relevant values	
Ecosystem functions and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem functions and services are supported, including those of importance to indigenous peoples and local communities, for other effective area-based conservation measures concerning their territories, taking into account interactions and trade-offs among ecosystem functions and services, with a view to ensuring positive biodiversity outcomes and equity. • Management to enhance one particular ecosystem function or service does not impact negatively on the sites overall biological diversity.
Cultural, spiritual, socio-economic and other locally relevant values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and management measures identify, respect and uphold the cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic, and other locally relevant values of the area, where such values exist. • Governance and management measures respect and uphold the knowledge, practices and institutions that are fundamental for the <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity.

Source: CBD. 2018a. *Definition of “other effective area-based conservation measures”*. Adopted: Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 30 November 2018. CBD/COP/DEC/14/8. Page 12. Montreal. www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-08-en.pdf

ANNEX D: INITIAL SCREENING TOOL

This section includes the screening tool used during the initial screening exercises.

Characteristics that define an OECM	Questions	Answer	Brief justification/ Supporting documentation (where possible)
	<p>Is the area a geographically defined space?</p> <p><i>Size and area are described, including a description of the characteristics of relevant depths within the water column, if possible. Boundaries are geographically delineated with coordinates that can be mapped.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	<p>Is the area currently recognized as a protected area?</p> <p><i>Answer no if the area is not currently recognized or reported by a competent authority to the CBD Secretariat or the World Database on Protected Areas as a protected area or part of a protected area. Please indicate if it contains a protected area (in which case only the surface area outside the protected area can qualify as an OECM).</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No but the area contains a protected area	
<p>Area governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity</p>	<p>Does the area have a legitimate governance authority?</p> <p><i>The area is under the authority of a specified entity or an agreed upon combination of entities that has or have the formal governance mandate and powers to achieve <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity in the area. This includes: (1) <u>governance by a government agency</u> (from central to local); (2) <u>governance by private individuals, organizations or companies</u> (e.g. fishers' associations); (3) <u>governance by Indigenous Peoples and/or local communities</u> (e.g. territories and areas conserved by Indigenous Peoples and local communities); and (4) <u>shared governance</u> (i.e. governance by various rights holders and stakeholders together, such as between Indigenous Peoples and local communities and governments or between private individuals or civil society organizations and governments).</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	<p>Is the area contributing, or is it expected to contribute to achieving the <i>in situ</i> conservation of any of the following biodiversity attributes? Check all that apply.</p> <p><i><i>In situ</i> biodiversity conservation refers to the protection, care, management, and maintenance of the variability among living organisms in their natural environments and the ecological complexes of which they are part in order to safeguard the natural conditions for their long-term permanence.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> The area <u>is not</u> achieving/is not expected to achieve the <i>in situ</i> conservation of any biodiversity attributes <input type="checkbox"/> Communities of rare, threatened, or endangered species <input type="checkbox"/> Representative natural ecosystems <input type="checkbox"/> Range restricted species <input type="checkbox"/> Key biodiversity areas <input type="checkbox"/> Areas providing critical ecosystem functions and services <input type="checkbox"/> Areas for ecological connectivity <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	

Characteristics that define an OECM	Questions	Answer	Brief justification/ Supporting documentation (where possible)
<p>Area governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity</p>	<p>Are there any existing or anticipated threats to biodiversity in the area?</p> <p><i>Threats to biodiversity result from human activities or processes and natural events that cause the degradation of the area and hinder progress towards conserving biodiversity. These threats might include both direct and indirect threats. Direct threats result from human activities or processes within or proximate to the area (e.g. on-site pollution, mining, infrastructure development, illegal activities, invasive species, conflicts, inadequate technical and management actions, processes, and resources, etc.). They can also result from natural events (e.g. fires, tsunamis, floods, earthquakes, and volcanic activity, etc.). Indirect threats are those that arise outside the area (e.g. climate change, off-site activities such as pollution, damming of rivers, diversion of water, and application of pesticides to crops, etc.).</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, there are existing threats to biodiversity in the area.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, there are anticipated threats to biodiversity in the area.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	
	<p>Is any type of monitoring being conducted that could be used to assess the effectiveness of the current management measures with respect to their effect on biodiversity conservation in the area?</p> <p><i>Undertaking monitoring activities in an area implies that data and information on how local species and ecosystems are used and impacted by fisheries activities is regularly collected. This could include the use of indicators for measuring change. Monitoring can also include, as an example, the incorporation of traditional knowledge and community-based monitoring, integrating public/community participation in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data and changes or trends in the natural environment.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	
<p>Area with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic, and other locally relevant values</p>	<p>Does the management system in place include measures to support the area's associated ecosystem functions and services?</p> <p><i>In the case of marine environments, ecosystem services might include:</i></p> <p><i>(1) <u>provisioning services</u> (energy, food and feed, materials and assistance, medicinal, biochemical and genetic resources);</i></p> <p><i>(2) <u>regulating services</u> (habitat creation and maintenance, regulation of air quality, regulation of climate, regulation of ocean acidification, regulation of freshwater and coastal water quality, regulation of hazards and extreme events, and regulation of organisms detrimental to humans);</i></p> <p><i>(3) <u>supporting services</u> (habitat for aquatic species, biomass production, nutrient cycling and water cycling); (4) <u>cultural, recreational and educational services</u> (learning and inspiration, physical and psychological experiences, supporting identities, and maintenance options).</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	

The expert meeting on fisheries-related other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean was co-organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) to seek the input of experts on the way forward for the identification of fisheries-related OECMs in the Mediterranean.

The main points covered during the expert meeting included: the initial application of the criteria for OECMs, as determined by the Convention on Biological Diversity, to a set of case studies and fisheries-related measures identified during the webinar on Marine OECMs in the Mediterranean region which was co-organized by FAO and GFCM on 14 December 2021; the compilation and discussion of main challenges related to the application of the criteria, with initial recommendations on how to address them; agreement on the next steps to undertake a more in-depth evaluation of the case studies presented for discussion during the GFCM subcommittee meetings; and the assessment of the implications, opportunities and potential difficulties that arise from identifying fisheries-related OECMs in the Mediterranean.

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