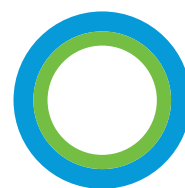




A unique group of leaders who are fast-tracking solutions to the most pressing challenges facing the Ocean



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OCEAN
ACTION

Marine Protected Areas

Background

Global biodiversity loss is taking place at increasingly fast rates and is close to reaching a critical point. We are seeing a worldwide decline in coastal and marine ecosystems and, in some cases, ecosystem collapse in many regions through habitat degradation, overfishing, land-based pollution, and climate change. In addition, the world's population and the projected consequences of human activities and impacts are also expected to put more pressure on nature.

A healthy Ocean is highly productive: it generates and safeguards jobs, food supplies, tourism, business and industry, as well as livelihoods, and delivers goods and services that provide clean water and support communities and economies. Globally, there is a growing recognition of the need to increase conservation efforts and that protecting our Ocean is not just an environmental issue but a social and economic one also.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) help to maintain and restore coastal and marine ecosystems and fisheries and enhance

Ocean productivity and health while sustaining the world's population, safeguarding economic and social development, and increasing resilience to the growing challenges posed by climate change. Although they are not the only solution for coastal and marine problems, the establishment of new MPAs is part of a range of integrated ocean management options needed to help sustain Ocean health.

The establishment of MPAs is a first critical step towards ensuring the restoration of a flourishing healthy marine environment. However, these processes need to be supported by the correct design, management, governance and enforcement systems. Indeed, enforcement is one of the most pressing challenges in creating MPAs. Gaps in financing and capacity-building must also be addressed to ensure an adequate response to these challenges.

If it is to meet Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 14.5, the world has until 2020 to address the above gaps and effectively and sustainably protect 10% of the coastal and marine ecosystems. While only 7.44% of the ocean is currently protected, encouraging progress and a growing momentum has led to raised hopes of meeting this target. Doing so is likely to contribute to long-term economic growth.



Wooden fishing boats in the natural port of Hanga Roa, Easter Island. © Antonello Proietti/Alamy

The next two years therefore represent a unique opportunity to mobilise collective action to scale up efforts and build on the current momentum by raising the ambition of targets such as SDG 14.5 and Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 (under the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity). The importance of MPAs in conserving marine ecosystems has become increasingly recognised in the past few years with the adoption of these international commitments but further action is still needed. Innovative tools and new technologies, such as satellites, and new ways of monitoring and tracking data, have the potential to fast-track scalable solutions and help overcome many Ocean challenges.

How Friends of Ocean Action will help

The Friends of Ocean Action is helping to drive concerted, public-private cooperation across geographies and sectors on the issue of MPAs.

In this context, due to the rapid decline in Ocean health, its members or 'Friends' are joining the widespread call to increase the ambition in line with SDG 14 (Life Below Water or the 'Ocean Goal'), which calls for protecting at least 30% of the Ocean by 2030. The Action Track on MPAs will see the Friends mobilising a global network that through targeted activities aims to:

- Build a business case for MPAs that will mobilise a strong coalition of world business champions ready to contribute to reaching the 30% target by 2030;
- Engage key relevant policy fora to support the international community in increasing the global MPA coverage by shifting to a more coordinated, effective and strategic network of MPAs; and
- Facilitate the development of platforms supporting the enforcement, management and monitoring of MPAs, with user cases built for specific hotspots.

Business case

There are several different categories of MPAs: from fully protected areas with no take (i.e. no fishing is allowed within those areas), through to multiple-use areas (which aim to allow for both sustainable human use and biodiversity conservation side-by-side), but businesses still perceive MPAs as an obstacle to their activities without understanding the benefits that these protected areas could provide for their businesses in the medium and long term. For example, MPAs are essential for ensuring fishers have healthy stocks by preventing resource depletion. They protect endangered species and help to restore healthy and more-productive ecosystems, all of which contribute to economic growth. MPAs also make ecosystems more resilient to climate change and natural disasters and ensure thriving biodiversity. A healthy Ocean will also help to reduce the financial risks associated with overfishing and reduced fish stocks, which affect economic activities such as tourism and, more broadly, jobs.

The Friends will work to build a business case for MPAs to inform and engage the private sector on the economic benefits of well-designed and enforced MPAs. By the end of 2019, the Friends aim to have created a coalition of the world's business leaders, under which commitments will



Yellow tube sponge, *Aplysina aerophoba*, and *Pinna nobilis*, shell in Gökova Bay Marine Protected Area, Turkey. © Images & Stories/Alamy

be made to protect 30% of the Ocean by 2030 (30x30). The coalition would see business join forces with government and civil society to drive action towards the 30x30 target.

Policy

While engaging the private sector on MPAs, the Friends will also build on the momentum generated around the Ocean agenda in order to raise the ambition on the percentage of the Ocean that should be protected. The Friends will work with stakeholders involved in processes such as the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) to ensure the establishment of a more ambitious 2030 target. The Action Track on MPAs will also explore how the Friends can engage in other critical fora linked to the high seas, as well as Antarctica. In addition, this Track will aim to support the international community in its efforts to address the current 'ad hoc approach' to marine conservation by shifting to a qualitative, coordinated, coherent, effective and strategic network of MPAs.

New technologies and access to data

Given the increasing anthropogenic changes facing the marine environment (including climate change, ocean warming, ocean acidification, ocean deoxygenation, coastal pollution, population increases, and technological changes), there is a critical need to ensure that all MPAs are adaptively managed, with continuous improvement across all elements of management. Flexible governance and decision-making processes are needed that are positioned to nimbly and rapidly absorb new information about ecological and economic conditions and threats including climate change. These processes will rely on the implementation of adaptive management responses such as changes to management rules, zoning systems or MPA boundaries.

The Friends of Ocean Action is exploring the development of an innovative MPA management tool, grounded in science and backed-up by new technologies, satellite, monitoring and tracking data, that will improve the establishment, monitoring and enforcement of MPAs. The platform is being developed in collaboration with key technology institutions and academia and aims to facilitate the enforcement and monitoring of existing and new MPAs.

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