

Partnership for Regional Ocean Governance (PROG) Marine Regions Forum

Connecting people to protect one ocean.

1 Background

Healthy oceans and coasts are fundamental for achieving global sustainability. But the degradation of the marine environment has outpaced the development of the international ocean governance landscape. A central challenge comes from the transboundary nature of both marine resources and threats to ocean sustainability: neither fish stocks nor marine pollution are bound by national borders. The same accounts for many other ocean pressures and their drivers, including climate change. Another problem is the sectoral divide in ocean governance: human activities in the ocean are regulated through separated regulatory systems with limited coordination between the different sectors of human uses and conservation. Addressing these challenges requires collective and coordinated actions by States and other actors to develop innovative approaches to ocean governance and solutions to shared problems within marine regions.

2 The Partnership for Regional Ocean Governance

Cognisant of these challenges, participants to the 2014 Potsdam Ocean Governance Workshop¹ recommended the creation of the international *Partnership for Regional Ocean Governance (PROG)*.

The PROG was initiated in 2015 by the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI), and TMG – Think Tank for Sustainability, together with UN Environment and partners from different marine regions. PROG activities are currently funded by the Government of Germany and the European Commission.

The PROG is a collaborative initiative at the science-society-policy interface that supports the development of integrated ocean governance approaches for marine regions. Main areas of work are:

- The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and of ocean related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with a focus on SDG14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources”;
- The conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

The PROG facilitates multi-stakeholder dialogues and the development of transformative knowledge that supports integrated ocean governance approaches for marine regions. Specifically, through sharing experiences, best practices, and governance-oriented research, the PROG initiates and supports participatory learning processes across sectors, disciplines and national borders.

The PROG engages and collaborates with actors at three different scales: 1) within regions; 2) between regions; and 3) between the regional and global level.

¹ The series of Potsdam Ocean Governance Workshops at IASS brings together every 1,5 years leading international ocean experts and other actors from policy, society, and science to discuss and develop solutions for critical ocean sustainability issues.

3 PROG Marine Regions Forum

Around the world in different marine regions such as the Pacific, Western Indian Ocean, Caribbean, the Baltic Sea or the Arctic, a great variety of different mechanisms and tailor-made initiatives have been developed and taken to conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas and marine resources. Collectively they all contribute to one common goal: to achieve and sustain a healthy and diverse ocean. This diversity of ocean governance approaches provides a unique source for joint learning processes and the development of innovative solutions for transformative change. However, so far there is only limited dialogue and opportunity for mutual exchange between pioneering regions and their different relevant actors.

One of the main aims of the PROG therefore is to initiate and support dialogue, exchange of good-practices, and cooperation between marine regions. In 2017, Germany announced at the UN Ocean Conference² in New York and jointly with the European Union at the Our Ocean Conference in Malta that they will support *“the establishment of a cross-sectoral and cross-boundary multi-stakeholder platform for regional ocean governance by 2020”*³ under the PROG, the so called PROG-Forums. The development of this platform will be implemented through the organisation of *Marine Regions Forums* hosted by the PROG together with its partners and support from an international high level Advisory Board. The first PROG Marine Regions Forum will be held in 2019 in Berlin with support from the Federal German Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Nuclear Safety, the German Environment Agency, and the European Union.

At a glance: The PROG Marine Regions Forum

A participatory, multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral dialogue through which stakeholders from science, governments, regional and international organizations, civil society, industry, and other relevant actors from different marine regions and sectors meet:

- To advance dialogue and joint learning, engage in the exchange of good practices, and facilitate the development of integrated ocean governance approaches for marine regions;
- To support cooperation and coordination within and between marine regions for ocean sustainability;
- To facilitate collective strategies for key sustainability challenges and introduce new approaches linking up to relevant international governance processes, e.g. the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in ABNJ.

The 1st PROG Marine Regions Forum will be held in 2019 in Berlin.

² <https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=18439>

³ <http://www.ourocean2017.org/our-ocean-commitments>

4 PROG actions to date

Since its official launch in 2015, the PROG has built on focused projects and efforts with regional partners seeking to deliver solution-oriented approaches and contributing to related global ocean governance processes:

- Support of two Regional Seas Programmes – the Abidjan Convention in Western Africa and the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (CPPS) – in their efforts to strengthen ocean governance and to conserve and sustainably use marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ). This work is carried out under the project Strengthening Regional Ocean Governance for the High Seas (STRONG High Seas) funded through the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the Federal German Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Nuclear Safety⁴;
- Collaboration with Western Indian Ocean countries and relevant stakeholders under the framework of the Nairobi Convention to support a regionally coordinated implementation of SDG 14 and development of a first study on the role of regional ocean governance in implementing SDG 14 “Partnering for a Sustainable Ocean”⁵ funded through the Federal German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development;
- Identification and promotion of regional efforts for a cooperative and coordinated implementation of global policies and legal instruments, e.g. during a “Regional Ocean Governance Day” at the 2017 UN Ocean Conference, or through side events at the Preparatory Committees for a new legal instrument for marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction;
- PROG Members conduct and regularly publish critical research that builds momentum for ocean governance processes at the national, regional and global scale.

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Implementing partners



IDDRI



Supporting partners



Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Nature Conservation
and Nuclear Safety



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⁴ <http://www.prog-ocean.org/our-work/strong-high-seas/>

⁵ <http://www.prog-ocean.org/prog-releases-first-report-on-regional-delivery-for-the-ocean-sdg/>