



Terms of Reference

Task and deliverables for the development and coordination of feasibility study on Deep Sea Red List of Ecosystems

a. Background

The project funded by Dona Bertarelli Philanthropy will deliver critically important information on the status of Deep Sea ecosystems. Building on past Red List of Deep Sea Species, ongoing deep sea conservation project and inspired by the momentum generated by the global Red List of Mangrove Ecosystems initiative, IUCN is now exploring the **feasibility of conducting a global Red List of Ecosystems (RLE) for Deep Sea ecosystems**, covering priority Ecosystem Functional Groups within the Biome M3- Deep sea floors¹ which include Submarine canyons (3.2), Abyssal plains (3.3), Seamounts, ridges and plateaus (3.4) and chemosynthetic-based ecosystems (3.7). These ecosystems play a critical role in biodiversity, climate regulation, water security, and community livelihoods.

Under this agreement, the Consultant will serve as Technical Lead, responsible for producing all technical inputs required for the Deep Sea RLE feasibility study. This includes: (i) proposing draft Level 4 units and identifying available distribution maps if any; (ii) proposing indicators, threats, and collapse definitions; and (iii) conducting a pilot RLE assessment in three particular sites (one site per EFG).

To achieve the above, the Consultant will facilitate expert discussions under a Deep-Sea ecosystem Task Force (hereafter “the Task Force”).

b. Scope of Work and activities

The Consultant will be responsible for all technical tasks required for the steps outlined below regarding the Deep Sea ecosystems feasibility study.

The Consultant, in close collaboration with the IUCN Ocean team and the Red List of Ecosystems unit, will lead overall coordination, organise meetings, manage the Task Force process and pilot the three RLE in three particular sites as follows:

0. Organization

- Do a kick-off meeting with the IUCN Secretariat team and key partners
- Propose expert members for the Task Force
- Facilitate three (3) meetings of Task Force to go through steps 1 through to 3

1. Draft Level 4 Units (step 1)

¹ Definition of the ecosystem functional groups available here: [Biome: Deep sea floors biome - Global Ecosystem Typology](#)



- Identify, compile, and evaluate the best available Deep Sea ecosystems ecosystem-distribution maps (resolution, coverage, suitability)
- Prepare draft proposals for Level 4 units for chosen EFGs in Deep Sea ecosystems
- Prepare clear documentation and materials and facilitate expert discussion²
- Revise Level 4 units based on expert feedback and prepare final proposals.

2. Data, Indicators, Threats, and Collapse Definitions (Step 2)

- Identify potential abiotic and biotic indicators relevant to RLE Criteria C and D for Deep Sea ecosystems ecosystem functional groups (including regional or latitudinal differences where relevant).
- Assess relevant dataset adequacy, comparability, and suitability for applying the RLE criteria.
- Compile material for initial discussions with experts on collapse definitions (including existing conceptual models, key threats and degradation pathways). This includes identifying major data gaps and limitations
- Facilitate consultations to present proposed indicators and collapse definitions and document expert feedback.
- Integrate experts feedback into updated indicator and collapse-definition proposals.

3. Pilot three draft RLEs in three particular sites (Step 3)

- Identify three particular sites where the RLE methodology could be deployed. The sites should be data rich, and good representations of their EFGs;
- Conduct draft RLE assessments for each site;
- Throughout, facilitate expert discussion for each site as required;
- Revise and update technical documents after consultations, incorporating expert feedback at each step.

c. Deliverables

All activities and deliverables are expected to be completed between September and December 2026.

Activity	Deliverable	Indicative timeline
Step 1	• Draft EFG L4 units + evaluation of EFG distribution maps	September – October 2026
Step 2	• Draft indicators + collapse-definition materials	October 2026

² Expert consultations include the Deep Sea RLE Task Force.



Step 3	• Identification of three particular sites • Conduct a draft RLE assessments	November - December 2026
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d. Budget

Maximum budget for the activities under this agreement is expected to be **15,000 CHF** (Fifteen thousand hundred Swiss Francs) for consultancy service costs. Travel and workshops participation will be handled separately, if needed. This total includes all applicable overheads, taxes, and indirect costs.

e. Payment Schedule

Payments under this agreement will be made by IUCN to the Consultant according to the following schedule:

Payment	Amount	Conditions
1st Payment	50% of the total amount	Upon signature of the agreement and submission of first invoice.
Final Payment	50% of the total amount	Upon satisfactory completion and IUCN approval of all activities .

f. Timeline and duration

The duration of this engagement is for 2026, commencing upon signature of the agreement, with current list of activities implemented between September and December 2026.