



Parliamentarians for Global Action  
Parlamentarios para la Acción Global  
Action Mondiale des Parlementaires  
برلمانيون من أجل التحرك العالمي

# CAMPAIGN FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE OCEANS & IMPLEMENTATION OF SDG 14

## Sustainably Managed Marine Protected Areas and Climate Change: A Factsheet for Parliamentarians

Berlengas in Portugal, Marine Protected Area (OSPAR). Photo: Silas Szwarcberg Cunha



Oceans cover over 70 percent of the earth's surface, thereby playing a crucial role in human welfare by providing social, economic and environmental benefits to the world's growing population. Increased human activity is placing significant and growing stress on marine ecosystems, evident in increased severe weather events, decreased fish stocks from overfishing and habitat destruction.

An important tool to address the negative impacts of human activity on the oceans is through the creation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), which are defined as areas of *clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.*<sup>1</sup>

**Establishing MPA networks is critical to maintaining climate change resilience and rebuilding ecological and social resilience.** MPA networks are collections of MPAs that work together to meet

objectives beyond those of a single area. Well-integrated MPA networks can increase species survival by allowing them to move around and escape certain pressures.

Currently, MPAs account for only 7.92 percent of the ocean.<sup>2</sup> Out of those 7.92 percent only 2.8 percent of the world's oceans are highly or fully protected, though at least 30 percent is needed to build the resilience of ocean life to sufficiently adapt to climate change and buffer it from other threats.<sup>3</sup>

The goal to protect 30 percent of the Ocean by 2030 is crucial to achieve healthier ecosystems and species, increase climate change mitigation through protection of coastal habitats that store carbon dioxide, reduce ocean risk from extreme weather events, secure livelihoods and food resources for all, raise abundance and diversity of species, create safe havens for threatened species and secure economic benefits from the ocean. **By achieving this goal, the vision is to effectively prevent the further destruction of our oceans.**

Marine Protected Area of Capo Carbonara and the island of Cavoli (Isola dei Cavoli) in Sardinia, Italy



## THE IMPACT OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

**Climate health is directly linked to the oceans.** Oceans absorb nearly one-quarter of carbon dioxide emissions and roughly 90 percent of the excess heat generated by greenhouse gas emissions.

<sup>4</sup> Even though the ocean is a vital buffer against climate change, greenhouse gas emissions are adversely affecting marine ecosystems, through warming, sea-level rise, acidification, deoxygenation, increased intensity and frequency of severe weather events, and shifts in species distribution and habitat suitability.

**Strong ocean protections build and maintain ocean health, allowing for greater resilience and quicker recovery from climate impacts.**

**MPAs provide areas of reduced stress, improving the ability of marine organisms to cope with climate change impacts.**<sup>5</sup>

The long-term, location-based nature of MPAs provides an advantage in addressing the impacts of climate change by creating a focal area for management and science to reduce stressors, monitor conditions and trends, and engage the public. Levels of protection vary significantly amongst MPAs, with protective measures ranging from limitations on man-made development, fishing practices, fishing seasons and catch limits, moorings and bans on removing or disrupting marine life, as well as Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs)<sup>6</sup>.

MPAs can be categorized into four levels of protection<sup>7</sup>:

- 1. Fully Protected:** all impacts are minimized, and extractive or damaging activities are prohibited such as fishing or mining;
- 2. Highly Protected:** only light extractive activities are allowed, and other impacts are minimized as much as possible;
- 3. Lightly Protected:** moderate extraction and impacts are allowed;
- 4. Minimally Protected:** extensive extraction and other impacts are allowed.

**Fully and Highly Protected MPAs are extremely important as they prevent the exploitation of healthy areas** and allow damaged ecosystems to recover. In other words, they restore the ecological balance of marine areas by increasing the abundance and diversity of marine life and advancing habitat recovery. At the same time, these MPAs help rebuild a greater resilience towards human activities and adaptation to climate and other environmental changes. Thus, effectively contributing to biodiversity protection.

**Fully and Highly Protected areas also support human well-being by safeguarding food resources** and preventing the loss of species. They further serve as benchmarks to compare with unprotected or altered ecosystems to assess human impact and improve management. In contrast, MPAs with less protection likely have fewer of these conservation benefits.<sup>8</sup>

## THE ECONOMIC AND HUMAN RIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (MPAS)

Marine Protected Areas provide a range of economic and human rights benefits:

### **Biodiversity conservation**

species, genes and ecosystems

1

### **Improved fisheries**

increased biomass and stock replenishment

2

### **Climate mitigation and resilience**

enhanced ecosystem resilience and carbon storage

3

### **Disaster risk reduction**

protecting coastlines and coastal populations from extreme weather, tsunamis and coastal erosion

4

### **Restoration**

providing places to restore ecosystems such as reefs, seagrass beds and mangroves

5

### **Tourism and recreation**

economic and health benefits to coastal communities

6

### **Protection of cultural and spiritual resources and values**

saving our history and sacred places

7

### **Research and education**

building an understanding of our ocean and promoting good stewardship

8

### **Models of fair and open governance**

MPAs can recognize rights and help share benefits and reduce conflicts through transparent and inclusive decision-making processes<sup>9</sup>

9

### **Increased financial returns and job stability**

Protecting 30 percent of the oceans would protect existing jobs and create as many as 180,000 additional full-time jobs, with an estimated economic benefit between USD \$490 to \$920 billion by 2050.<sup>10</sup>

10

## THE ROLE OF LEGISLATORS AND PGA

In October 2021, PGA launched its partnership with the Blue Nature Alliance, building on the initiative taken by PGA Members through commitments in the [2019 Praia Plan of Action](#), which affirmed the need to protect 30 percent of the ocean in Marine Protected Areas by 2030 in order to maximize fisheries yield and safeguard marine resources.

Members of Parliament are uniquely positioned to support the process of protecting the oceans by:

- **Ensuring the topic of reaching 30% by 2030 is on your Parliament's agenda** by raising the topic of effective MPAs with peers and government through parliamentary questions or during relevant meetings, for example: marine research and conservation meetings (to define MPAs), budgetary meetings (to invest in monitoring and evaluation and to source financing strategies), meetings on sustainable development (to ensure long-term management of MPAs), and maritime security meetings (to push for compliance and enforcement methods)
- Educating fellow parliamentarians on the widespread value of MPAs to climate resilience, food security and long-term sustainability
- Ensuring legislative efforts relating to MPAs include clear definitions of goals and objectives, and are part of a larger comprehensive package of policy measures to ensure sustainable use of marine resources.
- Addressing the need for policy coherence and sustainable development goals by embedding MPA design issues into other policy approaches, such as Marine Spatial Planning and ecosystem-based management approaches and establishing inter-Ministerial Committees to develop national marine and coastal development strategies and bring together multiple stakeholders.<sup>11</sup>
- Supporting your country's engagement on international fora in support of achieving the MPA goal of 30 percent by 2030.
- Publishing statements and articles informing audiences on your country's plans to protect 30 percent of the Ocean by 2030, sharing lessons learned and encouraging regional or international cooperation



## ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

- [Aichi target pages](#)
- [Blue Nature Alliance Resources Page](#)
- [IUCN Library System](#)
- [The World Database on Protected Areas](#)
- [OECMs](#)
- [Marine Protected Areas - OECD](#)
- [Marine Conservation Institute](#)
- [The MPA Guide](#)

## PHOTO CREDITS:

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p2: “[A view from the north on the Marine Protected Area of Capo Carbonara and the island of Cavoli \(Isola dei Cavoli\) in Sardinia, Italy](#)” by [dronepicr](#), cropped by PGA, is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

p5: “[Fish Sounds - Kelp Forest](#)” by [California Sea Grant](#), cropped by PGA, is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

## ENDNOTES

- 1 [Guidelines for Applying the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories to Marine Protected Areas](#), *International Union for Conservation of Nature*
- 2 Data retrieved from: [Protected Planet on 3 December 2021](#)
- 3 [www.campaignfornature.org/why-30-1](#)
- 4 [The Role of Marine Protected Areas in the Fight Against Climate Change](#), *Marine Conservation Institute*
- 5 [Issues Brief: Marine Protected Areas and Climate Change](#), *International Union for Conservation of Nature*
- 6 “Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) is a conservation designation for areas that are achieving the effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity outside of protected areas”.
- 7 [An Introduction to the MPA Guide](#), *Protected Planet*
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 IUCN 2018 Global Conservation Standards
- 10 [www.campaignfornature.org/why-30-1](#)
- 11 [Torremolinos Declaration](#), *International Maritime Organization*

## ABOUT PGA

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) is the largest non-governmental, multi-party international network of individual legislators with approximately 1,150 members in 135 parliaments around the world that informs and mobilizes parliamentarians to advocate for human rights and the rule of law, sustainability democracy, human security, non-discrimination, and gender equality. This global network of parliamentarians acting in their individual capacity is supported by a PGA National Group structure in parliaments, which creates sustainability and ownership of issues at the national level, and by a Secretariat with relevant expertise. PGA is in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations with headquarters in New York; its office in The Hague, Netherlands fosters cooperation with The Hague-based International Organizations, including the ICC.

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