From Outlook to Roadmap: Moving forward with marine biodiversity conservation in the WIO post-2020 (WIOMPAS Roadmap)

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The international calls (i.e., SDGs, CBD) for the establishment and effective management of marine protected areas (MPAs) strongly encourage governments to scale up their marine conservation efforts to urgently address biodiversity loss, resource exploitation, and to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts. As a response, governments across the globe have been working with different organisations and community groups to improve the management effectiveness of existing MPAs, and establish networks of MPAs at multiple spatial scales. Moreover, the formal recognition of other effective conservation measures (OECM) under the post-2020 biodiversity conservation policy can further contribute to existing efforts. These OECMs that include locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) will allow for better community engagement that can both contribute to more effective management and increase in establishment of conservation areas across the region.

To review the gains made under the previous biodiversity conservation policy in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO), the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) and the UNEP Nairobi Convention published the Marine Protected Areas Outlook in July 2021 and are currently finalising the Critical Habitats Outlook for publication. The MPA Outlook is the first report of its kind to present the progress of each country in the WIO with regards to MPA establishment and management. The report states that the WIO currently has 143 MPAs and 173 LMMAs established, which was estimated to cover at least seven per cent (7%) of the combined exclusive economic zone of East African nations. While this has resulted in great gains in the WIO’s marine conservation efforts, there are still gaps in protection and management of coastal and marine ecosystems in the region. Addressing these gaps and prioritising actions are crucial since the draft post-2020 global biodiversity conservation policy (as of April 2022) proposes the protection of higher percentage-based area targets (i.e., 30% by 2030) in the face of increased climate change and associated risks to biodiversity as per the latest IPCC report. Hence, this proposed special session aims to convene various conservation planners, managers, researchers, development workers and government representatives from the region to discuss and develop a roadmap to scale up conservation practices in the WIO. This roadmap will identify key priority actions for the WIO nations to improve MPA management effectiveness, establish MPA networks to address multiple conservation, management and sustainable development objectives, and integrate MPA plans within broader Blue Economy and marine spatial planning initiatives. More specifically, this special session aims to:

• Discuss the regional and national priorities, conservation goals and targets, and their relevance to post-2020 biodiversity conservation policy;
• Discuss initiatives to strengthen the WIO MPA Network (network of MPA managers in the WIO; WIOMPAN) to contribute to improved MPA management effectiveness and expansion of MPA networks; and,
• Contribute to the development of the WIOMPA System Roadmap and its implementation in support of preparing scenarios for national MPA networks, which can include a variety of objectives and governance frameworks such as transboundary conservation and OECMs.

The expected outputs of this special session will contribute to a proposed research paper that includes feedback and inputs elicited from the leading conservation scientists, planners and managers from the WIO. This special session will invite stakeholders in governments, NGOs, civil society and academic institutions among others. The half-day session includes short presentations on MPA management effectiveness initiatives, social MPA network initiatives of the WIOMPN, and progress towards developing a regional network of MPAs. The session will also include discussion workshops with participants to elicit feedback on the presentations, obtain inputs to facilitate the scenario planning for the WIO, and to discuss the potential and interest of stakeholders in developing of the WIOMPAS Roadmap.

This session is going to be organised by WIOMSA, Macquarie University and the WIOMPN, with support from the UNEP Nairobi Convention. These institutions are working towards identifying the priorities and actions to strengthen marine conservation initiatives in the region and to gain support from the Nairobi Convention Conference of Parties.

**Indicative program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.00 – 11.05</td>
<td>Introductions, objectives of this session and housekeeping</td>
<td>MQU/WIOMSA (Vera)</td>
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| 11.05 – 12.00       | Improving the management effectiveness of MPAs in the region through the WIOMPN  
                      Presentations by: Karine Pothin of the WIOMPN  
                      Emmanuelle Sarat of Varuna Project | WIOMPN (Karine)          |
| 12.00 – 13.00       | Lunch break *(Can this be a brown-bag lunch, so that we can continue the discussion and make it an interactive lunch session?)* |                          |
| 13.00 – 13.30       | Workshop/ Discussion on addressing MPA management effectiveness gaps and the role of the WIOMPN  
                      Presentations by: Joseph Maina  
                      Luisa Fontoura | WIOMPN and MQU          |
| 13.30 – 14.00       | Progress and gaps in developing a regional and ecological network of MPAs in the WIO  
                      Presentations by: Joseph Maina  
                      Luisa Fontoura | MQU (Maina)             |
| 14.00 – 15.00       | Workshop/ Discussion on the development of a regional MPA network in the WIO | MQU/ WIOMSA (Vera)       |
| 15.00 – 15.25       | Workshop/ Discussion  
                      Creating synergies – Integrating social and ecological MPA networks in the WIO (WIOMPAS Roadmap) | MQU/ WIOMSA             |
| 15.25 – 15.30       | Wrap-up                                                                  | MQU/ WIOMSA (Vera)       |