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Invitation to provide comment on marine issues related to new global targets for the Convention on Biological Diversity

The New Zealand Marine Sciences Society (NZMSS) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the reports of meetings held relating to the thematic areas - Ecosystem Restoration, Marine and Coastal Biodiversity and Area Based Conservation Measures.

NZMSS

The New Zealand Marine Sciences Society, known as “NZMSS”, was formed in 1960 as a constituent of the Royal Society of New Zealand, to encourage and assist marine science and related research across a wide range of disciplines in New Zealand and to foster communication among those with an interest in marine science.

NZMSS is a professional science body and a non-profit organization that provides access to and within the marine science community. We identify emerging issues through annual conferences, annual reviews, a listserv and our website <http://nzmsp.org/>. NZMSS membership covers all aspects of scientific interest in the marine environment and extends to the uptake of science in marine policy, resource management, conservation and the marine business sector. We speak for members of the Society on matters of interest on marine research in New Zealand and we engage with other scientific societies as appropriate. Our current membership comprises around 300 members.

Our submission is consistent with the Royal Society of New Zealand Code of Ethics and Rules, in particular principles 2.1 Integrity and professionalism, 4.1 Compliance with the law and relevant standards, and 10.1 Protection of the environment (www.royalsociety.org.nz/organisation/about/code).

Background to NZMSS involvement in new global targets for the CBD

Recently, we have made submissions to the Department of Conservation and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, regarding CBD initiatives. In our submissions, we highlighted our concerns about the inadequate reporting on current marine biodiversity targets and the lack of meaningful marine targets for the proposed new strategy.

To achieve the CBD 2050 vision for New Zealand, NZMSS considers that the marine component of the new global biodiversity targets should cover the following activities:

- Documenting the marine biodiversity of the entire marine realm comprising New Zealand's Territorial Sea, EEZ and extended continental shelf
- Implementing ecosystem-based management (EMB) including sustainable uses of marine resources and a network of representative, functioning no-take marine protected areas
- Understanding the impacts of invasive species, fishing, climate change and ocean acidification/deoxygenation on our marine biodiversity, habitats and ecosystems
- Ensuring there are no species extinctions or population declines resulting from human impacts and that threatened or endangered species are prioritised for protection to encourage recovery from past impacts
- Understanding the ecosystem services that our marine environment provides
- Incorporating mātauranga Māori
- Enabling a nation-wide focus, understanding of and appreciation for the marine environment.

Further, the new targets and timelines should include provision for advancing knowledge and understanding of the oceans' marine biodiversity, as well as recognising the role of traditional/cultural knowledge of the marine environment and its resources. Given the expected impacts of climate change, it is critical that significant investment is made at global and national levels to understand these impacts and to identify how to restore and safeguard marine and coastal biodiversity.

Comments on the three thematic areas for post 2020 global biodiversity framework – ecosystem restoration, marine and coastal biodiversity and area based conservation measures.

- Ecosystem restoration

In general, we support the principles identified to guide the development of goals and targets and endorse the inclusion of marine and coastal biodiversity in the considerations paper.

In relation to the guiding questions (page 15), we consider it important to identify specific time bound targets for marine and coastal biodiversity, with additional targets that recognise the relationship of terrestrial and freshwater environments with the marine/coastal area. Restoration strategies should aim to help understand climate change impacts locally, thus enabling local communities to respond to and be resilient to these impacts.

Restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems can involve two approaches – (i) active or direct restoration through direct intervention to rehabilitate impacted habitats (e.g. planting mangroves, seagrass beds or placing shellfish in disturbed areas); and, (ii) “passive” or indirect restoration where direct human impacts are removed from a specific area and these are left to recover (i.e. area-based protection measures/tools such as no-take marine protected areas are established). The former approach is likely to be resource intensive and should be underpinned by research to support active/direct restoration actions.

Any efforts to restore marine and coastal ecosystems will need to take into consideration the effects of climate change over time, as these will potentially impact on restoration efforts.

Use of no-take MPAs as a restoration tool links with the thematic areas of Marine and Coastal Biodiversity and Area Based Conservation.

- Marine and Coastal Biodiversity

This thematic area comprised a wealth of background information on the marine realm in the document “Background briefs for 2020 ocean pathways week”. The chapters on “Monitoring and Indicators” and “Ocean science for sustainable development and conservation of marine

biodiversity” will be useful in addressing targets for marine and coastal under the Ecosystem Restoration and Area Based Conservation Measures thematic areas.

- Area Based Conservation Measures

As noted above, the relevant chapters in the document “Background briefs for 2020 ocean pathways week” are relevant to this thematic area for marine and coastal biodiversity.

We support inclusion of targets and timelines that aim to increase the area of marine protection at the global, regional and national levels, in particular, through sufficient networks of no-take MPAs. We also support inclusion of targets for Ecosystem based management approaches to (i) specifically manage the negative impacts caused by fishing, oil and mineral extraction, marine dumping and pollution from land-based runoff; and, (ii) plan for the range of human uses and activities in the marine environment.

Gaps

There is no mention of targets that aim to ensure endangered/threatened/vulnerable marine species are protected from human impacts and encouraged to recover. It is unlikely that measures for ecosystem restoration or area based conservation will be sufficient, particularly for those species that are migratory or range over large areas or are already in low numbers.

NZMSS thanks the Ministry for this opportunity to make comments on the three thematic areas and the potential post 2020 global biodiversity targets. Further, we are particularly interested in making comment on the first draft of the new set of global targets, slated for release in mid-January 2020. As noted above, our membership comprises a wide range of marine science, policy and management expertise, which can be drawn upon to assist with this important new initiative. Please contact me at the email address provided below.

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