



Seminar on the Management of Protected Areas

Summary Report

On December 15, 2020, experts from Germany and China came together in a virtual seminar to discuss their respective countries' experiences, administration, and outlook in Protected Area management, in an attempt for mutual exchange and learning and to build momentum towards the CBD COP-15 and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

This seminar was kicked off by an opening speech by Mr. Hendrik Barkeling, Minister Counselor of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Beijing and moderated by Mr. Anders Hove of GIZ. It was hosted by the Sino-German Environmental Partnership of GIZ and the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Beijing. The expert participants included:

Dr. Volker Scherfose, Head of the Biotope Protection and Management & Protected Areas Department, German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation,

Mr. Zhang Yunyi, Division Director of Planning and Development, Department of Protected Area Management, Chinese National Forestry and Grassland Administration,

Mr. Manuel Schweiger, Head of the Germany Program, Frankfurt Zoological Society,
and

Dr. Wang Zhi, Deputy Director of the Research Center for Protected Areas, Nanjing Institute of Environmental Sciences.

Background: Effectively Managed Protected Areas are Critical for Biodiversity Conservation

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth and the key indicator of a healthy ecosystem. Unfortunately, the loss of biodiversity has accelerated to an unprecedented level worldwide. To prevent further loss, many countries are taking dramatic action to reverse this trend. A key element for global biodiversity protection is the establishment and proper management of "protected areas," which help to conserve species and their habitats.

A **protected area** is a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values (IUCN Definition 2008).

Protected areas (PAs) include national parks, wilderness areas, nature reserves, and so on. The **IUCN's protected area management categories** classify protected areas according to their management objectives, in descending order of protection strength. Many national governments use these categories as standards for their own protected areas.

IUCN PA Management Categories	
Category IA	Strict Nature Reserve
Category IB	Wilderness Area
Category II	National Park
Category III	Natural Monument or Feature
Category IV	Habitat/Species Management Area
Category V	Protected Landscape/Seascape
Category VI	Protected Area with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

The **Convention on Biological Diversity Convention of the Parties 15** (CBD COP-15) is the UN Biodiversity Conference to be held on Kunming, China and where the **Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework** will be adopted, which will outline what countries need to do in the next decade and beyond to achieve the CBD's vision of "living in harmony with nature" by 2050.

Effectively managed systems of protected areas have been recognized as critical instruments in achieving the objectives of the CBD and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Barkeling's Opening Remarks on the Importance of Biodiversity Conservation through Protected Area Management and the Basis for Mutual Learning between China and Germany

Mr. Barkeling opened the seminar with his remarks on the importance of biodiversity conservation due to the dramatic decline of biological diversity worldwide. He stressed the need to work together, as individuals and as a society, nationally and internationally, and across political sectors, to reverse the trend. A crucial step is to develop and implement an ambitious Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, which would also support environmentally-friendly COVID-19 economic recovery efforts.

To protect biodiversity, the establishment and management of protected areas is key. Protected areas are one of the most important instruments of nature conservation, because

site protection effectively conserves species and their habitats. China has been scaling up its efforts for an ambitious protected area system through a reform centered on the national parks, and Germany has far-reaching national programs in place as a result of its long history in protected area development. In this regard, both countries have valuable insight that can be shared for mutual understanding and learning.

Dr. Volker Scherfose on an Overview of the Protected Area System in Germany

Dr. Scherfose identified that when compared globally, Germany is home to a moderate level of flora and fauna diversity. It is home to several ancient beech forests as well as the tidal ecosystems of the Wadden Sea, which have been declared UNESCO World Heritage Sites and are a conservation focus for Germany.

The table below denotes the types of PAs Germany currently classifies and possesses in its country. The strength of protection for each most types of PAs are categorized under the IUCN PA management categories in a descending order of protection strength. National parks are highest at IUCN level II, while landscape protection areas and nature parks are the lowest at level V. Many of the different categories of PAs in Germany overlap with each other and are classified as more than one type. The types italicized do not overlap with each other.

Protected Area Types (Germany)	Number	Area	IUCN Category
<i>National Park</i>	16	0.6%	II
National Nature Monument	6	0.01%	III
Nature Conservation Areas	8,833	3.9%	IV
Natura 2000 – Habitats Directive	4,544	9.3%	IV
Natura 2000 – Birds Directive	742	11.3%	IV, V
<i>Biosphere Reserves</i>	18	3.9%	-
Landscape Protection Areas	8,788	26%	V
<i>Nature Parks</i>	104	28%	V

While the first national park, the Bavarian Forest National Park, was founded 50 years ago, a set of quality criteria has been used since 2008 to compare the reality of the parks with the standard. National parks and biosphere reserves are evaluated every 10 years, and nature parks every 6 years, with different evaluation systems for each category. One of the quality criteria for national parks is “space for natural processes.” The goal here is to have 75% of the area of parks to be free from human influence. This is taken from the 75% goal of the IUCN.

Currently, Germany is working on its Intended Action Plan for Protected Areas (2020-2030), with the main aims being to enhance the management effectiveness and quality of PAs, as well as the establishment of new PAs. The federal state governments are also working on the establishment of an integrated monitoring program for national parks and biosphere reserves.

Mr. Zhang Yunyi on the Reformed Protected Area System in China

Mr. Zhang explained how PAs are important on the agenda of the Chinese government, where they are seen as valuable assets and a symbol of a “Beautiful China.” China’s objective is to develop a system of strongly protected and effectively managed PAs, with national parks as

the cornerstone. To fulfill this objective, major changes have been made to the Chinese PA system, which had included a diversified system of over 11,800 PAs by the end of 2018. National parks were created as a new type of PA and there was a reclassification of PAs into three major categories. The National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA) was also established for unified supervision and management. The development of this new system is still ongoing, with the 2015 launch of the trial national park system recently completed.

The table below denotes the main PA categories of the new system and what they mean in terms of protection in the Chinese context.

Main PA Categories under the New System (China)	
National Park	Protection of key ecosystems and the integrity of biological processes.
Nature Reserve	Protection of typical ecosystems, important habitats of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna, and important natural heritage.
Nature Park	Protection of the ecological, ornamental, cultural, and scientific values of nature and makes appropriate use of them.

Under the new system, management is divided between central and provincial governments. There are now three modes of management for nature reserves and nature parks: direct central management, joint management, and local management. Those under direct central management and joint management are approved by the central government, while locally managed ones are approved by provincial governments.

A new zoning method consisting of core protection and general control zones was also established. Core protection zones prohibit human activities, while general control zone restrict them. National parks and nature reserves are divided between the two zones, while nature parks are designated as solely general control zones.

China's major focus going forward features the continued rolling out of its new system, including the next phase of the national park system. This entails the integration and reclassification of existing PAs into the categories under the new system, with a focus on avoiding any overlaps, and the development of a law on PAs in order to strengthen regulations. The issue of residents currently living in PAs and their livelihoods still needs to be resolved with solutions such as relocating human settlements out of PAs. Other future tasks for PAs include restoration projects, the carrying out of a baseline survey to get a clear overview, the strengthening of monitoring and supervision, and the registration of ownership.

Mr. Manuel Schweiger on Protected Area Management in Germany

Mr. Schweiger illustrated how Germany's long history of extensive land-use, resulting in a fragmented landscape with many roads and settlements, sets the stage for its PA management strategy. The landscape is dominated by man-made countryside and there are no more large swaths of untouched areas.

Unlike most of the world where nature conservation is more or less the same as the preservation of wilderness, the focus in Germany has been on the preservation of secondary habitats and species composition. However, in the last few years, Germany has been pushing to move more toward wilderness protection, especially in the protection of its beech forests. National parks play a crucial role, although there is also work towards the establishment of

“wilderness areas,” although unlike the IUCN definition (Category IB), which is the preservation of pristine wilderness, Germany’s goal is for the potential creation of new wilderness. These areas would be allowed to permanently ensure natural processes to unfold, undisturbed by human influences.

The NGO coalition "Wilderness in Germany" is pushing the federal states to increase wilderness areas, in line with the *National Strategy on Biological Diversity*, which aims for 2% of the land area to be designated as large-scale wilderness areas.

Dr. Wang Zhi on the Effectiveness of Nature Reserve Management in China

Dr. Wang gave deeper insight on one of the Chinese PA types, specifically, on nature reserves and the effectiveness of their development, as well as their ecosystem protection and species conservation functions. There are around 2,750 nature reserves nationwide in China, covering around 15% of the land area. A system of national and local nature reserves focus on protecting biological resources and providing ecological functions, such as water conservation and climate regulation.

The table below denotes the further division of nature reserves into categories and types.

Nature Reserve Categories and Types (China)	
Natural Ecosystem	Forest; Grassland & Meadow; Desert; Inland Wetland & Aquatic; Marine & Coastal
Wildlife	Fauna; Flora
Natural Monument	Geological Site; Paleontological Heritage

Seven provinces, including Guangdong and Heilongjiang, host the largest number of nature reserves, accounting for 54% of the total, while nature reserves in the western provinces, including Tibet and Qinghai, take up the largest land area, accounting for more than three quarters of the total land area. The largest nature reserve in China is the Qiangtang national nature reserve in Tibet, with a massive area of 29.8 million hectares.

China has cross-border nature reserves established in partnership with bordering countries, such as the Daurian Nature Reserve with Mongolia and Russia. It also cooperates with Myanmar, Vietnam and Laos on projects such as the Greater Mekong sub-region biodiversity corridor.

Based on the Nanjing Institute of Environmental Sciences (NIES) research findings, through an assessment of ecosystem patterns, human activities, and ecosystem quality, the NIES found that 89% of protected areas have improved or consistent stability of their ecological functions. The main factors influencing conservation effectiveness includes settlement expansion and agricultural development.

The effectiveness of in situ species conservation in nature reserves was also studied. The key conclusion was that while a high percentage of higher plants and vertebrate are being protected, the share under “good” conservation remains relatively low.

Takeaway

While Germany and China encounter different circumstances as it relates to PAs, with differences in land area and habitats, as well as Germany's established system versus China's newly reformed one, both countries are committed to the development and betterment of PAs and ultimately, to the protection of their respective countries' biodiversity. As both countries gear up for the upcoming CBD COP-15 and with China being the host, this seminar allowed experts and participants the opportunity for mutual sharing and learning in a befitting time.

About the Sino-German Environmental Partnership Project

The Sino-German Environmental Partnership project has supported bilateral environmental policy dialogue through the exchange of experience and advice on various specialist topics since 2013. It is overseen by the Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) of the People's Republic of China. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is responsible for implementing the Sino-German Environmental Partnership project, which is funded through the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of BMU.

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