



PRESS RELEASE

“By expanding the protection of marine and coastal areas, France surpasses its commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals in its Western Indian Ocean territories”

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nairobi, 16 July 2021 – France has made significant progress towards increasing the total coverage of its Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), as the country has declared five marine and coastal areas as protected, representing 10.81% of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) across La Réunion, Iles Esparses, and Mayotte, according to a new [Marine Protected Areas Outlook](#) by UNEP-Nairobi Convention and the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association.

The establishment of these Marine Protected Areas, or MPAs, mean that France has exceeded its commitments under Sustainable Development Goal (SGD) 14.5 of bringing 10% of the country’s EEZ under protection by 2020, thus underscoring the country’s momentum towards achieving future targets under the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Marine Protected Areas Outlook: Towards achievement of the Global Biodiversity Framework targets, released today, indicates that these MPAs span a breadth of 234 314 square kilometers, and documents how they have increased the resilience of its crucial fisheries and tourism sectors and preserved the country’s natural beauty for the enjoyment and use of its citizens.

Although the ocean provides us with resources essential for survival—like food, employment, and even oxygen—the world is damaging and depleting it faster than ever.

Marine protected areas offer one of the best options to reverse these trends. “A well-managed MPA can bring significant economic, social, and environmental benefits to a country,” said **Karine Pothin of the National Marine Réservé of Réunion Island**. “They can increase food security by preventing the overexploitation of fish stocks; create and protect jobs in the tourism and fisheries sectors; build resilience to climate change; and protect species and habitats, just to name a few benefits.”

The Outlook examines the current and future status of MPAs on a regional level. It documents the progress made by nine countries in the WIO region in increasing MPA coverage, highlights best practices and challenges faced by governments in managing MPAs, and provides recommendations on how to make the impact of MPAs even greater.

Key recommendations from the Outlook include the need for dedicated budgets for MPA management, adopting proactive law enforcement and compliance strategies to ensure MPA rules are being respected; incorporating research and monitoring programs on biodiversity and ecosystems into decision-making in MPAs, and more.

Indeed, though France has made significant strides forward in protecting its marine and coastal areas, there are several opportunities to build on this progress and ensure that people, the economy, and nature reap even more benefits from MPAs.

By seizing on the opportunities presented in the MPA Outlook, France and other countries in the region can capitalize on this momentum of expanding and improving MPA management—thereby safeguarding the WIO's immense natural beauty and resources for generations to come.

NOTES TO EDITORS

This Outlook was developed under the [Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Protection of the Western Indian Ocean from Land-Based Sources and Activities](#) project of the Nairobi Convention, funded by the Global Environment Facility.

The Nairobi Convention, signed by Comoros, France, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, and Tanzania, aims to promote a prosperous Western Indian Ocean region with healthy rivers, coasts, and oceans. It provides a platform for governments, civil society, and the private sector to work together for the sustainable management and use of the marine and coastal environment.

The UN Environment Programme is the leading global voice on the environment. It provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

The Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association is a non-profit, membership organization dedicated to promoting the educational, scientific and technological development of all aspects of marine sciences throughout the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region, with a view toward sustaining the use and conservation of its marine resources.