

# MARINE PROTECTED AREAS AND THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN REGION

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### WHAT IS A MARINE PROTECTED AREA?

A Marine Protected Area (MPA) is an area of ocean or coastline that has been specially-designated for protection for the benefit of nature and people. The world, including countries in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region, has committed to protecting at least 10% of its marine and coastal areas by 2020 under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.5. The WIO MPA Outlook: Towards achievement of the Global Biodiversity Framework targets further assesses and analyzes these efforts in order to guide and strengthen marine conservation in the region towards the achievement of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

### WHY ARE MPAS IMPORTANT?

Healthy oceans are critical to human survival. Oceans feed us, regulate our climate, generate most of the oxygen we breathe, and serve as the engine for much of the world's economy.

Yet the ocean and its rich resources are being damaged and depleted faster than ever before. Soon, we may no longer be able to count on the many jobs, health, and economic benefits provided by the ocean.

Marine protected areas offer one of the best options to maintain our oceans' health and avoid further degradation.



## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MPAS?

MPAs can bring social, economic, and environmental benefits.

### *Economic:*

- Protect breeding and nursery grounds for fish and prevent over-exploitation of fish stocks, helping **maintain food and job security**
- **Create and protect jobs** linked to the tourism industry in coastal communities

### *Social:*

- Help keep alive **cultural and heritage practices** intricately linked to the ocean

### *Environmental:*

- Help **protect species, habitats, and ecosystem functions**
- **Build resilience to climate change** events, like floods, tsunamis, or sea-level rise

## WHAT IS THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN (WIO) MPA OUTLOOK?

The WIO MPA Outlook is the first government-endorsed publication ever to examine the current and future status of MPAs on a regional level, noting that the region has declared 7% of its Exclusive Economic Zone (550,000 sq km) as protected. 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 for how to make the impact of MPAs even greater.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MPA OUTLOOK FOR THE WIO REGION AS A WHOLE?

- Creating a regional framework to develop Kenya and its neighbors' capacity for MPA management
- Ensuring sustainable financing to support equipment, infrastructure, skilled personnel, and effective enforcement of MPA regulations
- Working with other countries in the region, develop a standard, region-wide approach to assess management effectiveness of MPAs.

## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE MPAs?

All chapters will soon be made available on the Nairobi Convention's website, nairobiconvention.org, along with an interactive dashboard allowing users to explore maps, coverage, and other features of MPAs in each country.