

A SNAP-SHOT OF THE STATE OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS WORLDWIDE

Background, progress, challenges and opportunities

This document is a briefing document as of 12th March 2019, prepared on purpose for the 10th edition of the Monaco Blue Initiative.

BACKGROUND

The political world is being driven forwards by the need to achieve the *Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Marine Protected Target 11: By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.*

This target is also reflected in other global targets such as the Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water, and through agreements at regional and national scales.

PROGRESS

The overall MPA (Marine Protected Areas) progress to date (March 2019 - *World Database on Protected Areas – WDPA*) is that **14,882 MPAs** have been reported, covering **27,494,100 km²** of the ocean (**7.59% of the Ocean**). This is based on sites reported to the WDPA by countries as fully designated and does not reflect the status in relation to implementation or effectiveness. Based on an independent analysis of the WDPA, MPAtlas concludes that of the 7.59% only **4.8%** of the MPAs are implemented and actively managed. Approximately half of that, or only **2.2%**, of the ocean, is in strongly protected no-take marine reserves. The overall distribution is extremely skewed – just 20 of the largest MPAs contributing about 70% of the total reported coverage. Finally, a total of over 15 million km² additional area has been pledged by over 70 countries and territories, which has yet to be implemented and counted towards the MPA target.

Monthly updates to these figures can be found on <https://protectedplanet.net/marine>.

CHALLENGES

Many challenges exist but **six key ones** can be readily highlighted:

- The global community may meet the 10% quantitative target by 2020 but will clearly miss meeting the qualitative elements - and by some considerable margin. Significant additional effort is needed to be closer to the target in terms of representation, effectiveness, networking and connectivity etc. The **High Seas** is virtually absent from the above figures and it still lacks any conservation framework - it makes up 61% of the global ocean, but only **1.18%** are protected.
- The 10% target is outdated, not based on science, and stems from 1983 when nearly all major ocean problems had not been identified. Much more ambition and action is required and demanded by the global community. For example, Resolution 50 from the 2016 World Conservation Congress, approved by nearly 90% of the Governments, and by over 90% of the NGO members who voted, asked for at least **30% of each habitat type to be under strict protection**, whilst Resolution 102 calls on governments to prohibit environmentally damaging industrial activities and infrastructure development in all IUCN management categories of protected area.

- The establishment of MPAs needs to improve, including with appropriate and specific objectives and management, adequate resources, and effective surveillance and reporting to document change. Announcing an MPA is simply the beginning of the hard work and not the end-point!
- The need to embrace now *other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMS)* to include only areas that deliver effective and lasting conservation through other routes.
- The need remains to ensure that MPAs are adequately integrated into the wider seascape and that uses in the wider seascape also respect and integrate with MPAs. This means recognising and acting on the other CBD targets and not just focussing on target 11, and failing to report, for example, on delivery of truly sustainable fisheries under Target 6.
- The need beyond MPAs development is to ensure that **100% of the ocean is managed sustainably and effectively**, and that the MPAs networks provide real conservation of ecosystem services for supporting sustainable development.

OPPORTUNITIES

Many opportunities exist to improve and, in the space, available we highlight just **four**:

- Recent work by *WCPA - Marine (World Commission on Protected Areas)* and its IUCN members resolves confusion on the MPA definition and other standards and helps countries and agencies see what needs to be done www.IUCN.org/mpastandards. MPA guidance will be released in the next month or so that has been updated to be consistent with these standards.
- Guidance on OECMs will be issued by IUCN in May 2019 to help countries and authorities implement this new route to celebrating effective measures under CBD Target 11. <https://www.iucn.org/commissions/world-commission-protected-areas/our-work/oecms>.
- The continued development of the Green List helps celebrate what is going right in management and is processed to help countries and agencies improve management on a journey to fully effective MPAs <https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/our-work/iucn-green-list-protected-and-conserved-areas>.
- New work under development by Dr Jane Lubchenco and colleagues, in partnership with organisations like *WCPA-Marine*, *UNEP-WCMC (World Conservation Monitoring Centre)*, *MPAtlas* and *National Geographic*, on delivering greater transparency on reporting MPAs (based around clarifying terminology on levels of protection and state of implementation) should greatly help achieve transparency and accountability against targets. Progress is very good and much agreement has been reached on simple everyday terms to achieve this. Consultation continues. Called 'the MPA Guide' it will also show where more support is needed and help donors target resources more effectively."

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Sources:

- <https://www.protectedplanet.net/marine>
- <http://www.mpatlas.org/>