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Project Inception Workshop Report

Conserving terrestrial and marine biodiversity and restoring ecosystem services in globally relevant and vulnerable sites in Somalia

Funding Source: Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Implementing Partner: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Somalia

Government Partners: Federal Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC-FGS) and State Ministries of Environment and Climate Change

Date of Inception Meeting: 4th February 2026

Venue: UNDP Somalia, Mogadishu

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1. Introduction

This Inception Report documents the discussions, outcomes, agreements, and technical deliberations of the Project Inception Workshop for the project "Conserving Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity and Restoring Ecosystem Services in Globally Relevant and Vulnerable Sites in Somalia", held on 4 February 2026 at UNDP Somalia in Mogadishu.

The inception workshop marked the formal operational launch of the project following its approval through the GEF and LPAC process. The workshop was convened as a structured technical and operational meeting to confirm readiness for implementation and to ensure that all participating institutions shared a common understanding of the project's objectives, scope, sequencing, and implementation requirements.

The full-day technical programme for the inception workshop that included: opening remarks and setting of expectations; a comprehensive project overview and recap of the LPAC process; a technical review of the project design, results framework, baselines, risks, and assumptions; a detailed review of the Year 1 Annual Work Plan and budget; and dedicated sessions on environmental and social safeguards, monitoring, evaluation, and learning arrangements.

The workshop concluded with a consolidation of technical agreements and confirmation of next steps.

2. Agenda – Inception Workshop

Time	Agenda Item	Responsibility
09:00 – 09:30	Opening remarks – MoECC	• Christopher Laker, DRR-P • Mr. Abdirisak Ahmed Ali • Mr. Abdillahi Godah
09:30 – 10:30	Project Overview & Inception Expectations • LPAC recap • Project scope and sequencing	UNDP team
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee Break	
10:45 – 12:15	Technical Review of Project Design • Results framework & baselines • Risks and assumptions	UNDP team
12:15 – 13:15	**Lunch Break**	
13:15 – 14:45	Annual Work Plan (Year 1) Technical Review • Activity sequencing • Roles and responsibilities	UNDP team
14:45 – 15:00	**Coffee Break**	
15:00 – 16:00	Safeguards, Monitoring & Learning Arrangements	UNDP team
16:00 – 16:30	Summary of Technical Agreements & Next Steps	UNDP/MOECC team

Participants: Participants were drawn from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) at the Federal Government and Federal Member State levels, the Banadir Regional Administration, and UNDP Somalia Country Office.

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High-level participants included:

- Mr. Abdirisak Ahmed Ali, Director General, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Federal Government of Somalia;
- Dr. Christopher Laker, Deputy Resident Representative (Programme), UNDP Somalia;
- Mr. Abdullahi Godah Barre, GEF Operational Focal Point for Somalia;
- Members of the Technical Steering Committee

The fully signed attendance sheet is provided in the attached Annexe 1.

3. Proceedings of the Workshop – Opening Remarks from the Co-Chairs

Co-Chairs: The meeting was co-chaired by the Director General of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) and the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative (Programme). In their opening remarks, the Co-Chairs welcomed participants and emphasized that the inception workshop marked the beginning of a government-led and nationally owned programme to strengthen Somalia's terrestrial and marine biodiversity conservation system. They highlighted the inception phase is a critical foundation for aligning all stakeholders around one plan, one schedule, and one set of standards. The Co-Chairs underscored that the primary purpose of the workshop was to review project documents, approve the Year 1 Annual Work Plan and Budget, and agree on shared rules for safeguards, grievance redress, management effectiveness monitoring, and data governance through the national biodiversity and geospatial platform.

The Co-Chairs reaffirmed the project's importance in transitioning from historical, nominal conservation designations to a modern, legally established, and operational system of protected areas and locally managed marine areas, as mandated in Somalia's Environmental Protection and Management Act (2024) and National Environmental Policy (2023). They stressed the need for a lawful and structured approach to protected area establishment, including FPIC, environmental and social assessments, participatory mapping and zoning, and legal gazettement to ensure community rights, legitimacy, and long-term institutional durability. The Co-Chairs also recognised the complementary roles of the Federal Government and Federal Member States and emphasised that communities, particularly women and youth, are central rights-holders and custodians in co-management, restoration, and benefit-sharing. They concluded by reaffirming the importance of partnership, transparency, and adaptive management.

GEF Operational Focal Point: The GEF Operational Focal Point reaffirmed GEF's support to the project and its alignment with national priorities and global environmental objectives. It was emphasised that the inception workshop serves to review and confirm the approved project design, not to redesign it, and to align implementation arrangements. He emphasised the importance of coordination and leveraging lessons from similar GEF-supported projects in Somalia to strengthen delivery.

Finally, he highlighted that the technical inputs, agreements, and recommendations emerging from the inception workshop will inform the Project Steering Committee's review, endorsement, and approval of the project for implementation.

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4. Overview of the Inception Workshop

The Project Inception Workshop was successfully convened on 4 February 2026 and brought together senior leadership and technical representatives from the Federal Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC–FGS), Ministries of Environment from Federal Member States (FMS), Banadir Regional Administration (BRA), UNDP senior management and technical teams, civil society representatives, and technical advisors.

The session focused on presentations and reviews of the project objectives and scope, the results framework, risks and assumptions, and a detailed review of the Year 1 Annual Work Plan, including activity sequencing and implementation roles. The discussion also covered safeguards and monitoring and learning arrangements, with the aim of confirming governance requirements and ensuring readiness for project implementation.

The primary objectives of the workshop were to:

- Review project documents, validate the project design and Theory of Change.
- Confirm institutional roles, responsibilities, and coordination arrangements at federal and state levels;
- Agree on first-year (2026) priorities, sequencing, and implementation modalities.-year (2026) priorities, sequencing, and implementation
- Confirm approaches for stakeholder engagement, safeguards, grievance handling, data management, and monitoring.

The workshop also served as preparatory technical input to the Project Steering Committee, to be held the following day, 5 February 2026, ensuring that strategic oversight would be informed by a shared technical understanding.

5. Strategic Context and Rationale

Somalia hosts globally significant terrestrial and marine ecosystems that sustain livelihoods, food security, and climate resilience, yet these ecosystems face escalating threats from land degradation, deforestation, unsustainable resource use, illegal fishing, climate shocks, and weak institutional capacity.

The project addresses these challenges by supporting Somalia's shift from non-operational "paper parks" to a legally established, community-anchored, and effectively managed network of Protected Areas (PAs) and Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs), aligned with national priorities under the National Environmental Policy, the Environmental Protection and Management Act (2024), the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, and Land Degradation Neutrality commitments.

The inception workshop reaffirmed the project's role as a systemic reform effort, integrating legal and policy frameworks, institutional strengthening, community co-management, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable livelihoods.

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6. Project Scope and Theory of Change

The project aims to conserve Somalia's terrestrial and marine biodiversity by establishing a sustainably managed network of protected areas through community-led and inclusive approaches. The project is structured around four interlinked components: (i) strengthening legal, policy, and institutional frameworks for biodiversity conservation and protected area management; (ii) establishing and improving the management of terrestrial and marine protected areas through participatory processes, including FPIC, ESIA, boundary mapping, and co-management arrangements; (iii) restoring degraded ecosystems while promoting sustainable land management and nature-based, green livelihoods; and (iv) strengthening monitoring, evaluation, learning, knowledge management, and adaptive management systems.

The project's Theory of Change assumes that if enabling legal and institutional frameworks are strengthened, communities are empowered as rights-holders and stewards, protected areas are legally gazetted and effectively managed, and degraded ecosystems are restored alongside sustainable livelihoods, then biodiversity loss will be reversed, ecosystem services enhanced, and resilience of communities and ecosystems strengthened. This Theory of Change explicitly integrates gender equality, social inclusion, conflict sensitivity, and climate risk considerations, ensuring that women, youth, indigenous groups, internally displaced persons, and persons with disabilities are meaningfully engaged and benefit from project interventions.

7. Geographic Focus

The project focuses on 11 priority terrestrial and marine sites distributed across ecologically significant and highly vulnerable regions of Somalia including coastal and marine ecosystems, dryland forests, rangelands, riverine landscapes, and offshore islands. The selected sites were based on biodiversity value, ecosystem service importance, climate vulnerability, and livelihood dependence. The project prioritizes the biodiversity and degradation hotspots, allowing interventions to address both inland and coastal pressures while demonstrating scalable, community-led models for protected area governance, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable resource management

8. Implementation Modality and Performance-Based Approach

Project implementation follows UNDP's Direct Implementation Modality (DIM), with roles and responsibilities clearly defined and confirmed during the inception workshop to ensure accountability, operational efficiency, and strong national ownership. The Federal Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC-FGS) serves as the lead authority, providing overall leadership, strategic oversight, policy guidance, inter-ministerial coordination, and national-level reporting. Federal Member State (FMS) Ministries of Environment and Climate Change co-lead field-level implementation, including FPIC processes, assessments, community engagement, site management support, and field-level reporting. UNDP provides technical assistance, fiduciary oversight, quality assurance, safeguards assurance, and implementation support in accordance with UNDP and GEF requirements.

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Governance and coordination arrangements agreed at inception include a Project Steering Committee providing strategic oversight; multi-stakeholder technical coordination mechanisms; and site-level Protected Area Management Committees (PAMCs) and Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) committees to anchor co-management and community participation. Coordination is supported through monthly virtual coordination meetings, held on the last Wednesday of each month with rotating FMS chairmanship, and quarterly in-person meetings chaired by MoECC-FGS to review progress, address operational bottlenecks, capture lessons learned, and revise work plans as needed to respond to evolving implementation contexts.

9. Results Framework and Baselines

The project's Results Framework and its alignment with GEF Core Indicators were reviewed in detail during the inception workshop. Participants confirmed that the framework appropriately captures the intended biodiversity, climate, and livelihood outcomes at national and global levels, while also recognizing the complexity of implementation in a fragile and data-limited context. The results framework was therefore endorsed as fit for purpose, subject to careful sequencing and adaptive management during early implementation.

Participants acknowledged that baseline information across several proposed protected areas and restoration sites remains uneven or incomplete. It was agreed that the establishment of credible ecological, social, and management baselines is a prerequisite for substantive on-the-ground investments and for demonstrating results in line with UNDP and GEF requirements. In particular, site-specific Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) assessments will be undertaken once Free, Prior and Informed Consent, Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, and boundary delineation processes have been completed.

In addition to METT assessments, biodiversity surveys, habitat condition assessments, and socio-economic baseline studies will be conducted to inform protected area management planning, ecosystem restoration priorities, and livelihood interventions. Baseline methodologies, data responsibilities, and reporting formats will be harmonized across sites to ensure consistency, data credibility, and comparability over time. Robust baseline data was recognized as essential for adaptive management, justification of expenditures, and long-term sustainability of the protected area system.

10. Work Plan and Budget (2026)

The Year 1 Annual Work Plan and indicative budget were reviewed in depth, with a shared understanding that the first year of implementation represents a foundational and learning phase for the project. Participants noted that the 2026 allocation of USD 1,035,434 is relatively modest compared to the overall project envelope and that the majority of financial investments are scheduled for subsequent years, reflecting the need for upfront consultations, assessments, institutional readiness, coordination mechanisms, and capacity strengthening.

It was agreed that the primary focus of 2026 will be on enabling and preparatory activities that lay the groundwork for effective delivery in later years. These include the initiation of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes, conduct of Environmental and Social Impact Assessments

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(ESIA), boundary mapping and zoning of protected areas, establishment of site-level governance and coordination structures, and commencement of baseline ecological and socio-economic assessments. Where feasible, light preparatory activities may be advanced into early quarters to mitigate start-up delays, while maintaining flexibility in activity sequencing to respond to elections, security considerations, and other external factors.

Discussions on financial efficiency emphasized the importance of value for money and prudent resource use. Participants agreed that budgets may be reviewed and adjusted through established monthly and quarterly coordination mechanisms to reflect implementation of realities and lessons learned.

11. Environmental and Social Safeguards

Environmental and Social safeguard considerations were highlighted as a priority during the inception workshop. The participants reaffirmed that safeguard compliance is not a procedural formality, but a core pillar for legitimacy, protection of rights, effective risk management, and the long-term sustainability of conservation outcomes.

It was agreed that all project activities will comply with national legislation, UNDP Social and Environmental Standards, and GEF requirements. The mandatory application of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), alongside the completion of Environmental and Social Assessments (ESIA) and related safeguard instruments, will precede any physical or restoration interventions. These processes are intended to ensure respect for community and customary rights, early identification and mitigation of potential adverse impacts, and the active promotion of social inclusion and gender equality.

Participants also agreed on the need to operationalise a three-tier Grievance Redress Mechanism at the community, state, and national levels, complemented by access to UNDP accountability mechanisms. Safeguard roles and responsibilities, reporting lines, and capacity-building measures will be clearly defined and monitored throughout the project lifecycle, with continuous oversight and adaptive management applied to respond effectively to evolving environmental, social, conflict-related, and climate-related risks.

12. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

The project will apply a results-based management approach aligned with UNDP and GEF requirements, with monitoring, evaluation, and risk oversight fully integrated into implementation. Existing monitoring and evaluation frameworks of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change will be reviewed and aligned with project indicators to ensure consistency, data quality, and national ownership.

Participants emphasized that monitoring and evaluation are essential not only for accountability, but also for adaptive management in a complex and evolving operating context. To support this, the project will hold monthly coordination meetings, quarterly progress reviews, and maintain a dynamic risk register regularly updated to reflect evolving environmental, social, institutional, and security risks. Review and learning sessions will be convened after project commencement to

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assess early implementation challenges, capture lessons learned and identify opportunities to enhance efficiency and overall project performance.

13. Key Agreements and Decisions

The Project Inception Workshop concluded with a set of clear technical and operational agreements that establish the foundation for effective and accountable project implementation. These agreements reflect consensus among participating institutions on project scope, workplan, governance, safeguards, sequencing, and implementation principles

- The approved project design and Theory of Change were validated, with the inception workshop confirming implementation readiness
- The project will focus on the selected 11 terrestrial and marine sites, with flexible sequencing based on site readiness, access, and security.
- It was agreed that the Federal MoECC will be the lead authority for strategic oversight and coordination; FMS MoECC will lead field-level implementation and reporting; and UNDP will provide technical, fiduciary, and quality assurance support.
- The 2026 Annual Work Plan and budget of USD 1,035,434 were reviewed, discussed, and agreed.
- Baseline assessments, including METT and socio-economic surveys, were confirmed as prerequisites for field implementation and reporting.
- Mandatory compliance with FPIC, ESIA, UNDP standards, and national regulations was reaffirmed prior to any field activities.
- Value for money will guide implementation, with flexible budgeting and consultant engagement based on technical need and capacity.
- Monitoring, learning, and risk management will be embedded through regular reviews and adaptive implementation.

14. Agreed Next Steps

- MoECC to present the inception outcomes, Year 1 Annual Work Plan and Budget, and governance arrangements to the Project Steering Committee.
- UNDP to circulate the Environmental and Social Safeguards, Monitoring and Evaluation, and learning frameworks to all relevant stakeholders.
- Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes and Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA) to be prioritized for the first field-level activities.
- MOECC at the Federal and State levels to align existing capacities and data systems with project baseline, monitoring, and reporting requirements.
- Site-level Protected Area Management Committees and Locally Managed Marine Area committees to be first established to support co-management arrangements.
- Baseline assessments, including METT evaluations, biodiversity surveys, and socio-economic studies, to commence following completion of safeguards requirements.
- Regular coordination mechanisms to be operationalized through monthly virtual coordination meetings and quarterly in-person progress reviews.

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- The first year of implementation (2026) will be treated as an adaptive learning phase focused on preparatory, coordination, and system-strengthening activities.

15. Conclusions

The Inception Workshop confirmed the project's readiness for implementation and established a shared understanding of its design, priorities, governance arrangements, and safeguards requirements. Participants validated the approved project framework and agreed on institutional roles, implementation of sequencing, and Year 1 priorities.

Consensus was reached on the need to priorities safeguards, community engagement, and the establishment of credible baselines prior to field implementation. The inception outcomes, Year 1 Annual Work Plan and Budget, and agreed governance arrangements will be presented to the Project Steering Committee for endorsement and approval.

Approval and Signatures

Approved by:
Name: Dr. Christopher Laker
Title: PSC Co-Chair, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative (Programme), Somalia

Date: 23-Feb-2026

Signature: DocuSigned by: 53F7AA00844C461...

Name: Mr. Abdirisak Ahmed Ali
Title: PSC Co-Chair, Director General, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Federal Government of Somalia (MoECC)

Date: 22/02/2026

Signature:



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Annex 1: Attendance Sheet (Physical)





One Attendance (Online)

Name	Institutions	Participation
Abdirashid Artan Abdirahman	MOECC - FGS	Online
Abdikadir	MOECC – South West	Online
Ahmed Mohamoud	UNDP	Online
Salah Dahir	UNDP	Online
Abdi Yusuf	UNDP	Online
Tarik Islam	UNDP	Online
Zaitun Ware	UNDP	Online

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Annex 2: Photos









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