

Marine Regions Forum in the Western Indian Ocean Fact Sheet

Why a Marine Regions Forum?

The ocean, its ecosystems, species, and the manifold threats that impact it, are not limited by political boundaries. The transboundary nature of the ocean poses a unique challenge for implementing effective governance measures. Action must therefore be coordinated and collaborative - across multiple states, stakeholders, sectors, and levels of governance. Integrated governance approaches are needed to bring together diverse sectors, disciplines, and stakeholder groups to collectively work for the sustainable management of the ocean.

The Marine Regions Forum strives to support transformations toward integrated and collaborative ocean governance for marine regions by advancing multi-stakeholder dialogue, facilitating exchanges of good-practices and strengthening cooperation within and among marine regions. It aims to provide an informal space for joint learning and to support ocean action at the regional level and with interregional to global governance processes. Strengthening ocean governance at the regional level offers opportunities to create joint visions and facilitate sharing of capacities and aligning of actions.

The Marine Regions Forum strives to strengthen ocean action at three different scales: (i) supporting progress within marine regions, (ii) advancing dialogue across marine regions, and (iii) giving regional ocean governance a voice in global processes. By complementing existing processes, and disseminating emerging recommendations to the formal policy processes, the Marine Regions Forum supports the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) and other relevant policy processes.

Towards a Marine Regions Forum in the Western Indian Ocean

The Marine Regions Forum organises dedicated conferences as well as side events, workshops, and Friends of the Marine Regions Forum meetings to enable trust building, regular exchanges between actors and strengthening of collaborations. The first Marine Regions Forum conference took place in 2019 in Berlin, Germany, under the theme '*Achieving a healthy ocean – Regional ocean governance beyond 2020*'. Two-hundred international ocean actors, from a diversity of sectors and regions, gathered to discuss pressing issues and develop recommendations for advancing regional ocean governance.

The next Marine Regions Forum conference will take place in 2023 in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region. It aims to bring together approximately 140 stakeholders to focus on regional issues and priorities to encourage collaborations, cooperation, and exchange. In addition to representatives and experts from the WIO region, participants from other marine regions will be invited for exchange across the various marine regions of the world – and to put regional efforts and advances in context with global processes. The Marine Regions Forum conference is being co-developed and co-designed with stakeholders from the region to ensure that the forum meets the regional needs, with clearly defined outcomes that will feed into regional and global sustainable ocean processes.

General approach

From concept development over planning and hosting of the Marine Regions Forum, a co-creative, transdisciplinary, and participatory approach is employed in which independent research institutes worked together with experts from policy-making and civil-society. It strives to support transformations toward integrated ocean governance for marine regions by advancing multi-stakeholder cross-sectoral dialogue, facilitating exchanges of good-practices and cooperation between marine regions through joint-learning processes. The informal nature of the Forum provides a space outside of formal governance arrangements where stakeholders engage in discussion on equal footing as individual experts. It functions as an inclusive dialogue and exchange platform, bringing actors together across multiple stakeholder groups, sectors, and marine regions in a genuine effort to enable the transformative change for the sustainable use and conservation of marine environments. The Marine Regions Forum aims to facilitate action at the regional level, thereby supporting the

implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG 14, and build a bridge to a post-2020 pathway for ocean health.

Consortium

The Marine Regions Forum has been developed and established by scientific institutions and think tanks together with policy representatives within the Partnership for Regional Ocean Governance (PROG). It currently works on a project-related basis and is implemented by the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI), and TMG – Think Tank for Sustainability (TMG). This core team is supported by a Steering Group and an international Advisory Board to provide perspectives on project development and strategies, policy and governance processes, and opportunities for linkages with regional or global initiatives. The core team works in close collaboration with regional partners, such as the Nairobi Convention Secretariat, to provide regional expertise and ensure that regional needs and priorities are met for the Marine Regions Forum in the Western Indian Ocean.

Work programme and funding

For the current work phase (09/2022 – 02/2024), the Marine Regions Forum receives co-funding from the European Maritime, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)¹ and from the Swedish Ministry for the Environment. This co-funding is part of an integrated work and research plan covering the overall period 03/2021 – 02/2024, part of which has already been implemented with funding support from the Swedish Ministry for the Environment. The first phase of the Marine Regions Forum (2017-2021) was supported by the Government of Germany, the European Union, and the project team's individual institution. The work program has three main pillars:

- 1. Within regions:** Enhancing cooperation and coordination to support transformative action in the WIO region.
- 2. Between regions and linking regions to the global level:** Fostering exchange between marine regions and feeding into global processes.
- 3. Marine Regions Forum secretarial function:** Ensuring the long-term operational and funding strategy of the Marine Regions Forum.

Contact

Website: <https://www.prog-ocean.org/marine-regions-forum/>

Mail: MarineRegionsForum@iass-potsdam.de

Twitter: @PROG_Ocean #MarineRegionsForum

The Marine Regions Forum is co-funded by:



The Marine Regions Forum is organised by:



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