Enhancing the current knowledge on marine biodiversity integration in development cooperation, through a Delphi survey focusing on sub-Saharan Africa

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The rapid and accelerating decline of marine biodiversity leads to a loss of ecosystem functionality and negatively affects the ecosystem services underpinning people's livelihoods all over the world. Ecosystem functions rely on biodiversity to generate processes, such as *e.g.* water quality regulation, that contribute to resilient socio-ecological systems in the face of rapid environmental changes, as highlighted in a range of publications (*e.g.* The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity).

The links between biodiversity conservation and development are recognized in international policy frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as in the policies of bilateral and multilateral donors who engage in development cooperation with partner countries in the global South. Biodiversity conservation and development cooperation initiatives, which provide the main source of conservation funds in biodiversity-rich areas, would benefit from an effective integration. In the academic literature, there is still a lack of policy-relevant knowledge on the interaction of development cooperation and biodiversity. Recent studies (Miller, 2014; Drutschinin, 2015) emphasize the necessity of global case studies, as well as broader analysis, on development cooperation in relation to biodiversity conservation.

The overall objective of this study is to enhance the current understanding of biodiversity integration in development cooperation by surveying a range of experts (from the donor, NGO and academic communities) through the use of the Delphi technique. The study will focus on the reasons for integrating biodiversity in development cooperation, on the approaches and tools used, on the roles and responsibilities of the various actors and on the expected outcomes and obstacles. The Delphi technique gathers and evaluates expert-based knowledge, in order to identify areas of consensus through a structured, anonymous and iterative survey (consisting of minimum 2 rounds), in which experts are asked to react to a range of questions. The preliminary results of the study are expected in February, 2016 and will be discussed in relation to the literature on biodiversity integration in development cooperation. The overall development objective is to generate policy recommendations. This inter-university research project is embedded in the work of the KLIMOS Research Platform on Climate Change and Development Cooperation.

Keywords: marine biodiversity conservation; development cooperation; sustainable development; delphi