



Promoting MPAs as a tool for management in the WIO Region: Progress towards achieving SDG 14

Background

The declaration of marine protected areas (MPAs), has long been considered a key tool in the quest to conserve the world's marine biodiversity. The countries have played their part fully, in terms of identifying and declaring MPAs; from Tsitsikamma, the first MPA in Africa, proclaimed by the Government of the Republic of South Africa in 1964, to the newest MPAs declared in 2017 by the Government of Seychelles, and those proclaimed in 2018 by the government of Republic of South Africa. It is, however, becoming increasingly clear that the mere proclamation of an MPA is no guarantee of effective protection, and assessments of this effectiveness show that many MPAs in the region lack the funding, human resources, skills and equipment to fulfil their functions adequately, and there is a pressing need to strengthen management of these areas.

MPAs and SDG 14

MPA establishment and management will be a central plank in enabling countries deliver on SDG 14 (Life under water) especially Targets 14.2 and 14.5. Target 14.2 calls for the sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration, to achieve healthy and productive oceans by 2020, while Target 14.5 states that by 2020, countries shall conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, essentially their exclusive economic zones (EEZs), consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information.

Establishing MPA baselines

The Contracting Parties to the UNEP Nairobi Convention through the WIOSAP Project in collaboration with Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) are working to establish baselines for these two SDG 14 Targets through the production of an MPA and Critical Habitats Outlooks. The MPA Outlook will support the countries to establish baselines and include assessment metrics to track their progress in the delivery of the targets to increase the spatial extents of national MPAs from the current 2.4% to 10% by 2020, thus achieving SDG 14¹ target 14.5².

The key findings of the MPA Outlook indicate that there are 137 areas across the WIO region that are considered as MPAs or as having equivalent protection. The vast majority of these are coastal and/or inshore, however the largest, covering by far the greatest extents of the ocean are the few MPAs with considerable offshore deep-sea elements. These include the newly declared Seychelles MPAs, the MPAs associated with the *Isles Esparses* (Scattered Islands), and South Africa's Prince Edward Island, on the edge of the Southern Ocean. It is no coincidence that these three territories are the only ones where the SDG Target 14.5 of 10 percent of EEZ under protection is reached. A further finding is that the majority of existing MPAs across the region are not managed as effectively as they could and should be, due primarily to lack of funding for essential staff, equipment and capacity development. The question is raised whether the immediate priority should be for governments to firstly ensure effective management of their existing MPA estate, before embarking on expansion of this estate.

¹ SDG target 14 - Conserve and Sustainably Use Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development

² SDG target 14.5 by 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on best available scientific information



Individual countries in the WIO

are also taking a larger-scale approach to marine conservation, often within “Blue Economy” initiatives such as the Blue Economy Roadmap developed by the Government of Seychelles and Operation Phakisa in South Africa. In both cases, these initiatives have involved thorough and complex marine spatial planning processes, identifying areas suitable for different uses and activities, including for conservation. Much more recently, in Seychelles two (2) new MPAs covering an area of 208 365km² have already been declared as a result of this process, with more to follow. In South Africa 22 new, mostly offshore MPAs covering an area of 68 578km², have been gazetted and proclamation under Operation Phakisa following an intense consultation process with all stakeholders.

An interesting recent development, pioneered in Madagascar, has been the rapid increase in the number of Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs), known under a variety of names in different countries, where coastal communities work in collaboration with government and other stakeholders to protect their coastal resources. Across the region almost three hundred (300) of these have been established in the last ten (10) years. The Outlooks will be important decision-making support tools, especially in identifying areas requiring protection, or in the establishment and implementation of comprehensive national and transboundary network of well managed MPAs.

At a transnational scale, there is a move toward initiation of transboundary MPAs to promote wholistic protection of marine and coastal resources through an ecosystem-based approach beyond the political boundaries, and diverse national policy, legislative and institutional structures. Examples of such transboundary MPA initiatives in the WIO region include the transboundary MPA between Mozambique, South Africa which was the first to be established the African continent, and the proposed Transboundary Conservation Area (TBCA) between Kenya and Tanzania.

The proposed TBCA between Kenya and Tanzania provides further demonstration of the WIO region’s commitment to cooperate at transnational level to tackle marine and coastal issues and support national efforts towards attaining SDG targets 14.2 and 14.5. The coastal and marine area at the Kenya-Tanzania border proposed for the TBCA (which extends from the northern boundary of Diani-Chale Marine National Reserve in Kenya to the Southern Boundary of Mkinga district in Tanzania) has some of the richest biodiversity in the WIO region including several marine protected areas and is a coral reef climate refugia and an important migratory route for some endangered and threatened marine mammals and sea turtles. The area is ecologically strategic and fits the criteria described by IUCN in type 1 of transboundary conservation areas, that is “*a clearly defined geographical space that includes protected areas that are ecologically connected across one or more international boundaries and involves some form of cooperation*”. The TBCA will seek to strengthen capacity for restoring ecosystem health and conserving biodiversity locally, nationally and at a transboundary level and will pilot ecosystem-based approaches into spatial planning, water management, agriculture, forest, fisheries and marine protected areas management. The initial discussions and steps towards development, including profiling of the proposed TBCA were coordinated by Nairobi Convention and WIOMSA. Subsequent workshops and a review of the legal and institutional arrangements in Kenya and Tanzania was supported by Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) which resulted in establishment of a core working group and a legal framework for establishing such a TBCA. Establishment and effective management of a TBCA is challenging due to

the many factors including dynamics of political, economic, social, cultural and security, aspects which heavily influence cross-border management regimes. This necessitates engagement of relevant

stakeholders at the early stages of the process. While initial engagement of stakeholders was undertaken earlier during the legal and institutional review stage, there is still need to engage a wider array of stakeholders. This session at the WIOMSA Symposium will provide an effective platform for informing and engaging a cross section of potential stakeholders since the Symposium brings together a broad base of participants with diverse and valuable expertise to support the development and future management of the TBCA.

Session Objectives

The main objective of the Session will be to assess progress made in the region towards achievement of SDG target 14.5, while specific objectives will be to:

1. Appreciate current spatial extents of MPAs across the region as a basis for progress towards SDG14.5
2. Understand current management effectiveness and opportunities for enhanced MPA performance
3. Understand contemporary drivers of change impacting on MPAs in the region
4. Discuss the role of research and science in MPA management
5. Discuss the opportunities for cross border MPA establishment and management, looking at the case study of the proposed Transboundary Conservation Area between Kenya and Tanzania, its importance from a national and regional perspective, the process of establishment, legal and institutional arrangements and engagement of stakeholders in the process.
6. Initiate the establishment of MPA network in the WIO region

Expected outputs

Recommendations on:

1. Establishment of an MPA Network in the region
2. Recommendations for improving MPA management effectiveness
3. How research can inform and strengthen MPA management
4. Potential opportunities for transboundary MPA establishment, management and stakeholder engagement in the process.

Targeted audience: Mandated policy makers, MPA Managers, marine and conservation scientists, conservation practitioners, resources users and students.

Tentative session programme

1. Presentations on MPAs from WIO Countries
2. Presentation of the profile and process for the proposed TBCA between Kenya and Tanzania
3. Panel discussion on the role of research in enhancing MPA Performance and how to engage various stakeholders in the TBCA process.

The Special Session is organized by UNEP/Nairobi Convention in collaboration with WIOMSA, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the Marine Reserves of Reunion.