

# An Important Platform

**The Sustainable Ocean Initiative of the Convention on Biological Diversity will help improve the health and resilience of oceans in the longer term**

**T**he Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) was born at the margins of the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 10) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2010. The initiative aims to build partnerships to enhance capacity to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets on marine and coastal biodiversity.

The SOI Global Partnership meeting took place during 3-4 October 2014 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. It was organized by the Korea Maritime Institute and the CBD Secretariat, and hosted and sponsored by the Ministry of Ocean and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea.

SOI, which is co-ordinated by the CBD Secretariat, aims to address this need by providing a holistic and strategic framework through which to address capacity-development needs of countries to improve the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity. It builds on existing efforts, resources and experiences, in an integrated and holistic manner, by enhancing partnerships, building on lessons learned and knowledge gained, and facilitating improved co-ordination among sectors and stakeholder groups and across multiple scales in order to meet regional and national priorities for capacity building.

The core strength of SOI is its wide range of partners. SOI partners comprise various global, regional or national institutions/programmes/initiatives who share the vision of SOI and contribute in different ways to its mission. The SOI Global Partnership Meeting brought together a range of experts to share perspectives on major capacity needs in different regions and to develop an action plan for SOI to address these needs through targeted capacity-development activities.

## **Marine biodiversity**

The meeting gathered experts from different regions to discuss key challenges and barriers related to sustainable management of marine biodiversity, major capacity needs in various regions (for example, access to data, technical expertise in using data to inform management, guidance on tools and approaches to improve management), ongoing capacity-development efforts at different scales and opportunities to address capacity-development needs by building on

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Along with the SOI High-Level Meeting, held on 16 October in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, as a parallel session of the High-Level Segment of the 12th meeting of COP 12, these were important steps in the evolution of SOI, outlining an action plan to achieve the vision of SOI and building political support to address major capacity gaps to achieve the Aichi Targets.

The Aichi Targets, adopted by the CBD COP in 2010, lay out an ambitious agenda to reverse global biodiversity loss, including for marine and coastal biodiversity. In order to achieve these targets, there is an urgent need to enhance the capacity of countries to improve on-the-ground implementation.

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existing efforts and resources through partnerships, exchange and dialogue.

The meeting began with a series of stage-setting presentations and general discussions focused on outlining experiences and opportunities in different regions. Participants discussed the need to understand and appreciate the broad range of ecosystem services derived from marine biodiversity, and the importance of these services in demonstrating the value of biodiversity to people. The importance of cultural and traditional ecosystem services was also highlighted, along with the need to include indigenous peoples and local communities.

Participants then focused on the key elements of an action plan for implementing SOI from 2015 to 2020. The discussions focused on key thematic areas, including enhancing co-ordination and synergies at the global level, region-based capacity-building approaches, facilitating regional and national implementation and information sharing and learning exchange. Within these focal areas, the participants discussed practical ways to focus SOI activities and means to build upon existing resources and capacity-development efforts to increase on-the-ground impact.

The discussions on the action plan highlighted the need to collaborate with existing initiatives and tap into existing networks. Creating synergies globally and regionally was seen to be important in order to build on achievements and avoid duplication of effort. The need to strengthen and interlink regional efforts and support local implementation was also highlighted.

Information sharing, including through online platforms, was seen as an essential component of the process to improve exchange and monitor progress. Longer-term sustainability of SOI capacity-building efforts was also discussed, and ideas to maintain sustainability included incorporating SOI efforts into the work of regional learning centres as well as universities and higher learning programmes.

Through these discussions, the workshop participants finalized the

SOI Action Plan 2015-2020, which will serve as a strategic roadmap for SOI activities until 2020. The plan outlines activities within the following key elements:

- SOI Global Partnership Meetings
- SOI Regional Workshops and Learning Exchange Programme
- Facilitating On-the-Ground Implementation through SOI National Training and Exchange
- Engaging SOI Local Leaders—Local Leaders Forum
- Web-based Information Sharing and Co-ordination
- SOI Training of Trainers

The SOI High-Level Meeting provided an important forum for more than 100 political leaders and high-level representatives from international and regional organizations, academia, scientific institutions and other civil society groups to discuss progress made, and challenges faced, in efforts to achieve the Aichi Targets and how to utilize SOI as a platform to enhance implementation opportunities and resources and create synergies to contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity. In particular, the meeting focused on engaging political commitment and scientific and technical co-operation to accelerate current efforts by countries toward achieving the targets.

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Naoko Ishii (CEO and Chairperson, GEF), Jihyun Lee (Environmental Affairs Officer, CBD Secretariat), Braulio Dias (Executive Secretary, CBD) and Ju-Young Lee (Minister of Ocean and Fisheries, Republic of Korea) at the SOI High-Level Meeting

## Aichi Biodiversity Targets Related to Marine and Coastal Biodiversity

*All of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets are related to marine and coastal biodiversity in some way; however, the following targets are especially relevant to the work of the SOI:*

**Target 6:** By 2020, all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem-based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems, and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits.

**Target 10:** By 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are minimized, so as to maintain their integrity and functioning.

**Target 11:** By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

The meeting was chaired by the Minister of Ocean and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea and featured statements from a number of global leaders.

The meeting also featured a ministerial roundtable with ministers and vice ministers from Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Costa Rica, the European Commission, Germany and South Africa. The SOI Action Plan 2015-2020 was also presented during the meeting and political commitments were engaged by the high-level participants, including financial and in-kind contributions by some countries for the implementation of the Action Plan.

Through the statements and discussions, participants identified major challenges facing the achievement of the Aichi Targets, including the vulnerability of coastal populations, limited resources available in many countries and communities, poverty, lack of human and financial capacity, limited co-ordination and inter-agency co-operation and the ecological fragility of islands and coastal areas.

They recognized the critical need for SOI and its key role in enhancing capacity, and also welcomed the SOI Action Plan 2015-2020 as an

important means to support global, regional and national efforts to achieve the Aichi Targets. The participants emphasized that, through its diverse range of collaborators, SOI is timely and well positioned to deliver a range of capacity-building opportunities in an integrated and holistic manner to meet identified regional and national priorities. They emphasized that SOI has a unique role in helping countries achieve the Aichi Targets.

SOI has come a long way since its inception in 2010, and has already delivered successful capacity-building opportunities. Through the support of existing and new partners, SOI can become an important platform for providing integrated and holistic training and capacity building towards achievement of the Aichi Targets and for improving the health and resilience of oceans in the longer term. 

### For more

[www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/mar/soiom-2014-02/official/soiom-2014-02-actionplan-en.pdf](http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/mar/soiom-2014-02/official/soiom-2014-02-actionplan-en.pdf)

**SOI Action Plan 2015-2020**