



PRESS RELEASE

“Madagascar’s quest to declare and manage Marine Protected Areas documented in new publication”

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nairobi, 16 July 2021 – Madagascar has declared 22 marine and coastal areas as protected, an area covering 14,400 square kilometers, representing 0.58 percent of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), according to a new [Marine Protected Areas Outlook](#) by UNEP-Nairobi Convention and the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association.

The biggest island in the Western Indian Ocean has also created 200 Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) – i.e. areas in which communities shoulder the mantle of conservation – covering an additional 14,000 square kilometers of coastal territory. These LMMAs under the country’s MIHARI Network provides a remarkable opportunity for community engagement in the management of ocean resources; a great learning experience to other countries in the region.

The Marine Protected Areas Outlook: Towards achievement of the Global Biodiversity Framework Targets, released today, analyzes Madagascar’s efforts in its commitment to conserving at least 10% of its marine and coastal areas by 2020 under Sustainable Development Goal 14.5. The Outlook further assesses and analyzes these efforts in order to guide and strengthen marine conservation towards the achievement of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Although the ocean provides us with resources essential for socio-economic development—like food, employment, cultural benefits, and even oxygen—the world is damaging and depleting it faster than ever. Soon, Madagascar may no longer be able to count on the many jobs, health, and economic benefits that the ocean provides, unless concerted efforts are undertaken to effectively manage these resources.

Marine protected areas, or MPAs, 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 **Guy Célestin RAKOTOVAO of the MIHARI network, a group of LMMAs**. “They can ensure/increase the food security by preventing overexploitation of fish stocks; creating marine reserves, restriction of unregulated fishing gear and protecting jobs in the tourism, marine aquaculture and fisheries sectors; building resilience to climate change; and protecting marine species and habitats - just to name a few benefits.”

Madagascar has made significant progress towards increasing the total coverage of MPAs, thanks in large part to the commitment made during the 2003 Durban conference (at which the government committed to increasing the country’s land and marine protected areas from 17,000 square kilometers to 60,000 square kilometers).

During the 2014 World Congress Park in Sydney, the government further pledged to triple the surface area of its MPAs by 2025, with the aim of conserving Madagascar's unique biodiversity and promoting Locally Marine Management Areas (LMMAs) as a way to involve coastal communities in management. Work to fulfill these two commitments has brought significant economic, social, and environmental benefits to the country.

The Outlook examines the current and future status of MPAs at 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 management guidelines are being respected; incorporating research and monitoring programs on biodiversity and ecosystems into decision-making in MPAs, and more.

"Our network of 22 MPAs, together with our more than 200 LMMAs, means that we have many experiences to share," noted **Jacquis Rasoanaina, Focal Point of Madagascar to the Nairobi Convention**. "We look forward to also learning from other countries and to continuing a dialogue about how we can strengthen MPA management across the entire region."

Though Madagascar 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, Madagascar and the wider WIO region can capitalize on this momentum of expanding and improving MPA management towards the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework Targets—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.