BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES OCEAN INITIATIVE

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On track or off course?

ASSESSING PROGRESS TOWARD THE 30X30 TARGET FOR THE OCEAN

Metabolic Consulting

Acknowledgments

About this publication

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Foreword

There's no bigger challenge than the work to preserve and protect a world covered more than 70% by water — where our collective action is urgently needed to protect the ocean which is essential to life on our planet.

It's fitting then that this is a report about ambition, action, and accountability. The global ambition to protect and conserve at least 30% of the world's land and ocean by 2030, colloquially known as '30x30', is the most urgent conservation commitment ever made. It serves as the cornerstone of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), agreed to at the COP15 UN Biodiversity Summit, and its adoption inspired a sense of hope in the face of spiralling biodiversity loss. It has already galvanized global action and historic commitments to marine protected areas, even as we push on to meet its promise.

Because the stakes are so high, accountability must be equally historic: in a race against time itself, when the scale and scope of the challenge has grown, so too must our commitment keep growing just to meet the moment and keep faith with our own ambition.

There's no time to rest when more than 60% of the coral reefs that host over 25% of marine life are threatened — 90% will be in danger by 2030. No time to rest when less than 3% of the world's ocean is highly protected. And no time to rest when scientists tell us our actions this decade are what will forever shape our ability to stop the collapse of the ocean and prevent the worst of the global climate crisis.

Every country needs to do more faster – diplomatically, through regulation, and with support of communities and NGOs and countries who need it – to stem the tide.

The successful implementation of 30x30 is imperative if we are to halt the rising tide of species loss globally. In particular, protecting and conserving at least 30% of the world's ocean is vital to safeguard marine biodiversity and the billions of people who depend on it for their livelihoods and food security. It is also essential to preserving the ocean's ability to act as our greatest climate ally by absorbing billions of tonnes of carbon emissions every year.

This report is appropriately launched ahead of the COP16 UN Biodiversity Conference, in Cali, Colombia, where governments will assess their progress on the implementation of the GBF. It is a jeremiad in its own right, but more than that we hope it is a practical stocktake that helps answer two key questions:

- Are we delivering on the 30x30 commitment at the pace required?
- Are the majority of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) delivering conservation benefits for wildlife and coastal communities?

Unfortunately, the answer is a resounding 'no' on both counts.

There is still time to protect 30% of the world's ocean by 2030 if we act together with urgency.

As outlined in these pages, success requires governments to:

- significantly increase the designation of MPAs and OECMs in their national waters
- move swiftly to ratify the High Seas Treaty and establish protected areas in international waters
- all coastal nations must take action to designate and submit their national marine protection and conservation targets in support of the global 30x30 target.

But if there is one thread that runs through this powerful report, it is this: protected needs to mean protected. Paper promises are merely Potemkin Protected Areas when we have no time for blue washing or self-delusion.

Only by putting in place protections that prevent harmful activities — such as industrial and destructive fishing and fossil fuels extraction — can these areas deliver the intended conservation benefits.

Governments must also do more to recognize and enable the rights and roles of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, key stewards of our planet's remaining biodiversity, and prioritize supporting their ongoing efforts. The report highlights the Kitasoo Xai'xais First Nation's MPA, Gitdisdzu Lugyeks, and Inhambane Bay Community Conservation Network in Mozambique as models of what success looks like when Indigenous Peoples and local communities lead on marine conservation. While no one template fits all, these serve as examples for others and inspire greater action.

Crucially, we must recognize that richer countries have a responsibility to better support the conservation efforts of developing nations. They have promised to provide at least $20 billion a year to the Global South by 2025 and $30 billion a year by 2030, but little in the way of plans to deliver this has emerged. With the deadline now fast approaching, it is critical that developed countries make their plans clearer at COP16, and that the majority of this finance is delivered in public grants, and not loans.

This report is a gut-check, a reality check, and a call to action.

The goal is to motivate all of us to do better – because we can. Our hope is that it will open the world's eyes to just how far off the pace we have travelled when it comes to meaningfully protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030. But it should also be seen as a roadmap for how governments can still achieve this target in the six years remaining, if they act with purpose.

COP16 is a moment for governments to demonstrate serious intent to make good on their commitments. The Our Ocean Conference in South Korea in April 2025 and the UN Ocean Conference in France in June 2025 will also provide additional opportunities for them to accelerate progress on marine 30x30 by announcing new ocean protections and new finance to support conservation efforts.

Significantly ramping up ambition and action on effective ocean protection has never been just a nice thing to do, but an imperative for ocean's survival; today that emergency light is blinking red, making an imperative truly existential.

For too long we have run down the clock debating how we address the ongoing nature crisis, but the science is clear about one thing we can and must do: delivering on 30x30 will provide the necessary protections required to safeguard our marine ecosystems and the lives that depend on them, not to mention help tackle the ongoing climate crisis.

Ambition, action, and accountability — for all of us: it is our sincere hope that this report will jumpstart transformative action that delivers for people and the planet.

John Kerry,
Former Secretary of State of the United States of America

José María Figueres,
Former President of Costa Rica

Outline

Executive summary

In 2022, the world's nations committed to **effectively conserve at least 30% of the Earth's land and ocean by 2030** under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). This **30x30** global target is the most ambitious conservation commitment ever made and a critical step toward addressing the dual challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.

In short, we are failing to meet the 30x30 target. Countries must conserve more of their national waters and work together to increase the protection of the vast area of international waters beyond their borders (high seas). Moreover, the conservation of the ocean must be more 'effective', meaning with higher quality standards and regulation, to achieve the intended biodiversity outcomes outlined in the GBF. Importantly, the work must not stop when the 30x30 target is met. Once reached, we will be in a stronger position to work toward the GBF's broader ambition of humanity living in harmony with nature by 2050.

This report provides insights into the current status of global ocean conservation (see Annex 1 for information about data and methodologies) and five key recommendations for governments to improve and speed up action for ocean conservation. The recommendations are designed to inform discussion at the **COP16 UN Biodiversity Conference in October 2024**.

Putting these **five key recommendations** high on the agenda will make reaching the 30x30 target with *effective protection* in place achievable. And it is in the interests of governments to do so. Research shows that effectively protected marine areas are more likely to deliver the ecological, social, and economic benefits attributed to conservation. Delivering on the 30x30 target is essential to protect the ocean's rich biodiversity, which has intrinsic value beyond human benefit. **By preserving marine ecosystems, we sustain the critical provisions we depend on — such as food supply, climate regulation, and carbon capture — ensuring the health and balance of our planet.**

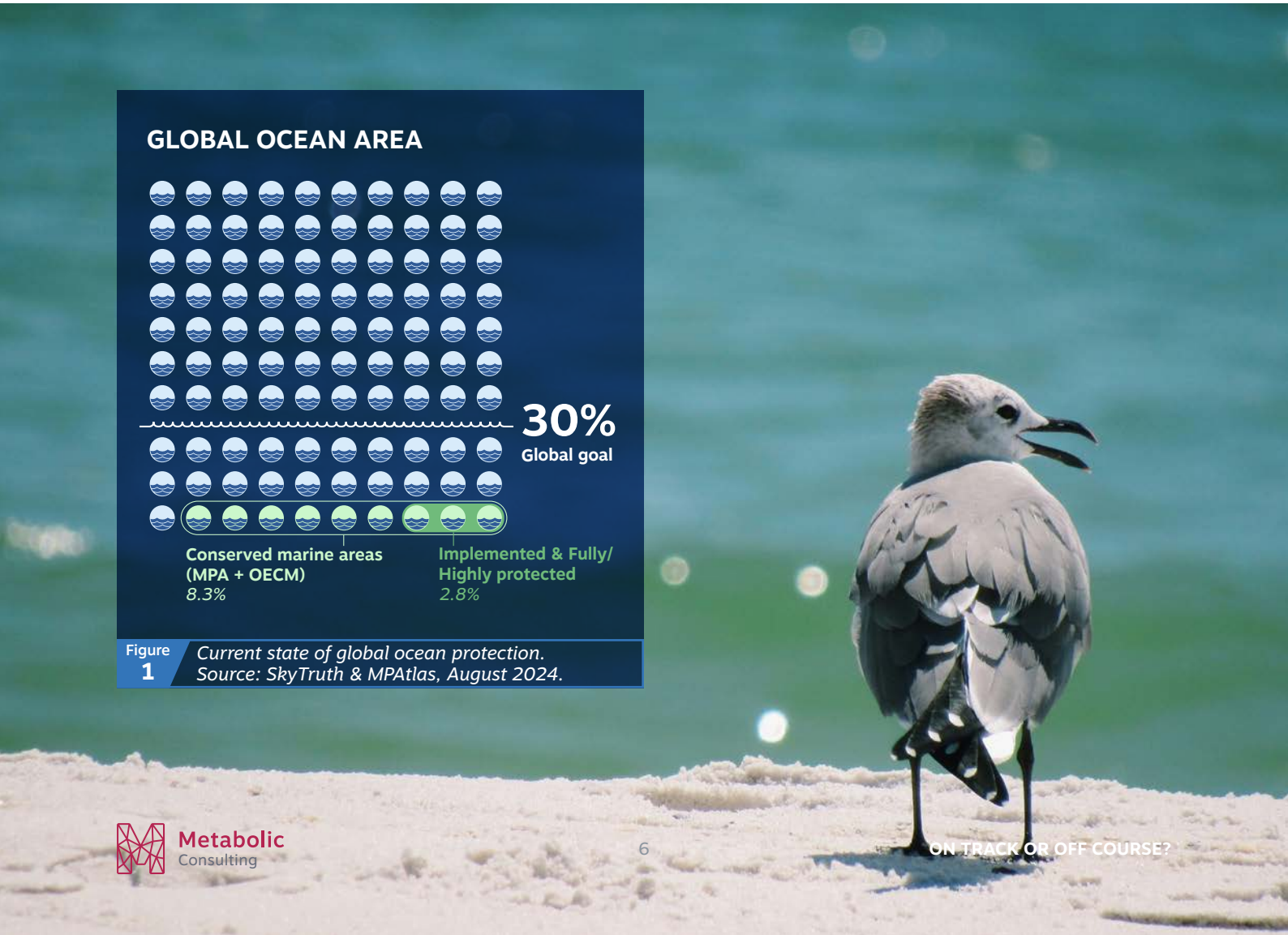


Figure 1 *Current state of global ocean protection. Source: SkyTruth & MPAtlas, August 2024.*

1. Increase the quantity (coverage) of areas under conservation, both in national and international (high seas) waters and establish national marine conservation targets

Only 8.3% of global marine areas are reported as protected (either as MPAs or OECMs). At the current rate of progress — an increase of 0.5% since the adoption of the GBF in 2022 — this figure is **projected to rise to just 9.7% by 2030.** It is clear we need to accelerate efforts to protect marine areas if we are to achieve the 30x30 target and halt and reverse nature loss in the long term. Countries must protect more of their **national waters** and work together to expand protection in the vast **international waters** beyond their borders (high seas).

Countries need to protect more of the marine areas within their national waters, which extend up to 200 nautical miles from the coastline. In these zones, coastal countries hold special rights to explore and manage marine resources. **Only 14 countries have reported more than 30% of their waters as protected areas:** Monaco, Palau, United Kingdom, Kazakhstan, New Zealand,[1] Australia, Argentina, Germany, Chile, Colombia, Belgium, France, Seychelles and the Netherlands. With just six years left to achieve the 30% global target, countries must significantly increase their commitments and actions within their national waters. While 30x30 is a global target, countries need to set their own national targets outlining their contribution to the global effort. Currently, the targets set by countries are lacking in ambition, both in their National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plans (NBSAPs) and other national policies. **To accelerate action on a global scale, countries must set more ambitious targets on the national level.**

The creation of new MPAs requires careful planning and consideration of ecological conditions. MPAs should for instance be large enough to **reduce edge effects,** and networks of MPAs should ensure **adequate representation of ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity,** and **promote ecological connectivity.** Moreover, efforts should be made to **regenerate degraded marine ecosystems** in busy and industrialized regions, rather than just focusing on biodiversity hotspots in remote places. Establishing MPAs in high-extraction zones is particularly relevant for recovering sustainable fish stocks and for climate change mitigation and resilience.

We cannot reach the 30x30 target without significant area-based protections in the high seas. These are the parts of the open ocean that lie beyond the boundaries of any one country, and cover two thirds of the ocean and nearly half of the planet. Yet, so far only about 1.4% of the high seas is under some form of protection — and considering effective protection, this drops to less than 1%. T*he High Seas Treaty,* formally known as the *Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ)*, once entered into force, will establish a legal framework for creating protected areas in international waters, closing a major gap in global ocean governance. Securing the 60 ratifications for the Treaty to become international law is a necessary first step in building the institutions needed to conserve the high seas, including an equitable financial mechanism for governance of these waters. Next, governments will need to work together to identify, develop, and resource protected areas.

Only 8.3% of global marine areas are protected

[1] *New Zealand protects over 30% of its waters when including Niue and the Cook Islands—an independent country and a self-governing territory, respectively, in free association with New Zealand. Without them, the protection coverage of New Zealand's domestic waters stands at just 28%.*

2. Improve the quality of marine conservation (implement effective protection)

Simply designating areas for protection is not enough. Actual success in achieving the GBF's biodiversity conservation targets depends on the quality of the protection in these areas, otherwise termed as *effective protection*. This means there is regulation and active management in place that ensures minimal or no damaging practices — such as industrial fishing, mining, and oil and gas development — allowing desired conservation outcomes to be achieved. This report reveals that, two years on from the adoption of the GBF, **just 2.8% of the world's marine areas have been assessed as likely to deliver effective protection,**[2] underscoring the urgent need for more meaningful conservation efforts (SkyTruth & MPAtlas, 2024).

This gap between coverage and effectiveness is a recurring issue, even in regions making the most progress toward the 30% target. For instance, while Latin America and the Caribbean appear to lead in marine conservation, with 26.6% of ocean designated as MPAs, only 2.5% has been assessed as likely effectively protected. The remaining 24% has either a very low protection level or was unassessed against *The MPA Guide*.[3] North America has protected 22.3% of marine areas, but only 17% has been assessed as likely to be effective. Europe has protected 23.3%, but only 7.4% has been assessed as likely to be effectively protected. On a country level, only two nations have effectively protected more than 30% of their waters: the UK (38.9%) and Palau (77.9%).

However, in examining the **UK case study** (see page 36), we see that **effective protection occurs only in its overseas territories, highlighting a clear gap between coverage and effectiveness in its domestic waters.** Although 47% of the UK's domestic waters are designated as MPAs, almost none (<0.1%) of the assessed areas are effectively protected. This is largely a result of a 'features-based' approach, whereby only specific features or species are protected within an MPA rather than the whole ecosystem. Consequently, more than half of these MPAs still allow destructive fishing methods such as bottom trawling.

***Effective protection*, not just coverage, should be a high priority**

Effective protection, not just coverage, should be a priority for expanding protection of marine biodiversity under the 30x30 target, including ensuring sites are at least implemented or actively managed and are highly or fully protected. This applies to both existing and future MPAs, many of which lack high quality standards and strong enforcement.

3. Support Indigenous Peoples and local communities

Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and local communities (LCs) have fundamental roles to play and should be at the forefront of marine conservation. Marine protection efforts should support, not displace, IPs and LCs, who have often developed sustainable practices and are key stewards of biodiversity. Governments must recognize and restore the rights of IPs and ensure they have free, prior and informed consent regarding decisions made about their waters and land. These groups should be enabled to create and manage marine conservation areas respective of their distinct rights. Decision-makers should incorporate traditional management practices to ensure that conservation is culturally appropriate and aligned with local values. By grounding management strategies in traditional knowledge, either independently or alongside modern science, conservation can be more effective and respectful of the communities it aims to benefit.

National governments should direct resources to include and support IPs and LCs, recognizing their knowledge of the biodiversity they sustain.

[2] *See figure 3 for details on effectiveness assessment*

[3] *See Annex 1 for details on methodology*

4. Unlock sufficient and durable (international) finance

Effective protection of biodiversity relies on capacity building, stakeholder engagement, management, scientific research, and monitoring, all of which depend on adequate, continuous funding. **Currently, governments allocate about $68 billion yearly toward biodiversity, but to reach the CBD's target of $200 billion annually from all sources by 2030, they must mobilize more resources.** While each country is responsible for allocating adequate resources to manage protected areas, some degree of redistribution is necessary to meet global conservation goals. Wealthier nations must contribute their fair share to support countries with fewer resources, fulfilling their commitments and enabling better governance of protected areas. Under the GBF, developed countries have committed to deliver at least $20 billion per year to developing countries by 2025 and $30 billion by 2030. Currently, this commitment is not being met. Furthermore, **the quality of financing is essential;** finance should be affordable and accessible, prioritize biodiversity as the primary goal, and be fairly distributed to and focused on those local institutions and communities that manage protected areas.

5. Improve reporting and data collection

To effectively monitor progress toward the 30x30 target, standardized data collection is essential. Current self-reported data often includes areas that are not implemented or lack effective protection. To address this, decision-makers should refer to *The MPA Guide* to determine appropriate protection levels tailored to specific local contexts. Moreover, comprehensive reporting should go further. For the 30x30 target to truly achieve biodiversity conservation, MPA coverage must be effective, representative, well-connected, and equitable. Therefore, combining critical, reliable datasets that provide metrics for each of these components is central to holistically understand progress and to create a path forward.

Finance should be affordable and accessible, and prioritize biodiversity as the primary goal.

DEFINITIONS

CBD: short for "United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity"; is a multilateral treaty that came into force in 1993 after being introduced at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. This treaty initiated a series of international discussions and summits on biodiversity, eventually leading to the signing of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The CBD remains in effect today, serving as a foundational framework for all biodiversity-related matters (*CBD, n.d.*).

GBF: short for the "The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework"; was adopted during the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in December 2022. The GBF outlines an ambitious plan to achieve a global vision of living in harmony with nature by 2050. It includes four key goals for 2050 and 23 targets for 2030. (*CBD, n.d.*).

30x30 target: GBF target 3, Conserve 30% of Land, Waters and Seas: "Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30% of terrestrial and inland water areas, and of marine and coastal areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories" (*CBD, n.d.*).

MPA: acronym for "Marine Protected Area"; describing a well-defined area of the sea or ocean that is recognized, designated, and managed—through legal or other effective measures—to ensure the long term conservation of nature along with its ecosystem services and cultural values (*IUCN, 2008*).

National waters: defined as an area of the ocean extending 200 nautical miles beyond a nation's coast, to which a country claims exclusive rights for any economic activities. Within these national waters, a distinction is made between inshore and offshore areas, though this can vary by country. Generally, inshore areas are shallower and located much closer to land, typically within 12 nautical miles off the coast while offshore waters are typically those between 12 and 200 nautical miles. Furthermore, some countries may have, in addition to national waters along their domestic coastline, also national waters in overseas territories (*Pike et al., 2024*).

Overseas territories: areas that are politically controlled by a country that is located far away from it.

Effective protection: according to the GBF, effective protection requires the adoption of appropriate management objectives and processes, governance systems, adequate and appropriate resourcing and consistent monitoring (*CBD, n.d.*). Defined in this report as MPAs that have been assessed against *The MPA Guide* and found to be implemented or actively managed and fully or highly protected. MPAs that are proposed or designated, and yet unimplemented, are assigned an Unknown Level of Protection since the actual protection level is not usually known until an MPA is implemented on the water following extensive consultation, feedback and dialog with communities.

OECM: short for "Other effective area-based conservation measures"; describes a geographic site that is not a protected area, that delivers long-term biodiversity conservation under equitable governance and management regardless of whether that is the primary objective of the area (*CBD, 2018*). The recognition of OECMs recognizes de facto effective long-term conservation that is taking place outside of Protected Areas, implemented by a diverse set of actors including by Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and local communities (LCs) (*IUCN-WCPA Task Force on OECMs, 2019*).

High Seas: otherwise known as international waters, the high seas refer to those parts of open ocean that lie beyond the boundaries of any one country. Thus, no one country has sole responsibility for their management. The high seas make up two-thirds of the ocean's surface and 95% of its volume (*Pew, 2018*). The high seas along with the international seafloor collectively form "Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction."

BBNJ: short for "Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction" and also known as the High Seas Treaty. This Agreement, adopted in June 2023, is the first comprehensive, cross-sectoral ocean treaty in decades, focusing on advancing international cooperation to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in high seas. It enables establishment of MPAs where previously there was no mechanism to do this (*United Nations, 2024*).

NBSAP: short for "National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan"; is a key policy document that defines a country's approach to national biodiversity planning, focusing on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. As the primary tool for implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the national level, the NBSAP plays a crucial role in guiding national biodiversity efforts (*CBD, 2024*).

01 How are we doing?

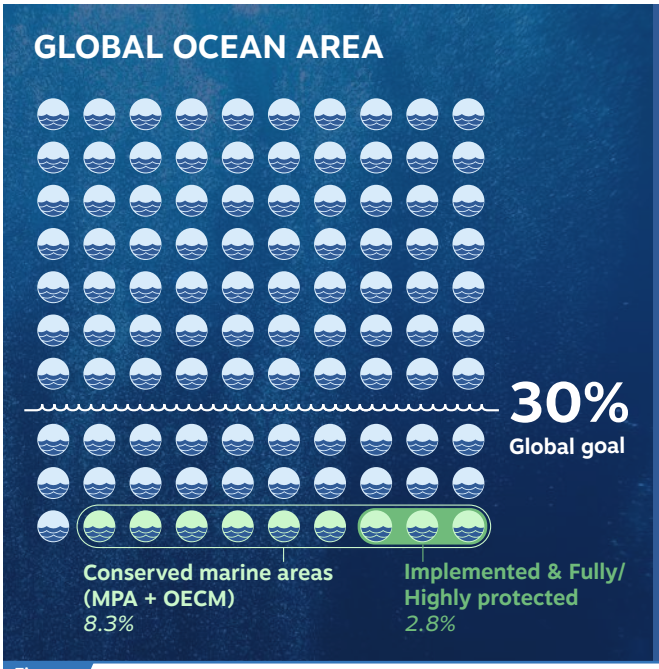
The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was adopted during the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in December 2022. The GBF outlines an ambitious plan to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and achieve a global vision of living in harmony with nature by 2050. It includes four key goals for 2050 and 23 targets for 2030.

The cornerstone commitment of the GBF is the third target. This target commits governments to protect and conserve at least 30% of the world's land and ocean by 2030 (30x30) through a rights-based approach that recognizes and respects the rights and roles of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and local communities (LCs).[4]

In the face of the climate crisis and increasing pressure from human activities such as overfishing and habitat destruction, 30x30 presents an important step toward a sustainable future. Delivering on the 30x30 target is essential to protect our planet's rich biodiversity, which has intrinsic value beyond human benefit. By preserving marine ecosystems, we also sustain the critical provisions we depend on — such as food supply, climate regulation, and carbon capture — ensuring the health and balance of our planet.

It is important to note that protecting 30% of the land and ocean by 2030 is not a one-size-fits-all goal. It is a global goal. While there is an expectation for all countries to contribute to global targets, there is no agreement requiring each country to protect 30% of their land and ocean. Each country needs to contribute in different ways based on the unique mix of geography and biological wealth.

The complexity lying beneath the catchy 30x30 tagline is hard to overstate. For starters, the target covers both terrestrial (land and freshwater) and marine (national and high seas) areas; two categories which demand significantly different governance structures and challenges. With the support of the Bloomberg Ocean Fund, SkyTruth, Marine Conservation Institute, and Campaign for Nature, Metabolic has taken a dive into existing data on the marine aspect of the target to assess progress toward the goal of at least 30% global marine protected area coverage. This report offers an overview, combining the latest quantitative data with qualitative in-country insights, to address a key question ahead of the next CBD COP: How are we doing?[5]



GLOBAL INSIGHTS

Simply put, progress to date has been far below the scale and pace required to achieve the 30x30 target and its biodiversity goals. As of August 2024, ***only 8.3% of total marine areas globally are reported as protected.***

Worryingly, ***only 2.8% of global marine areas are effectively protected*** *(implemented and fully or highly protected).*[6]

Since the adoption of the GBF in 2022, the total global marine area under some form of protection has ***only increased by 0.5%****. At this rate of progress,* ***only 9.7% of the Earth's marine areas will be protected by 2030****. To reach our global target of at least 30% of marine area under conservation, countries need to significantly increase their commitments and actions.*

Figure 1 *Current state of global ocean conservation. Source: SkyTruth & MPAtlas, August 2024.*

[4] *The target percentage for GBF Target 3 was left flexible as a result of the complexity in distributing coverage across the global marine area. It was not explicitly agreed that the overall global target of protected area coverage for both marine and terrestrial areas should be 30% each. Distribution of coverage across marine and terrestrial will be variable across countries, depending on their specific geographies. The UN process does not involve setting exact numerical targets at a global level, so for simplicity we assume here that the 30% target applies to marine areas.*
In addition, the ocean area that is protected needs to be ecologically representative. To reach the long-term goals of the GBF, such as preserving, enhancing, and restoring all ecosystems and preventing human-induced extinction by 2050, more than 30% of the ocean will likely need to be covered by an ecologically representative, well-connected, and equitably governed system of protected areas.

[5] *See Annex 1 for more information about data and methodologies.*

[6] *See figure 3 for details on effectiveness assessment.*

The percentage for reported Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is based on self-reported MPA coverage by governments around the world. These official figures are commonly cited as a measure of progress toward the 30% target while ignoring the fact that legally designating an MPA is only one step toward effective protection. Protecting marine and terrestrial areas is essential to achieving the intended benefits for humans and ecosystems, as outlined in the goals of the GBF.

The COP16 UN Biodiversity Conference in Cali, Colombia, starting on October 21, 2024, is a key moment to take stock of the progress made by countries since the GBF was adopted in 2022. Figure 2 shows global progress made toward 30% up to 2024 and a projection to 2030 based on progress made since 2022. The numbers are sobering: at the current rate of progress, only **9.7% of global marine areas will be conserved by 2030**. Especially in the last few years, progress has slowed, despite the perceived enthusiasm for the 30x30 target. If the 30% target is to remain in reach, countries need to significantly increase the quantity and quality of marine conservation.

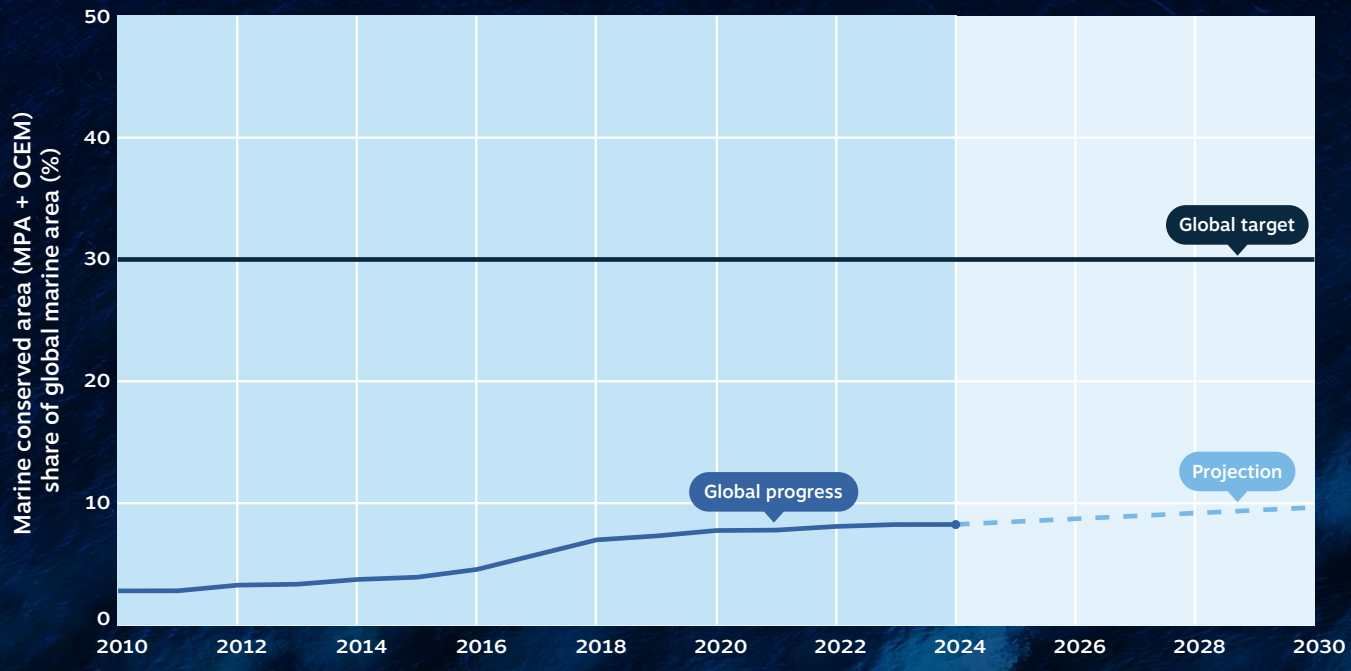


Figure 2 *Global ocean conservation progress between 2010 (2.8%) and 2024 (8.3%), with a projection toward 2030 based on progress made since the GBF adoption in 2022. Source: SkyTruth & MPAtlas, August 2024.*

WHAT IS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MPAS?

The effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is crucial for achieving biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration. It means that there is regulation and active management in place that ensures minimal or no damaging practices, such as industrial fishing, mining, and oil and gas development, allowing desired conservation outcomes to be achieved. While effectively protected MPAs are more likely to support species recovery, ecosystem functioning, and resilience, simply having a high level of protection is not enough to guarantee that biodiversity benefits will accrue over time. Active enforcement and management of these areas are also essential.

The MPA Guide serves as a tool for stakeholders and decision-makers to design and adapt MPAs for effective protection. It is based on four key components:

1. *Stage of Establishment: proposed, designated, implemented, or actively managed.*
2. *Level of Protection: minimally, lightly, highly, or fully protected.*
3. *Enabling Conditions: effective planning, implementation, governance, and management.*
4. *Outcomes: expected ecological and social outcomes based on protection levels.*

The effectiveness of an MPA largely depends on the first three core components. However, for biodiversity benefits to increase, areas must be either implemented or actively managed.

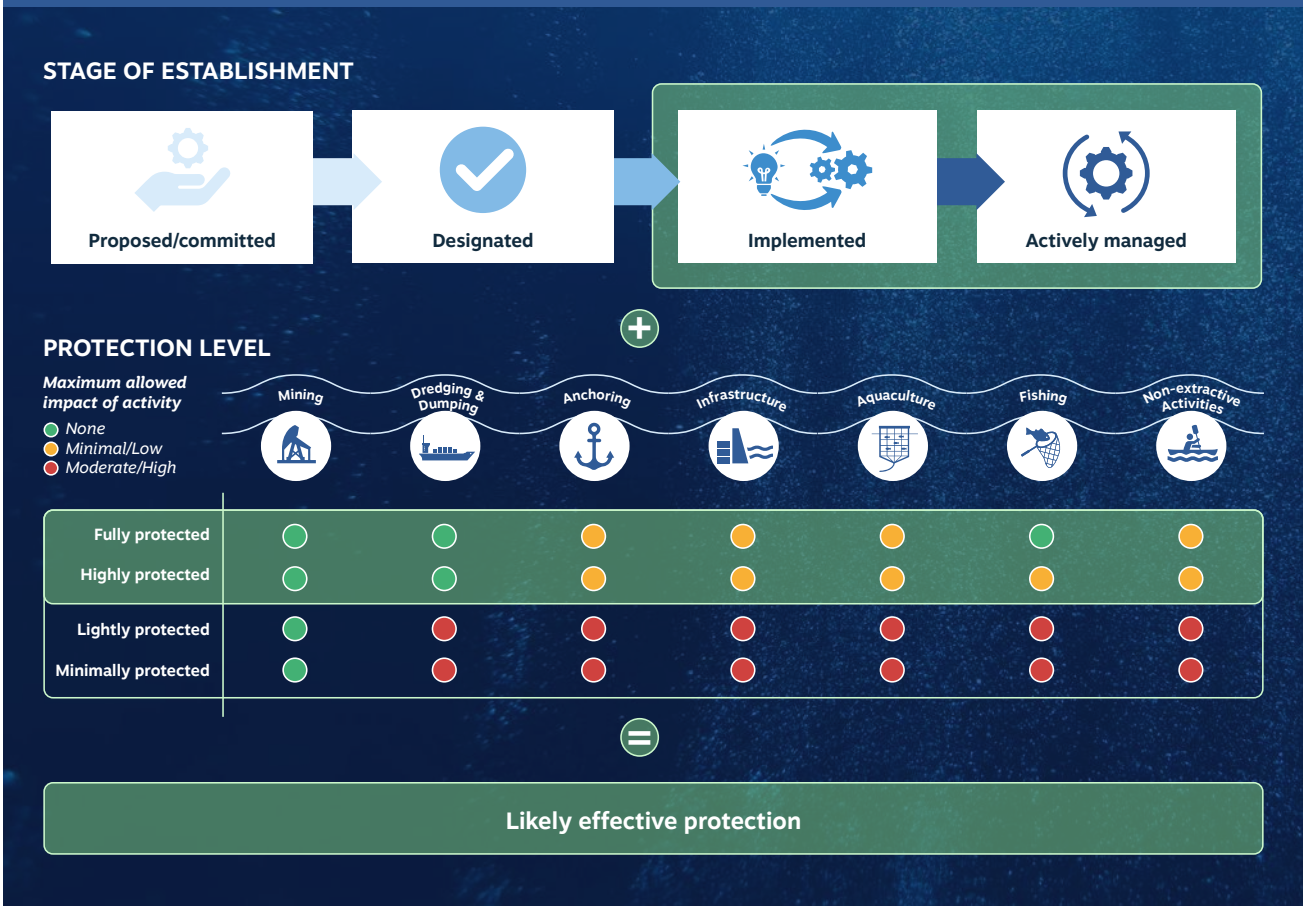


Figure 3 *Conditions for an MPA to be considered as likely to protect biodiversity. The stage of establishment must be classified as **implemented** or **actively managed**, and the level of protection as **highly** or **fully** protected, based on maximum allowable impacts from the activities listed. Both conditions must be met for an MPA to be considered likely effectively protected. Source: MPAtlas.*

WHERE DO OTHER EFFECTIVE AREA-BASED CONSERVATION MEASURES (OECMS) COME IN?

What is an OECM?

An OECM is a geographic site that is not a protected area that delivers long-term biodiversity conservation under equitable governance and management regardless of whether that is the primary objective of the area (CBD, 2018).

OECMs and the 30x30 target

The GBF leaves it up to country discretion whether to include OECMs in their reported target percentage. Only eight countries have any reported OECM coverage in marine areas. Many community-led OECMs, such as Locally-Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) in Fiji and across the Pacific, are often not registered in global databases such as the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA), despite providing considerable benefits to people and biodiversity. Many of these initiatives are gradually scaling up, but their global impact is likely undervalued due to underreporting. This underreporting could have many explanations. The OECM distinction was created to allow for diverse forms of conservation, with the intention of formally including Indigenous Peoples and local communities. However, results from recent academic analyzes shed light on a high instance of ***blue washing****, saying that, especially in marine spaces, OECMs have allowed for industry to negotiate concessions to protected areas (Claudet et al., 2022).*

OECMs and effective conservation

Ultimately, labeling an area as an MPA or OECM is not an indicator of how effective the area will be for biodiversity conservation. Varied conservation tools and mechanisms can serve an important role in inclusion and can allow for economically active areas to strive toward better resource management. Nevertheless, it should be reiterated that the purpose of the 30x30 target is to increase the amount of marine and terrestrial areas globally to ***support biodiversity and ecosystem thriving****. These goals can only be achieved by MPAs or OECMs with active management that serves the conservation of biodiversity, at a sufficiently high quality that biodiversity conservation can accrue.*

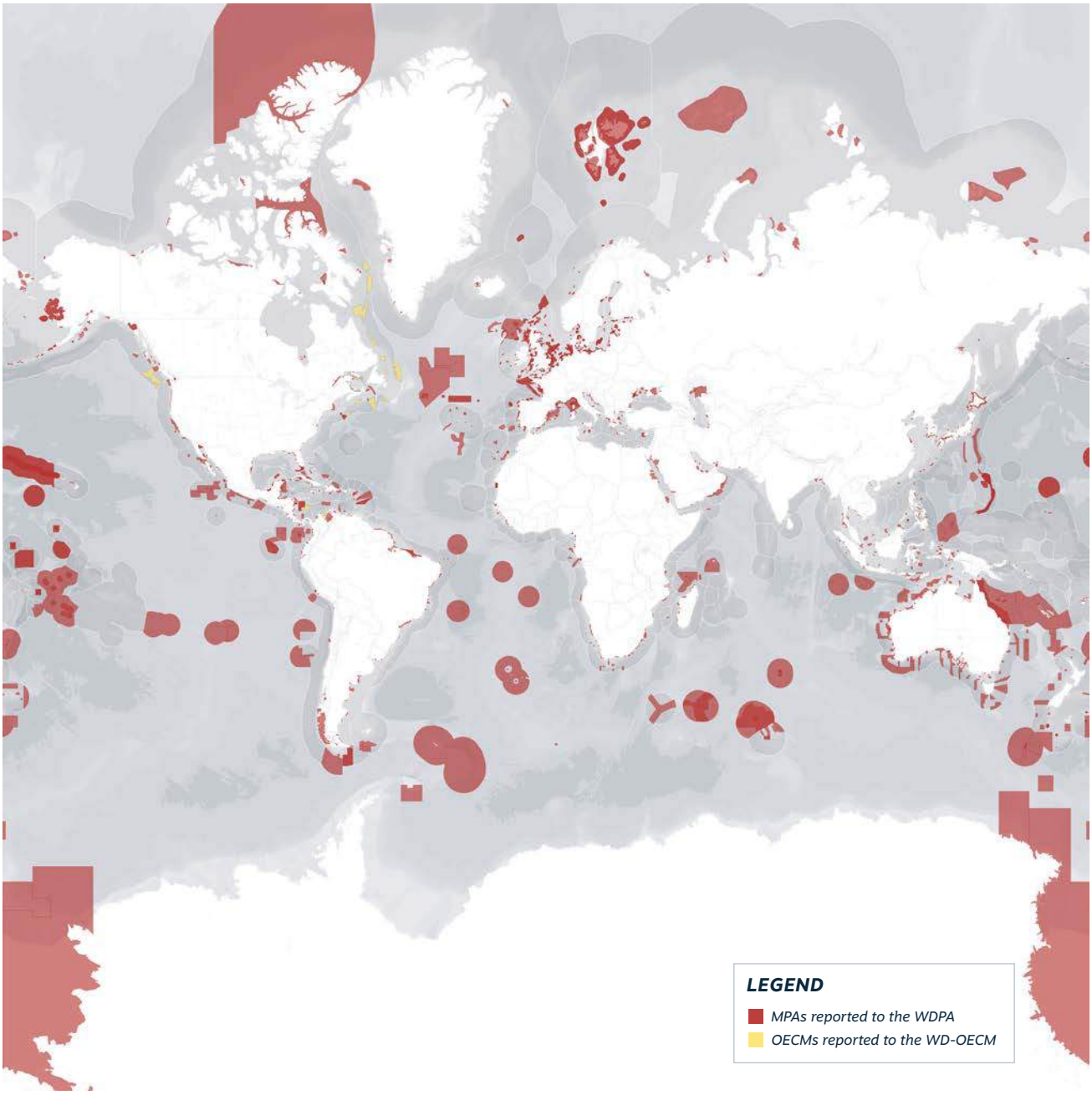


Figure 4 *Map of all WDPA reported Marine Protected Areas (MPAs, red) and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in marine areas reported to the WD-OECM (yellow). Source: Marine Conservation Institute (2024) | National waters data: marineregions.org; MPA data: MPAtlas, WDPA, WD-OECM/ProtectedPlanet | © Mapbox © OpenStreetMap.*

Regional insights

When looking at the regional level, we see a similar gap between coverage and effectiveness. Regional distribution of MPAs is important for both ecological and socio-political reasons. Biodiversity conservation works better when there is ecological connectivity and representativeness. Nature-informed networks of MPAs allow for migration corridors crucial to species' survival and regeneration. The socio-political sphere also influences where protected areas can and should be established, as well as allowing for their benefits to be accessed fairly across populations.

Figure 5 below illustrates the regional distribution of marine conservation areas as a percentage of the global marine area, with the highest concentration found in Latin America and the Caribbean (26.6%). However, combining all of the regional efforts accounts for only 8.3% of the total marine area, highlighting the substantial work still required to reach the 30x30 target. A clear jump in the reporting of marine protected areas occurred just before 2020, likely driven by the conclusion of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets[7] period, specifically Target 11, which aimed to conserve 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020, through well-managed and ecologically representative protected areas. Countries were motivated to establish these areas before the deadline. Notably, West Asia has seen sudden progress since 2022, largely due to a significant expansion of Oman's MPA coverage. This kind of progress is needed on a global level in order to move towards the 30x30 target.

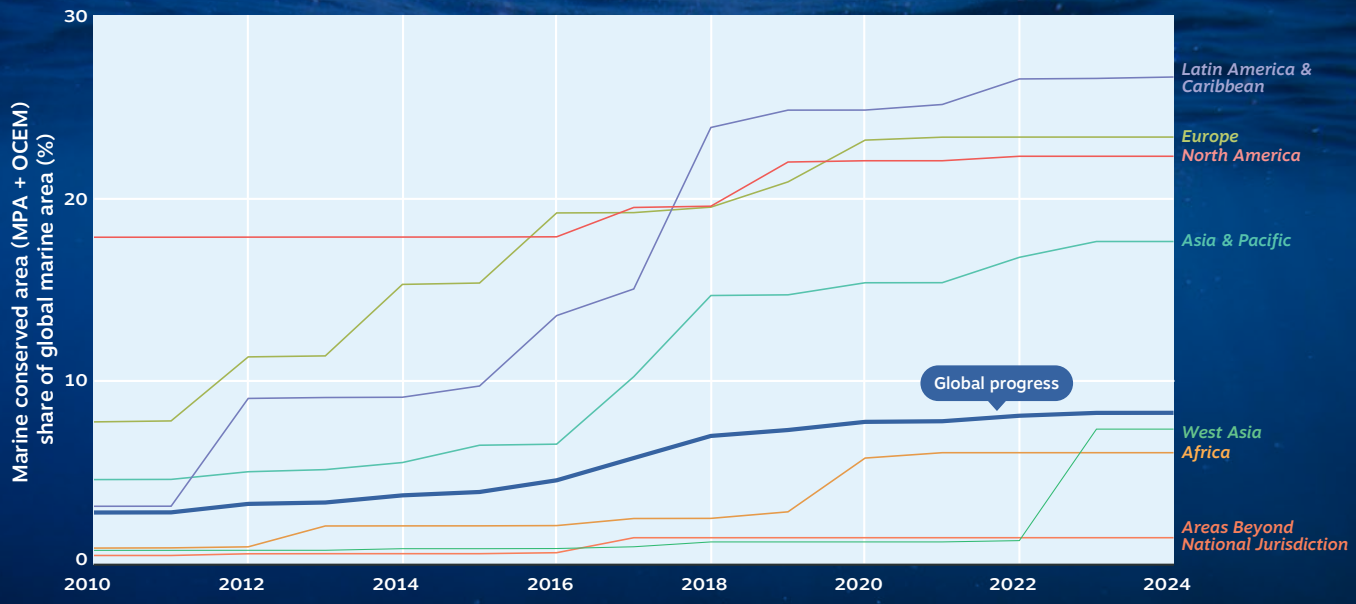


Figure 5 *Progress on ocean conservation, by region between 2010 and 2024.*[8]
Source: SkyTruth & MPAtlas, August 2024.

[7] *Established by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in 2011, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets consisted of 20 specific targets aimed at addressing and reducing biodiversity loss worldwide and set to be reached in the period between 2011 and 2020.*

[8] *Note: the United States of America (USA) is not a signatory to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and therefore has not adopted the GBF but its MPAs are included in the quantitative regional assessment, because it uses SkyTruth data which is independent from the UN accounting processes. The USA has committed to the 30x30 target via the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People.*

But how effective are these areas for biodiversity conservation? As it turns out, even in regions with a higher percentage of marine conservation or showing progress in establishing these areas, only a small portion is likely to be effectively protected.

Table 1 *Regional share of marine protected areas (MPA and OECM) in 2022 and 2024, compared to the total regional marine area (%); the share of likely effective protection in 2024 (Protection level: fully or highly protected and implemented/actively managed) of the total regional marine area (%). Refer to Figure 3 and Annex 1 for a detailed assessment of effectiveness, including an explanation of why the assessed area for protection exceeds the area under conservation in certain regions. Source: SkytTruth & MPAtlas, August 2024.*

Region	2022	2024		
	Ocean area under conservation (%)		Likely effective protection (%)	Marine area assessed for protection level (%)
High seas	1.4	1.4	0.8	3.0
Africa	5.3	6.1	*N/A**	4.9
Asia & Pacific	16.8	17.6	4.2	16.1
Europe	20.2	23.3	7.4	22.7
Latin America & Caribbean	26.5	26.6	2.5	31.2
North America	22.3	22.3	17.0	25
West Asia	1.3	7.4	*N/A**	0.8
Global	7.8	8.0	2.8	9.3

Note: overseas territories are assigned to their legal authority, not their actual geographical area; The Antarctic/Southern Ocean is included in the High Seas region.

** Due to limited data availability*

The data displayed in this table reinforces the same story. Even in regions where more progress has been made in establishing marine protected areas, only a small portion of these are likely to be effective.

When looking at the regional breakdown of data in Table 1, we can see that currently, the high seas (1.4%), Africa (5.3%) and West Asia (7.4%) have the lowest protected areas coverage. High seas protection is a particular case and will be discussed in the following section (Focus Area #1). For Africa and West Asia, one explanation for the low protection coverage may be that they have not received enough financial support to establish more MPAs. One might assume that the wealthier parts of the globe — Europe, North America, Asia have more established MPAs. But Latin America and the Caribbean is the region with the greatest percentage of marine areas under protected designation, suggesting that political will and robust civil society capacity can play an even more crucial role. Looking at the spread of effectively protected areas once again yields a more concerning picture: Latin America and the Caribbean have 26.6% marine areas protected, but less than a tenth are under effective protection. North America is next with 22.3% but only 17% assessed as effectively protected, followed by Europe, with 23.3%, but just 7.4% assessed as effectively protected.

The following map (Figure 6) provides a global overview on the distribution of MPAs and OECMs, highlighting the currently understood effectiveness of protection.

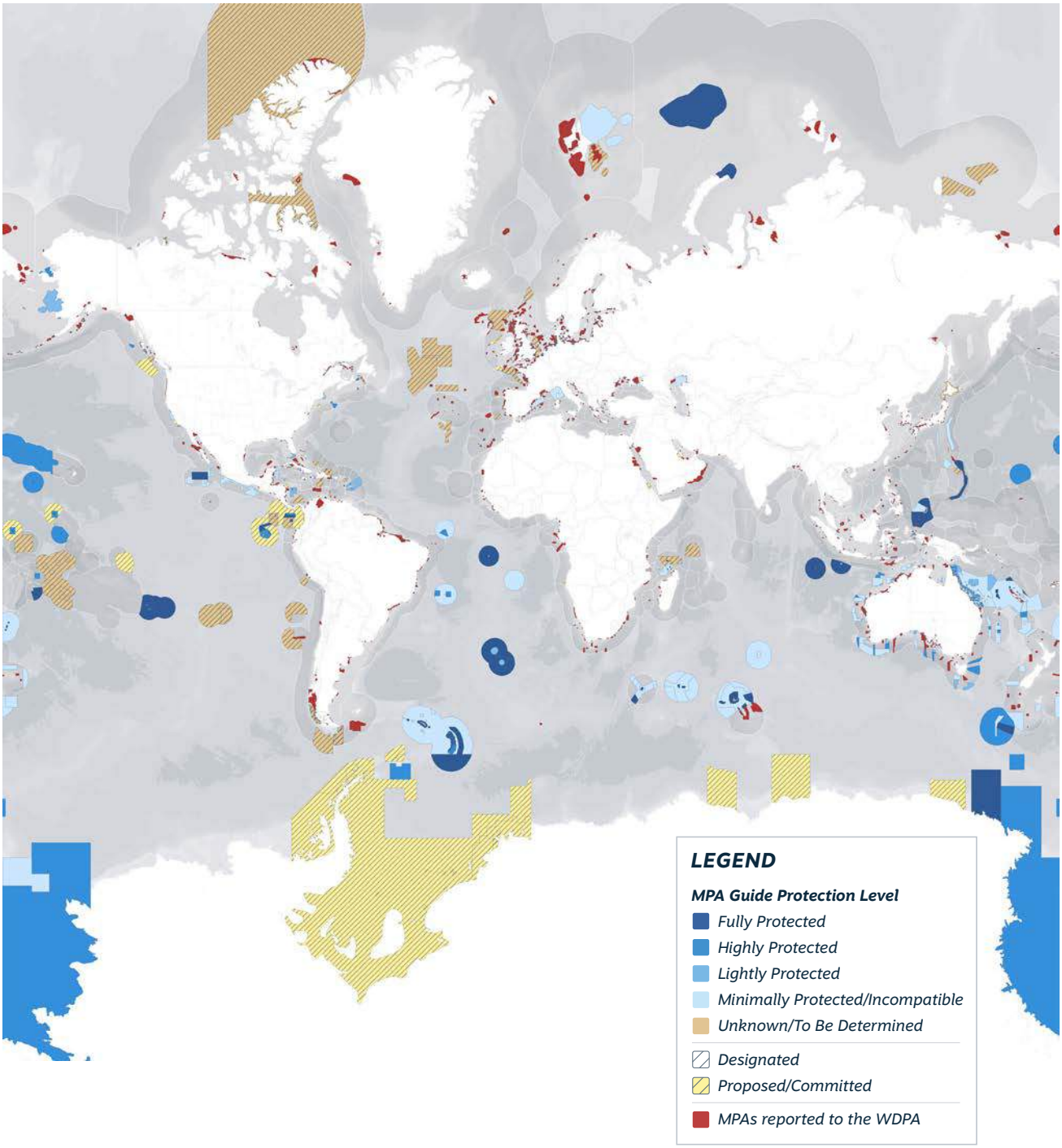


Figure 6 *Map showing establishment stage and protection level of MPAs, using The MPA Guide methodology. For effective marine protection, active management and fully/highly protection levels are desired. Note that designated and proposed/committed areas are already assessed for potential effectiveness, but not yet put into practice. Also note that not (yet) all MPAs reported to WDPA have been assessed for Stage of Establishment and Level of Protection. Source: Marine Conservation Institute (2024) | National waters data: marineregions.org; MPA data: MPAtlas, WDPA/ProtectedPlanet | © Mapbox © OpenStreetMap.*

National insights

The GBF is agreed at the global level, but responsibility for implementation of its targets typically begins at national levels of government. Caution should be taken when looking at country-level data. Accounting processes are not standardized and it is not easy to compare across countries as the 30% target is meant for global coverage. In the best case scenario for biodiversity and environmental justice, some countries will protect more than 30% of marine areas, while others will protect less.

The following tables offer insights on the countries that currently have the highest level of reported protected areas and on those that made the most significant progress since 2022. A full country table can be found in Annex 2.

Table 2

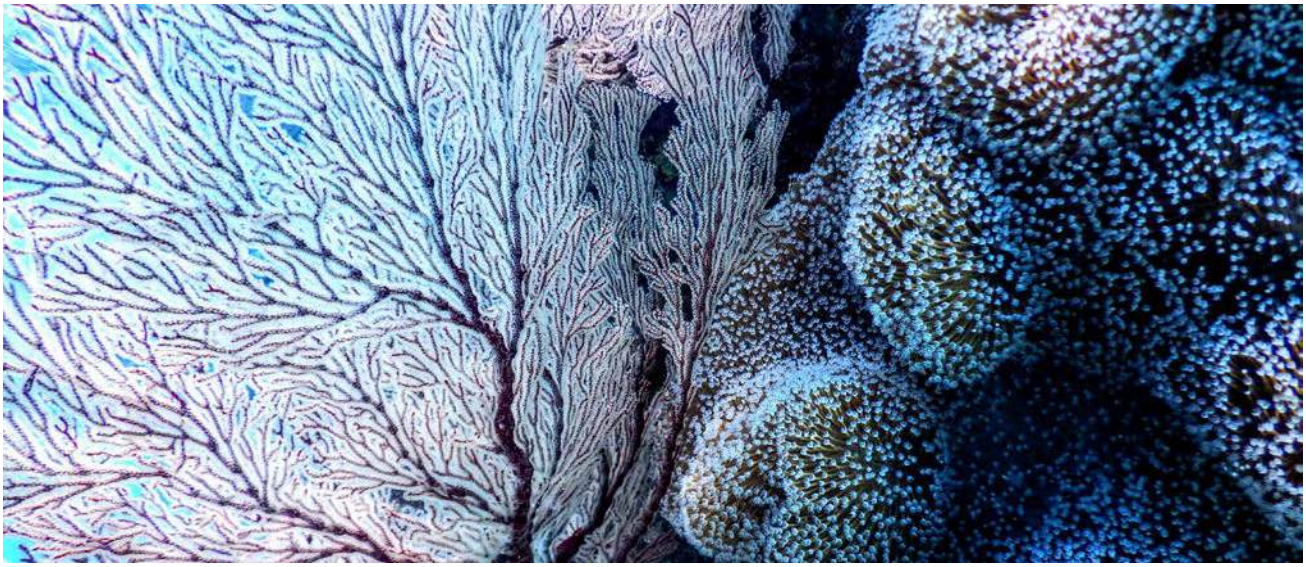
Countries with >30% area under conservation. Note that most of these countries have a low share of likely effective protection. Data specifics: National share of marine protected areas (MPA and OECM) in 2024, compared to the total national marine area (%); the share of likely effective protection in 2024 (Protection level: fully or highly protected) of the total national marine area (%); and the area assessed for protection level using The MPA Guide in 2024 of the total national marine area (%). Source: SkyTruth & MPAtlas, August 2024.

Country	Ocean area under conservation (%)	Likely effective protection (%)	Marine area assessed for protection level (%)
Monaco	99.7	0.0	100.0
Palau	98.7	77.9	96.6
United Kingdom	68.3	38.9*	66.1
Kazakhstan	52.2	0.0	48.5
New Zealand	49.5	2.0	48.0
Australia	48.3	18.5	44.7
Argentina	46.7	11*	45.2
Germany	45.3	0.0	3.0
Chile	41.2	0.0	39.9
Colombia	40.3	1.5	48.2
Belgium	37.7	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
France	33.3	2.6	36.6
Seychelles	32.7	0.2	32.6
Netherlands	31.9	0.0	17.0

** Includes MPAs located in disputed territories (Malvinas/Falkland Islands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands).*

Table 3 *Countries that have made progress in marine conservation coverage between 2022 and 2024. Source: SkyTruth & MPAtlas, August 2024.*

Country	Additional % covered by marine conservation from 2022 to 2024
Comoros	28.5
Oman	15.9
France	10.8
Australia	5.2
Madagascar	2.9
Estonia	0.6
Mexico	0.4
Antigua and Barbuda	0.3
Mozambique	0.2
Denmark	0.2
Chile	0.2
Peru	0.2



30x30 is a global target and countries need to adapt this guiding star to their national contexts. Variations in percentage of protected areas can have many reasons. Some countries are landlocked while others have huge coastlines of high biodiversity importance. Some countries have significant financial resources but have also exploited and damaged more of their marine areas historically. The process of negotiating these specificities to determine how a country can contribute to the global 30% target is unique to each country. This national coordination is reported back through the CBD's National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan (NBSAP) process.

Countries represented by their national governments at COP16 are requested to submit an NBSAP to document their plan for implementing the GBF. This document compiles implementation plans for all GBF targets in one place. NBSAPs are not binding policies, but are meaningful strategic documents that, in the best cases, indicate a multi-stakeholder process of deliberation and national contextualization of the targets set out in the GBF. These processes can include critical implementation questions such as establishing and resourcing more local institutions to be tasked with on the ground implementation, management and ongoing enforcement of protected areas, but this will be done differently in each country.

All countries should submit an NBSAP that specifies a national target for ocean conservation. Currently, only about a third of the 156 coastal and maritime countries have agreed to conserve and protect at least 30% of their respective national waters by 2030, either reporting this in their NBSAPs, through endorsement of the *Ocean Conservation Pledge* or other means. Of these countries, 40% have gone further by setting additional targets for designating waters as fully or highly protected. Yet, the majority — two-thirds — of these non-landlocked countries have still not adopted the 30% national target, with many opting for less ambitious targets of 10 - 20%, or providing no target at all.

One country - Niue - has set itself an ambitious target of protecting 100% of its EEZ by 2030, and has already made progress in designating 40% of the EEZ in highly or fully protected MPAs, which may inspire others to do so too. The EU member states have a 30% target in place, due to the EU biodiversity strategy (European Commission, 2020). This strategy also sets a separate target of 10% of each member states' national waters being "strictly protected". This target risks lowering the ambition of member states or counting ineffectively protected areas toward the remaining 20% that, according to the EU, do not need to be strictly protected. As of now, commitments and clear national targets for marine conservation are lacking for most countries, both in NBSAPs and other national policies. The upcoming COP16 will hopefully inspire countries to increase their ambitions for effective marine conservation.

Implementation of marine conservation takes place across multiple levels of governance, from the national to the local including governance of the protected area itself. To illustrate both the recommended steps for improving coverage and effectiveness, as well as the complexity involved in achieving these goals, the report includes three case studies. These cases are drawn from various global regions, and will provide additional insights into how the recommendations offered by this report apply to unique national contexts.

The following section will detail the recommended priority topics for governments as they move forward in the task of protecting our ocean and marine areas.

02 How can we do better?

As illustrated by the data, the global community is generally lagging in meeting the 30x30 target across two key dimensions: quantity (coverage) and quality (effectiveness) of marine protection. Based on additional desk research and expert interviews, we recommend the following focus areas to ramp up action from the international community to achieve 30% effective marine conservation by 2030. These recommendations should be at the top of the agenda for the COP16 UN Biodiversity Conference in October 2024:

1. **Increase the quantity (coverage) of areas under conservation, both in national and international (high seas) waters and establish national marine conservation targets**
2. **Improve the quality of marine conservation (implement effective protection)**
3. **Support Indigenous Peoples and local communities**
4. **Unlock sufficient and durable (international) finance**
5. **Improve reporting and data collection**

Ocean conservation is crucial for meeting nature and climate goals, as well as ensuring food and livelihood security. We call for action from governments to increase marine protection efforts and restore the required balance between nature and people.

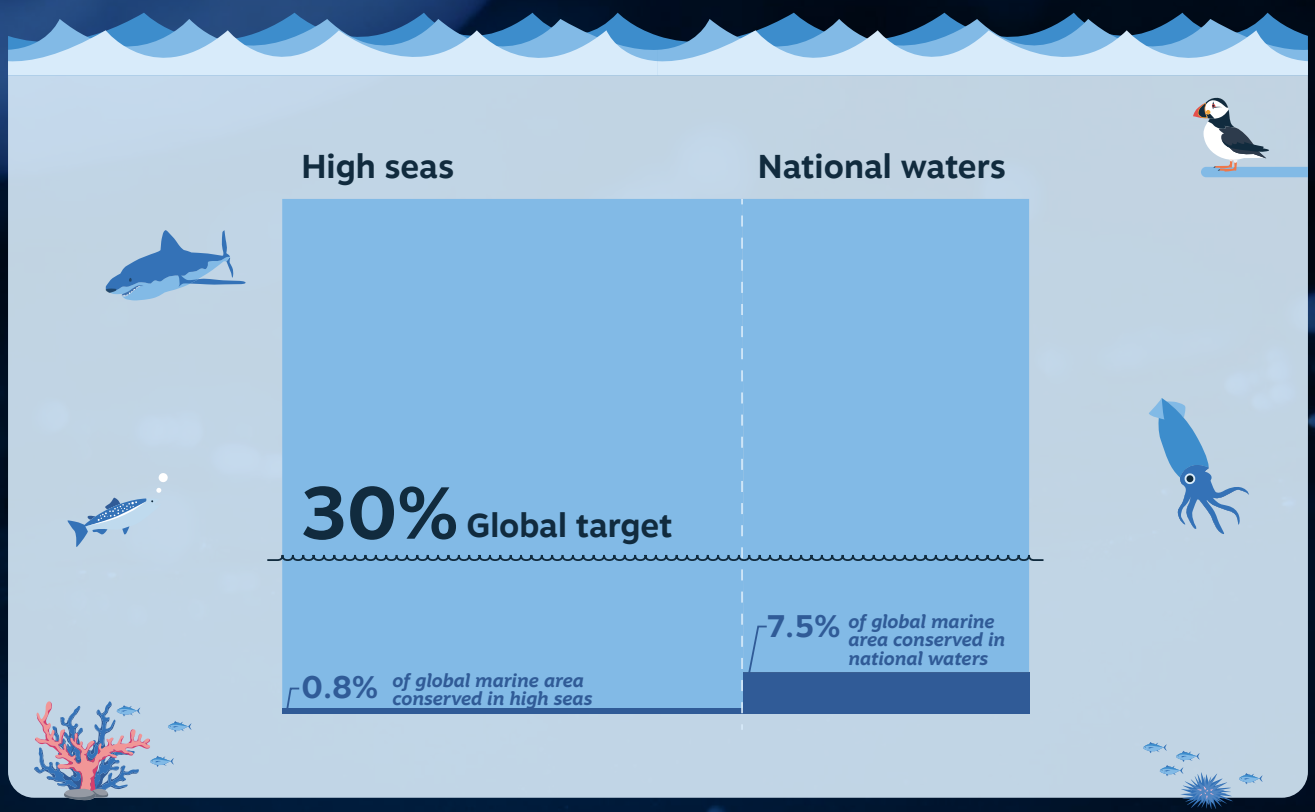


Figure 7 *Overview of current marine conservation in national waters and high seas, as a percentage of total marine area. Highlighting that while more conservation is taking place in national waters, action is needed in both areas to reach the 30x30 target.*

1. Increase the quantity (coverage) of areas under conservation, both in national and international (high seas) waters and establish national marine conservation targets

As of August 2024, only 8.3% of global marine areas are reported as protected. At the current rate of progress — an increase of just 0.5% since the adoption of the GBF in 2022 — this figure is projected to reach only 9.7% by 2030. It is clear that we need to accelerate efforts to protect marine areas if we want to achieve the 30x30 target. Countries must protect more of their **national waters** and work together to expand protection in the vast **international waters** beyond their borders (high seas).

PROTECTING NATIONAL WATERS

Countries need to protect more of the marine areas within their national waters, which extend up to 200 nautical miles from the coastline. In these zones, coastal countries hold special rights to explore and manage marine resources, making them crucial for sustainable resource use and conservation efforts. Only 14 coastal countries have reported more than 30% of their waters as protected areas: Monaco, Palau, United Kingdom, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Australia, Argentina, Germany, Chile, Colombia, Belgium, France, Seychelles and the Netherlands. Looking at recent progress, only three countries have significantly increased protection since the adoption of the GBF in 2022: Comoros has protected an extra 28.5%; Oman an additional 15.9%; and France an extra 10.8%. With just six years left to achieve the 30% global target, countries must significantly increase their commitments and actions within their national waters. These commitments and actions should be laid out as national targets in NBSAPs, which currently lack ambition specifically around marine conservation. Setting national targets and sharing them internationally has the potential to create global momentum, and allows countries to be held accountable to their commitments.

The designation of new MPAs should involve careful spatial planning. Both new and existing MPAs must be of sufficient size to minimize the edge effect, which can reduce conservation benefits (*Ohayon, Granot & Belmaker, 2021*). In addition, they should be ecologically representative, ensuring adequate representation of ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity (*Fischer et al., 2019*). MPAs should also provide ecological connectivity to allow for the movement of populations, individuals, genetic material, and non-living resources between ecosystems (*Hilty et al., 2020*). Networks of connected inshore national waters (<12 nautical miles), offshore national waters (12-200 nautical miles) and high seas MPAs can provide migration corridors, for example, allowing salmon to migrate between freshwater rivers and the ocean. Enhancing connectivity also bolsters the resilience of species and ecosystems, increasing the capacity to adapt to both natural and human-induced environmental changes (*Cannizzo et al., 2021*). In this context, coordination and collaboration between countries are vital for expanding and connecting marine conservation efforts. Cross-boundary MPAs, such as the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor (CMAR) established by Ecuador, Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia, exemplify successful international cooperation and could be replicated elsewhere. Creating more robust legal frameworks and effective regulation could strengthen these cross-country initiatives (*Enright et al., 2021*).

Protection should also focus around those areas that are considered ecologically important, regardless of their location. Currently, many of the world's large protected areas are located in the distant national waters (in the form of overseas territories) of countries such as France, the USA, and the UK (see case study). These areas often consist of sparsely populated island waters, relatively undisturbed by industrial activities like fishing, leading to higher biodiversity. Prioritizing the protection of these biodiversity hotspots is crucial — recent research found that only two realms of the Marine Ecoregions of the World biogeographic classification include more than 10% fully or highly protected coverage — the Eastern Indo-Pacific and the Southern Ocean (*Pike et al. 2024*). Neglecting protection of biodiverse and depleted areas closer to population centers because they are more challenging to manage, leaves these important ecosystems vulnerable to extractive and destructive activities. It also means that the local populations miss out on the social, economic and health benefits of marine conservation. Establishing protected areas in these regions can rehabilitate ecosystems, leading to enhanced fish stocks (*Grorud-Colvert et al., 2021*; *Lester et al., 2009*; *Sala & Giakoumi, 2018*; *Zupan et al., 2018*) and offering numerous co-benefits to nearby communities (*Ban et al., 2019*; *Nowakowski et al., 2023*; *Turnbull et al., 2021*). Recovery of depleted areas can also help increase the resilience of ecosystems to climate change and human pressures. Therefore, countries should focus more on protecting and regenerating high-extraction zones that are ecologically important rather than just the "low-hanging fruit" of distant MPAs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase the amount of MPAs in countries' national waters

Countries need to significantly increase the amount of protected marine areas in their national waters to reach the global target. The addition of meaningful MPAs should speed up, to ensure sufficient coverage by 2030.

Ensure good spatial planning of MPAs to optimize biodiversity benefits

MPAs should be of sufficient size to reduce edge effects, placed in areas with ecological representativeness, and should be connected with each other to allow for migration of species.

Commit to national marine conservation targets in National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans (NBSAPs)

Clear national marine conservation targets signal a country's commitment to the 30x30 target. In addition, defining a national target allows for countries to be held accountable by civil society and the international community.

Also protect and regenerate high-extraction zones rather than just remote biodiversity hotspots

Greater action for marine biodiversity is urgently needed in ecologically important zones near densely populated areas, where ecosystems are particularly vulnerable or heavily degraded by large-scale economic activities, and in a more diverse portfolio of ecosystem regions.

PROTECTING THE HIGH SEAS

The high seas are critical to reach the 30x30 target. The high seas, also known as Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) or international waters, refers to the parts of open ocean that lie beyond the boundaries of any one country, specifically beyond the first 200 nautical miles, known as national waters. The high seas are incredibly vast, making up two-thirds of the ocean's surface and over 95% of the Earth's space for life on the planet (*Pew, 2018*). Research shows they host some of the planet's most diverse ecosystems. Rich in biodiversity, the high seas serve as migration routes for species like whales and sharks and are home to unique environments like deep sea coral reefs. Their interconnectivity with national waters and coastal waters also supports important fisheries (*Pew, 2024*). The Southern Ocean around Antarctica, part of the high seas, covers 10% of the global ocean and plays an especially important role for the planet. Through its powerful currents, Antarctica's ocean regulates our oxygen production and climate, and drives key nutrients that feed the whole ocean, which in turn provides food and livelihoods.

Currently, the high seas remain largely unprotected with only 1.4% under some form of conservation (*MPAtlas, 2024*). This low number is mostly due to the lack of a comprehensive global legal framework to establish MPAs in these international waters. Few organizations have the legal authority to manage these MPAs and the economic activities within them. Additionally, there is a risk that protected areas may be designated in name only, with decisions taken to attribute existing or future fisheries management areas as area-based biodiversity protections, rather than ensuring the creation of large, fully protected zones. The lack of protection of the vast majority of high seas is concerning, given that activities like fishing and, increasingly, deep sea mining and potential geo-engineering activities pose significant threats to biodiversity.

There are a couple of rare exceptions where international bodies already allow for the establishment of MPAs on the high seas. The best examples of high seas MPAs are in Antarctica, with the South Orkney Islands and the world's largest marine reserve in the Ross Sea, covering over 2.1 million km². These areas were established by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), which falls under the Antarctic Treaty System. CCAMLR manages both protected areas and fisheries in the area and is supported by Treaty-set mining and shipping restrictions (*CCAMLR, 2021*). At the same time, designation of additional MPAs in Antarctica's Southern Ocean has been challenging, mired by geopolitics. In 2023, G20 leaders *recommitted* to supporting the designation of a representative system of MPAs in the Southern Ocean. Now we need to see this commitment being delivered. Similarly, in the Northeast Atlantic, the regional marine conservation body OSPAR has designated a number of high seas MPAs, though generally lacks the legal authority to regulate the biggest threats to biodiversity. Both of these high seas regions need protection, but political and economic interests have made implementing meaningful measures difficult.

The Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, sometimes referred to as the High Seas Treaty, has the potential to provide the required international legal framework for creating high seas MPAs and could be an important contribution to delivering the 30x30 target. In 2023, following more than a decade of discussions and negotiations, the BBNJ was finally agreed at UN level. At least 60 ratifications are needed by countries for the Treaty to enter into force. As of the publication of this report, 13 countries have ratified the Treaty. However, since the Treaty opened for signing in September 2023, over 100 countries have signed, signaling their commitment to ratify. Many countries are rallying around the political deadline of depositing their ratification by the 3rd UN Ocean Conference happening in June 2025. Once this treaty has entered into force, this will be a major milestone toward protecting the high seas.

With the new international BBNJ Agreement on the horizon, it is crucial to begin establishing the groundwork for rapid, effective, and equitable implementation now. Three priority areas are addressed here.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ratify the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ) so it can enter into force swiftly

Countries should ratify the BBNJ Agreement without delay for the 3rd UN Ocean Conference in June 2025. Therefore it is essential to raise awareness, provide capacity-building resources for developing countries, and offer technical assistance for implementation. Countries must also establish strong treaty institutions, including Science and Technical Committees and Implementation and Compliance bodies (Gjerde et al., 2022). Additionally, they should ensure the provisional application of the Treaty, which creates legally binding obligations to apply the agreement as if it were already in force.

Take action of protection of High Seas MPAs in Antarctica's water now

Efforts should be focused on using existing tools and bodies, particularly in the waters governed by CCAMLR. Currently, four major MPA proposals are awaiting approval (CCAMLR, 2023), all of which are ready for designation. Together with existing MPAs in CCAMLR waters, the additional protection of these new MPAs would increase protection of the global ocean to 2.6% from 0.8%. This will represent a substantial contribution to the 30x30 target.

Establish international collaborations to accelerate high seas protection

Global efforts are needed to ensure the long-term success of protected areas in international waters. All countries must be equipped to contribute to and benefit from high seas conservation. Stronger governance and political leadership are needed to advance these initiatives, requiring partnerships among governments, civil society, IPs and LCs, scientists, and MPA managers. Additionally, innovative financial mechanisms, including international funds from wealthier nations, should be developed to support these efforts.

2. Improve the quality of marine conservation (implement effective protection)

To achieve the 30x30 target, more must be done than simply increasing the quantity (coverage) of MPAs and OECMs. To ensure long-term, meaningful biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration, the quality, or effective protection, of MPAs must be enhanced. Effectively protected MPAs are more likely to restore species and habitats, support ecosystem functioning and resilience (i.e. the ability to recover from disturbances), contribute to the sustainability of fisheries through larval supply and spillover, and promote human well-being and livelihoods by maintaining healthy ocean ecosystems.

MPAs are likely effective for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem recovery when clear ambitious guidelines are established and consistently enforced. It is not sufficient to only look at area coverage conservation targets (e.g. 30%) based solely on the legal status of a marine area, i.e. whether an MPA is 'implemented'. It is also relevant whether that area has practical enforcement of protective measures such as fishing bans. Unfortunately, many 'implemented MPAs' have little to no ambitious restrictions on harmful activities nor enforcement; consequently they have little to no positive effect on nature.

The lack of ambitious regulations for many MPAs is partly a result of a loose definition. The current IUCN definition of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is broad and inconsistently applied by various countries. This inconsistency has resulted in many MPAs permitting highly damaging industrial fishing methods, such as bottom trawling, or oil and gas extraction.

The regulatory ambiguity surrounding the application of the term "MPAs" also extends to Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) and their inclusion in target percentages. According to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the key distinction between MPAs and OECMs is that OECMs are not required to have biodiversity conservation as their primary objective, yet they must still achieve effective conservation outcomes (*MacKinnon, 2019*). As a result, OECMs can support conservation efforts in sectors not traditionally linked to biodiversity protection — such as fisheries, mining, tourism, and energy — although this creates a risk of misrepresenting progress toward global conservation targets and enabling "blue-washing" practices. For instance, countries unable or unwilling to establish effective MPAs may designate OECMs in areas used for oil extraction or industrial fishing. This could lead to no real benefit or even harm to biodiversity conservation, fulfilling international conservation targets without ensuring long-term protection of ecosystems (*Claudet et al., 2022*).

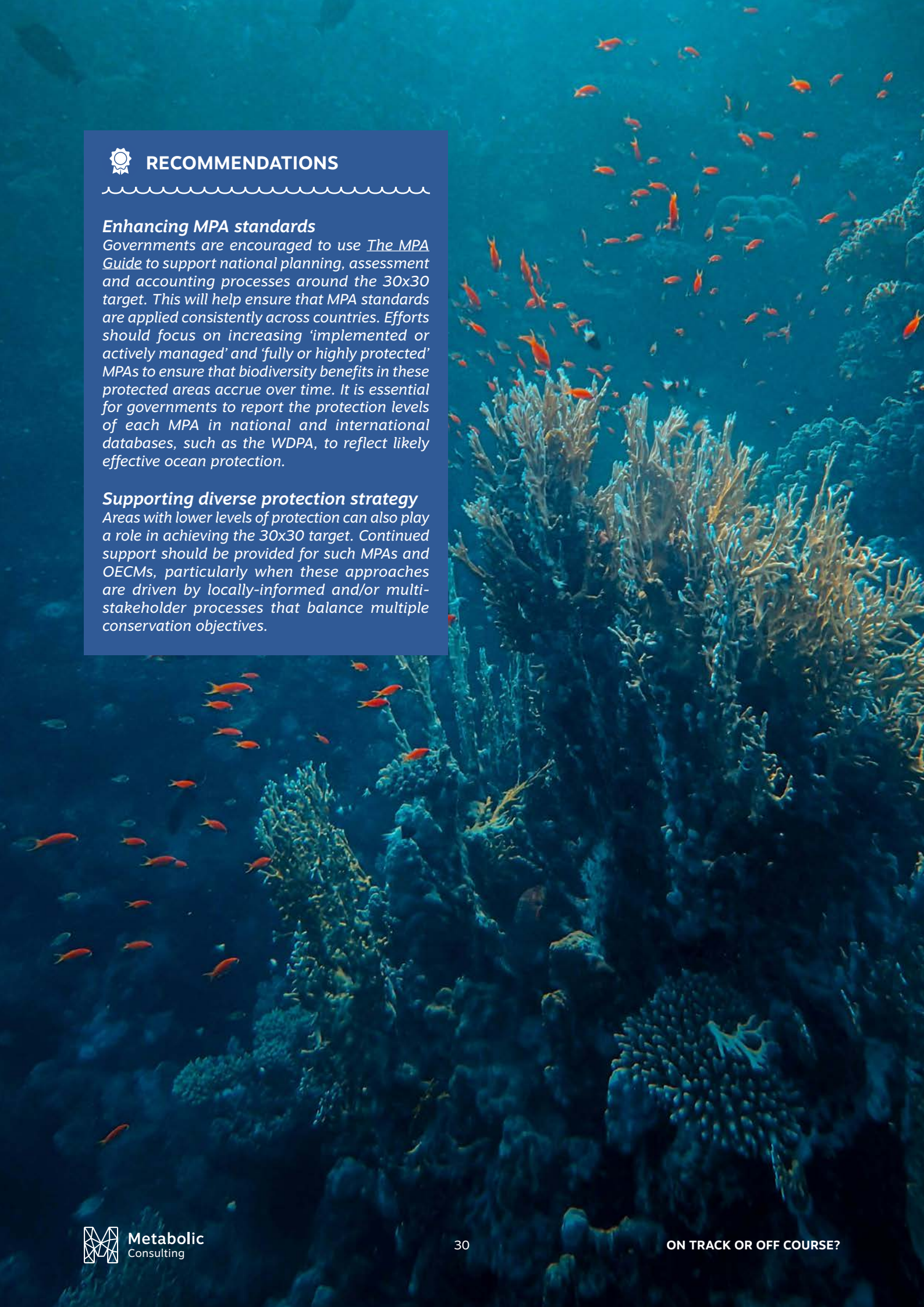
The lack of enforcement in established MPAs constitutes another significant challenge. MPAs that are designated but not implemented and actively enforced are often referred to as 'paper parks' — highlighting a lack of capacity and support that enables harmful activities to persist unrestrained. This situation undermines the ecological benefits that protected areas are intended to provide (*Grorud-Colvert et al., 2021*).

To address these challenges regarding definitions and management standards, *The MPA Guide* offers a comprehensive framework to assess the protection level per MPA and its expected social and ecological impact. It provides governments and relevant parties with the necessary tools to design and adapt MPAs, ensuring effective protection that leads to biodiversity enhancement and ecosystem restoration. *The MPA Guide* framework is based on four components:

1. Stage of Establishment: proposed, designated, implemented or actively managed.
2. Level of Protection: minimally, lightly, highly or fully protected.
3. Enabling Conditions: ensuring effective planning, implementation, governance and management.
4. Outcomes: expected ecological and social outcomes, based on protection level.

The likely effective protection of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) depends on the first three core components. However, for biodiversity benefits to increase, regulations must be established and enforced on the ground. According to *The MPA Guide*, this translates to areas that are categorized as either "implemented" or "actively managed" (*Grorud-Colvert et al., 2021*).

Only about a third of all MPAs, or 2.8% of total marine areas, are likely effectively protected, based on a global assessment of MPAs using *The MPA Guide* (*Pike et al. 2024*). A key focus for policymakers leading up to 2030 needs to be increasing effective protection of existing and newly formed MPAs, rather than just looking at the area coverage on paper.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhancing MPA standards

Governments are encouraged to use The MPA Guide to support national planning, assessment and accounting processes around the 30x30 target. This will help ensure that MPA standards are applied consistently across countries. Efforts should focus on increasing 'implemented or actively managed' and 'fully or highly protected' MPAs to ensure that biodiversity benefits in these protected areas accrue over time. It is essential for governments to report the protection levels of each MPA in national and international databases, such as the WDPA, to reflect likely effective ocean protection.

Supporting diverse protection strategy

Areas with lower levels of protection can also play a role in achieving the 30x30 target. Continued support should be provided for such MPAs and OECMs, particularly when these approaches are driven by locally-informed and/or multi-stakeholder processes that balance multiple conservation objectives.

3. Support Indigenous Peoples and local communities

Indigenous Peoples (IPs) manage almost 40% of the world's intact ecosystems (*Garnett et al., 2018*). Their participation in marine conservation efforts is therefore fundamental to achieving the 30x30 target. In areas where IPs hold traditional tenure rights, they can establish Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs), which can contribute to national conservation efforts. The 30x30 target recognizes the rights and roles of IPs, especially in regard to their traditional territories which are often the basis of their livelihoods. Governments must also recognize the rights of IPs, and ensure that they have free, prior and informed consent regarding decisions made about their waters and land. Furthermore, decision-makers should incorporate traditional management practices to ensure that conservation is culturally appropriate and grounded in local values. Rather than replacing traditional systems, conservation efforts must build on the thousands of years of Indigenous knowledge that have successfully supported biodiversity and sustained Indigenous livelihoods. In many cases, global conservation efforts have led to the imposition of external management frameworks, which not only disrupt traditional systems but also undermine the ability of communities to adapt management practices to rapidly changing environmental conditions. By doing so, they lose control over the management of their ecosystems and can no longer benefit from the critical resources these ecosystems provide, ultimately weakening both conservation outcomes and local livelihoods.

The establishment of MPAs and OECMs should also recognize and support the leadership role of local communities (LCs), who, like IPs, are primary stewards of marine environments and species in many regions. Engaging LCs and other local rights-holders is critical for MPA establishment processes. For instance, collaborative conservation efforts involving LCs and small-scale fisheries, coupled with sustained good governance, has shown to be crucial for the effective management of MPAs and for ensuring the long-term success of conservation initiatives (*Di Franco et al., 2020*). Supporting LCs to create and manage their MPAs and OECMs while combining their traditional knowledge with scientific research as complementary sources of information for effective ecosystem management can have wide-ranging positive impacts on biodiversity and local livelihoods, as the case study on community-led conservation in Mozambique illustrates.

Creating MPAs in areas for which IPs and LCs do not hold tenure rights but depend on for resources or have other interests in, can put their livelihoods at risk and create conflict. In these cases these groups should be consulted early on in the process and their rights and needs should be considered at every step in the establishment process and management plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Support Indigenous People and local communities to establish and govern conservation areas

Indigenous-led conservation often has highly successful conservation outcomes, especially when IPs have a clear mandate over a certain area (see case study about indigenous-led conservation). Rather than being considered simply as rights-holders groups, IPs and LCs should be at the forefront of every stage of establishing and managing MPAs and OECMs. As their livelihoods are often dependent on local biodiversity, they have the most to gain from effective biodiversity protection. Governments can encourage the establishment of MPAs and OECMs by IP and LC groups by recognizing and restoring IPs' rights to do so and devolving the power for LCs to do so (Fidler et al., 2022) and reducing administrative barriers for the process.

Encourage knowledge co-production from local and scientific sources

IPs and LCs generally hold local ecological knowledge specific to their area that has been passed on over many generations. These knowledge systems have maintained biodiversity for generations, and should continue to inform the establishment and management of MPAs. Both case studies on p.38 highlight the integration of traditional knowledge with Western scientific methods to manage MPAs. This kind of knowledge co-production enhances effective implementation and helps develop solutions that are tailored to the local context (Di Franco et al., 2020).

Provide financial resources to enable creation and management of locally governed conservation areas

IPs and LCs who maintain a deep relationship with their territories and have developed sustainable practices and lifestyles for their management, are often under-resourced and in need of financial redistribution (Dawson et al., 2021). As with any conservation effort, money is needed to fund the management and monitoring of Indigenous- or locally-led conservation, alongside activities such as awareness raising and educational programs. Furthermore, resources must be invested in promoting and supporting sustainable livelihood diversification among Indigenous groups and local communities to enhance their resilience and provide alternative income sources. Appropriate funds should be allocated by national and local governments, and directly provided to IPs and LCs.

4. Unlock sufficient and durable (international) finance

Finance plays a critical role in enabling effective biodiversity conservation. Capacity building, management, monitoring, and enforcement all require adequate and predictable funding. It is estimated that $700 billion per year between now and 2030 is needed from both public and private sources to meet the GBF goal of halting and reversing nature loss by 2030 (*CBD, 2022*).

Globally, governments currently allocate an estimated $68 billion annually toward domestic biodiversity efforts, accounting for about two-thirds of total biodiversity finance (*OECD, n.d.*). Meanwhile, Parties to the CBD have committed to increase biodiversity finance from all sources to $200 billion per year by 2030 (*CBD, 2022*). To meet this goal, governments must mobilize more domestic resources for biodiversity, alongside working to align financial flows. This includes taking action to eliminate or redirect incentives that are harmful to biodiversity. Currently, governments are still spending five to eight times as much on harming biodiversity than on helping it (*OECD, n.d.*). Strategic public policy interventions — encompassing environmental and fiscal policy, public governance, and international trade — can also help unlock much needed private funding for biodiversity efforts.

While the responsibility to establish and manage MPAs lies primarily with national governments, not all countries have the necessary resources to fully fund effective marine conservation efforts. It is crucial that developed countries deliver on their promise to increase international finance to developing countries to at least $20 billion per year by 2025 and $30 billion by 2030 (*CBD, 2022*). Providing critical resources to countries facing severe fiscal and financial challenges enables them to achieve the GBF goals. Next to that, international financial support flowing from developed to developing countries also holds ethical, symbolic and relational importance. It shows a recognition that there are differing responsibilities for both historic and ongoing biodiversity loss, shows solidarity, and maintains trust in multilateral governance frameworks (*Pettinotti et al., 2024*). A recent study by ODI (*2024*) analyzed each developed country's progress in 2021 toward their share of the $20 billion, finding that only two countries (Norway and Sweden) achieved this and the overwhelming majority of developed countries fell significantly short, contributing less than half of their fair share. Fortunately, overall biodiversity-specific development finance is trending upward, growing from $11.1 billion in 2021 to $15.4 billion in 2022 (*OECD, 2024*). However, there is much work to be done to meet the $20 billion target by 2025.

Domestic and international finance used to address the biodiversity crisis should not only be sufficient in quantity, but also effective in quality. While development funding for biodiversity grew significantly in 2022, money came mostly in the form of loans rather than grants. Multilateral institutions such as development banks even increased their funding from $2.7 billion in 2021 to $5.7 billion in 2022 (*OECD, 2024*). We need to ensure that the form finance takes does not further burden developing countries that are debt-laden. In addition, we should make sure that biodiversity is not a tangential approach to other funding endeavors and that it has, more often than not, the principal goal of tackling biodiversity loss. Bilateral Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members' Official Development Finance, for example, saw flows toward biodiversity as a principal objective decrease by 17% from 2021 to 2022.

To ensure fair and effective distribution, it is crucial that once necessary funding and financing are secured, national governance structures allocate these resources to the appropriate levels of management. As many protected areas are located in remote regions, it is essential that the institutions, offices and communities responsible for management and enforcement in these areas are equipped with sufficient resources. Specifically, funding should be directed toward scientific research to support the spatial planning and the establishment of MPAs, as well as to stakeholder engagement, monitoring, progress tracking, and capacity building for robust protected area governance. These processes are time-intensive and require trust, continuity, and stable financing to be successful (*Bohorquez et al., 2022*).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Aim for higher financial support

To bridge the gap in international financing for biodiversity conservation, it is essential that more countries step up and commit to funding. The resource mobilization outlined in the Kunming-Montreal GBF aims to increase international public resources for biodiversity to at least $20 billion per year by 2025 and at least $30 billion per year by 2030. Currently, with only five donor countries responsible for nearly three-quarters of international biodiversity funding between 2015 and 2022 (OECD, 2024), it is crucial for wealthier nations to increase their financial support and actively participate in preserving global biodiversity.

Prioritize quality in funding

To ensure fair and effective distribution of funding, global efforts should prioritize affordable and accessible financing. Firstly, it is essential to provide affordable funding for developing countries through grants, which have seen minimal growth over the past decade (OECD, 2024), or through more favorable loan terms. This is particularly important as loans can worsen the economy of debt-strapped developing countries. Secondly, clear channels of access to funding must be established. For developing countries to effectively draw from international funding sources, it is crucial to address issues such as limited transparency, bureaucratic hurdles, and rigid funding terms (Kallhauge, 2024).

Strengthen biodiversity-specific funding

To successfully address biodiversity conservation and meet the 30x30 target, increased funding for biodiversity-specific projects is crucial. Although overall biodiversity-specific financing from all sources has grown, funding specifically from Bilateral Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members' Official Development Finance has declined (OECD, 2024). "Biodiversity-specific" projects focus directly on reversing biodiversity loss, while "biodiversity-related" primarily target other issues with some indirect benefits for biodiversity. Relying on funding that is not primarily directed at safeguarding nature may slow ecosystem restoration efforts and impede progress toward achieving the GBF goals.

5. Improve reporting and data collection

To keep track of global progress toward the 30x30 target and continue to hold countries accountable to their commitments, data collection is critical. Many sources of data rely on self-reported numbers, but as this assessment has shown, these often include areas that are not yet implemented or effectively protected in practice. To track meaningful progress, data collection should therefore be improved and there should be expanded consultations with Indigenous Peoples groups to better understand the appropriate inclusion and contribution of Indigenous Protected Areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Standardize reporting of MPA effectiveness

When planning the expansion of MPAs, decision-makers should use The MPA Guide to design guidelines to ensure a likely effective level of protection. For comprehensive reporting, it is recommended to not only share the national percentage of marine protected areas, but also to report on the MPA's stage of establishment and level of protection. The MPA Guide assessment methodology may not be suitable for OECMs due to the varied and diverse nature of these conservation areas. However, their effectiveness should still be evaluated and reported for the 30x30 target.

Facilitate reporting on new MPAs and develop integrated progress tracking

Efforts should be made to facilitate data collection on new and proposed MPAs. This could be achieved by creating a centralized system that allows stakeholders to track which MPAs are expected to be operational within the next few years. Furthermore, it is recommended to support the development of integrated tracking and data collection between marine protected areas and their terrestrial and freshwater counterparts, to effectively monitor progress toward achieving the 30x30 target.

Collaborate with Indigenous Peoples to work towards closing the Indigenous Protected Areas data gap

A specific gap to be addressed by data collection is that of Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs). As these areas often do not fit the Western concept of MPAs, they can be challenging to capture in data collection. It is critical to work together with the Indigenous community to determine if and how to accurately and respectfully include IPAs in national and global accounting.

03 Case studies

UNITED KINGDOM

Equity within national contributions to the 30x30 target

The United Kingdom (UK) has committed to protect 30% of its land and sea by 2030 and is making gradual progress toward meeting this target (*UK Parliament, 2023*). 68.3% of the UK's waters are designated as MPAs (*SkyTruth*). A closer look at this data reveals some of the complexity and nuance involved in each country determining its contribution to this global conservation target.

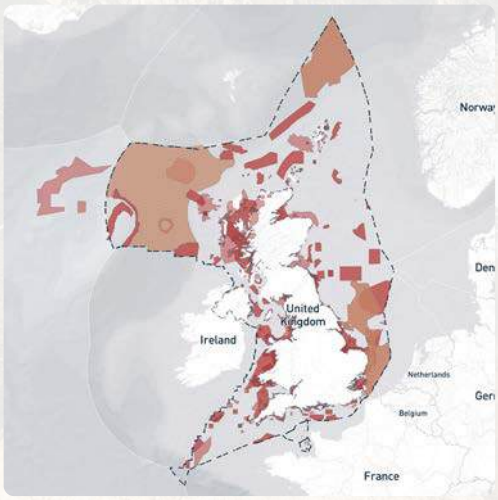
For the UK, only around 8% of the reported MPA coverage lies in its domestic waters. Over 90% of the MPAs are situated in distant waters of its overseas territories (OTs) (*Pike et al., 2024*). These include areas such as the Pitcairn Islands, Tristan da Cunha, and the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands (SkyTruth). This MPA distribution is unsurprising, as these regions are Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and represent "low hanging fruit" in conservation terms: they are remote, sparsely populated and relatively untouched still by large-scale economic activity such as fishing and shipping.

Supported by an active coalition of NGOs, the UK Government initiated the *The Blue Belt Programme* to support the UK Overseas Territories with the protection and sustainable management of their marine environments. This includes providing financial support for developing sustainable business models, as well as monitoring and enforcement of MPAs. Currently, 10 out of 16 OTs are participating in this initiative. The UK Government is looking to expand the program to include partnerships with a number of Caribbean territories.

While nearly 40% of the marine protection in OTs is fully or highly protected, the situation within the UK's domestic waters is much less effective in terms of biodiversity conservation outcomes. Of the 47% of UK domestic waters designated as MPAs, most have not been assessed. Only three MPAs which are reported "no-take zones" have been assessed, with two likely to be fully or highly protected. However, these zones account for less than 0.1% of the country's total domestic waters. (*MPAtlas, 2024*). This is largely due to a legislative loophole that allows bottom trawling — one of the most destructive fishing practices — within over half of these 'protected' areas, undermining the UK's claims of progress toward the 30x30 target. The government is already taking steps to address this issue, such as introducing new bylaws in 2023 to protect four of England's offshore MPAs, including the Doggerbank, from damaging fishing activity (*Patrick, 2023*). There is a need to continue apace with this improvement if the UK wants to claim that it has contributed its fair share of home waters to marine conservation.

The UK case also reveals a broader nuance around fair share contribution to the 30x30 target and one that is evident among other Western countries with large OTs such as the United States of America (USA) and France. While it is commendable that these biodiversity hotspots are being conserved, their status as hotspots is largely because they remained relatively undisturbed from exploitative economic activities. Besides conserving these biodiversity hotspots, countries also have a responsibility to regenerate depleted marine areas in more industrialized regions — usually close to the mainland. This not only protects and restores ecosystems but also combats climate change, supporting the resilience of small-scale fishers and bringing health benefits to the larger number of people living on continental areas. The burden and benefits of conservation should not be experienced only by remote, less affluent regions, while richer regions maintain the status quo. Nations with OTs should take responsibility for restoring ecosystems in depleted marine areas in domestic waters, and contribute to conservation efforts in OTs with financial support and capacity building.

UNITED KINGDOM



LEGEND

MPA Guide Protection Level

- *Fully Protected*
- *Highly Protected*
- *Lightly Protected*
- *Minimally Protected/Incompatible*
- *Unknown/To Be Determined*
- *Designated*
- *Proposed/Committed*
- *MPAs reported to the WDPA*
- *United Kingdom (all waters) boundary and marine area*
- *Area with multiple claims or joint control*

Figure 8 *Map of marine protected areas in the UK's domestic waters and overseas territories in the South Atlantic and South Pacific Oceans. Note that there are also MPAs in the UK's overseas territories in the Caribbean / Sargasso sea which are not shown on this map, and also not (yet) assessed for protection level. Red areas are MPAs reported to the WDPA which are not (yet) assessed for protection level (likely effective protection). However, it is known by experts that most unassessed areas in the UK's domestic waters have a minimal/incompatible protection level because destructive fishing practices such as bottom trawling are allowed.*

INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL APPROACHES TO CONSERVATION IN MOZAMBIQUE AND CANADA

Indigenous-led protection can lead to more effective conservation outcomes

Learning from and supporting Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and local communities (LCs) is as important in achieving ecological goals as it is in achieving the environmental justice goals clearly set forth in the GBF.

A successful example of community-led conservation is the Inhambane Bay Community Conservation Network (*IBCCN*) in Mozambique. Established in 2017, the network, locally referred to as Sidika, encompasses 12 no-take MPAs covering 6.7km², with proposals for further expansion currently under consideration. This initiative is co-managed by traditional leaders from nine coastal communities in collaboration with the local Community Fishing Councils, and with support from Ocean Revolution Moçambique, a non-profit organization, other NGOs, and local academic institutions. The protection standards of these MPAs align with the *Blue Park Standard* for conservation effectiveness established by the Marine Conservation Institute and an international Science Council composed of leading marine conservation scientists, positioning Sidika as a Blue Spark collaboration with the potential to achieve Blue Park status in the future.

The local communities of Inhambane Bay combine traditional ecological knowledge — locally referred to as "ocean rules," established by village elders — with conventional MPA management practices. Community engagement in conservation efforts is facilitated by Ocean Revolution Moçambique in partnership with various NGOs and academic researchers. Despite the involvement of numerous stakeholders, coordination has been effective, with high levels of engagement. As a result, community members use their "ocean rules" to identify key fishing areas and prioritize their conservation, while receiving training in catch monitoring and data collection, which enhances decision-making and improves fishing yields. Furthermore, scuba diving job training, educational programs, and alternative employment opportunities are being promoted within the communities to reduce pressure on marine resources and improve the livelihoods of local youth and community members. The organizations involved also promote gender equity and accessibility, incorporating marine environmental education into local school curricula and partnering with initiatives focused on women's empowerment. Through these efforts, local communities of the IBCCN and the involved stakeholders are enhancing environmental stewardship, conserving their ecosystem, and diversifying as well as improving livelihoods across the bay.

Similar to Sidika in Mozambique, the *Gitdisdzu Lugyeks MPA in Canada* exemplifies successful Indigenous-led conservation and has recently been awarded the Blue Park Award for its exceptional protection of marine biodiversity. Established in 2022 by the Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation and managed entirely by their Stewardship Authority, this 33.5 km² MPA, also known as Kitasu Bay, plays a crucial role in supporting diverse marine life, including important herring spawning grounds, and is integral to the Nation's culture, livelihoods, and traditions.

Gitdisdzu Lugyeks MPA is highly protected. The Kitasoo Xai'xais Stewardship Authority integrates traditional ecological knowledge with contemporary marine science to establish a sustainable framework for marine stewardship, guided by the Nation's principles of respect, interconnectedness, reciprocity, and intergenerational knowledge. With extensive experience in the region, the Kitasoo Xai'xais Guardian Watchmen actively monitor and care for the MPA, ensuring the protection of vital marine resources and the preservation of their cultural practices for future generations.

Effectively facilitating IPs' and LCs' self-determination and stewardship of land and water — despite the ongoing impacts of colonial legacies — promotes successful conservation strategies (*Tran et al., 2020*). These examples demonstrate that collaborative, cross-cultural approaches can integrate Indigenous and Western knowledge systems, thereby enhancing conservation efforts while respecting Indigenous and local rights and perspectives. Ultimately, the involvement of IPs and LCs in the design and implementation of conservation measures is often a key solution for addressing the performance of MPAs, leading to more effective management and improved conservation outcomes (*Ferse et al., 2010*).

PANAMA

Finance and capacity-building as a prerequisite for effective protection

Panama is home to some of the world's most diverse ecosystems, including rich biodiversity in both terrestrial and marine environments. To safeguard this rich natural heritage, the Panamanian government is prioritizing the protection of areas with high biodiversity value. While 20% of Panama's national waters is already fully or highly protected, the government recently announced the expansion of the Banco Volcán MPA from 14,000km² to over 90,000km² (*Mission Blue, 2023*). This expansion is crucial due to the area's high biodiversity and the presence of various migratory and endangered species. When the designated expansion is implemented/actively managed, Panama will be protecting almost 50% of its total seascape, making it one of the few countries globally, and the only one in Latin America, to reach this level. The protection level (likely effective impact on biodiversity) of Banco Volcán is still unknown/to be determined (*MPAtlas, 2024*).

This has been a major factor supporting the realization of the country's frontrunner implementation plan for the GBF commitments, including the 30x30 target, focusing on improving the management of existing MPAs and expanding conservation and restoration initiatives beyond these areas (*Hopman, 2023*). In collaboration with international partners, the Panamanian government has established the Center for Conservation and Sustainability (CONSOS), a dedicated institution that brings together the Ministry of Environment, NGOs, and other key stakeholders to oversee and support the execution of the 30x30 program. Serving as a project coordination office, CONSOS is a focal point for NGOs and private actors to provide implementation and financial support. Involvement of key NGOs as implementation partners has been particularly effective in strengthening stakeholder engagement.

Another key factor contributing to the effectiveness of implementation is the presence of dedicated owners for initiatives and the establishment of a monitoring system to track progress through KPIs. Additionally, Panama has enshrined its 30x30 commitments into law, ensuring stability and consistency even during political transitions. As a result, initiatives such as the declaration of MPAs, Project Finance for Permanence agreements (PFPs) to secure long-term protection for natural areas, and management plans continue to advance regardless of changes in administration. These measures enable the country to maintain momentum in the long term.

However, Panama also has opportunities to improve the management and governance of its MPAs to increase the quality of marine conservation. In this context, strengthening on the ground support and government capacity is key to improving the scale and depth of MPAs initiatives. Establishing legally binding collaborations between implementation partners could enhance their influence, and ability to engage with stakeholders, particularly IPs through the co-design and management of MPAs. Additionally, prioritizing collaborative partnerships with Indigenous Peoples at all stages could significantly improve outcomes and foster long-term sustainability. This is particularly important as Indigenous Peoples represent 12% of the national population and collectively own over 20% of Panama's territories (*IWGIA, n.d.*). Prioritizing inclusiveness of IPs by enabling them to become conservation owners can enhance equity and local capabilities, contributing to the effective safeguarding of these areas.

Developing a more robust management system that engages local stakeholders can also lead to more effective distribution of financial resources across governance levels and regions where management takes place. This is crucial given that the national government has committed to fund projects that align with the GBF goals and the 2030 Agenda, with the Ministry of Environment projecting an investment of approximately $265 million over the next eight years (*Hopman, 2023*). To raise such funds, Panama will require international biodiversity finance support to strengthen its capabilities. This support is essential for Panama to move from making significant commitments to effectively implementing established protected areas at the local level.

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ANNEX 1:
Data and methodology

DATA ANALYSIS

Metabolic's analysis draws on the latest data from the Marine Conservation Institute's (MCI) Marine Protection Atlas (*MPAtlas*) (which draws on national waters data from www.marineregions.org and MPA data from MPAtlas and World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA)/ProtectedPlanet) and from the *SkyTruth 30x30 Progress Tracker* (which draws on data from MPAtlas, WDPA, and other sources), combined with case study research and expert interviews to provide nuance to the numbers. Data cut-off point is August 2024 and might differ from numbers on MPAtlas' and SkyTruth's websites, which had their latest updates before August. MPAtlas data about the likely effective protection of MPAs was assessed using methodologies from the *The MPA Guide*. This report refers to 'likely effective protection' when marine areas are categorized as *implemented* and *fully or highly protected*. It's important to note that not all MPAs reported to the WDPA have been assessed (yet) for effectiveness. In addition, the MPAtlas assessment includes some areas which are proposed or committed but not yet implemented, explaining why in some cases the area assessed is larger than the area reported to be protected (for example in table 1).

WORLD DATABASE ON PROTECTED AREAS (WDPA)

The World Database on Protected Areas (*WDPA*) is a comprehensive global database that tracks terrestrial and marine protected areas. It is managed by the United Nations Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and is published by *Protected Planet*. The WDPA provides exhaustive, data-driven insights into global biodiversity conservation efforts, serving as a source to inform governments and stakeholders. The WDPA compiles government-reported figures and provides data for analysis, decision-making, and reporting on global conservation targets, such as the 30x30 target of protecting 30% of the world's land and ocean by 2030.

MARINE PROTECTION ATLAS (MPAtlas)

The *MPAtlas* was established by the Marine Conservation Institute (MCI) in 2012 and offers a detailed assessment of global MPAs. It uses a science-based framework called the *The MPA Guide* to categorize MPAs based on their level of protection and stage of establishment. The goal is to clarify which MPAs offer likely effective biodiversity conservation, ensuring accurate tracking toward global ocean protection targets like the 30x30 initiative. MPAtlas provides tools for users to explore MPA data, promoting transparency and informed decision-making in marine conservation.

Firstly, it is important to note that not all countries' MPAs have been assessed, and not all MPAs reported to the WDPA have yet been assessed for effectiveness. So far, the MPAtlas database includes *The MPA Guide* assessments for 783 MPA zones out of the more than 18,000 MPAs reported to the WDPA. However, the assessed MPAs include the 100 largest MPAs, which together cover 89% of the total global marine protected area and 7.3% of the global ocean area. Thus, the analysis provides useful insight into the global trend.

Furthermore, 8.3% of the total global marine area is under some form of conservation, of which 69% of this MPA coverage is implemented or actively managed, 10% has not yet been assessed (these are primarily small areas), and 21% is designated but not actually enforced or regulated. Given that the MPAtlas database includes some areas that have not yet been implemented, this explains why, in some cases, the area assessed is larger than the area reported to be protected (for effective protection, the area needs to be implemented or actively managed, not just designated or proposed/committed).

The level of protection of an MPA is based on activities and maximum allowed impacts in the given MPA. The assessed activities are mining, dredging and dumping, anchoring, infrastructure, aquaculture, fishing, and

non-extractive activities. In order to be classified as fully protected, minimal impacts from anchoring, infrastructure, aquaculture and non-extractive activities are permitted, while all other activities are prohibited. This activity-based method helps assess expected impacts on biodiversity and illustrates how important management plans are to effectively protect an area. Management plans and goals are used to determine the level of protection. If no management plan exists, the MPA is not considered implemented, and can therefore not be fully or highly protected.

ProtectedSeas also assesses the protection level of marine protected areas globally. However, this assessment is based on fishing protection alone. For this reason, this paper uses the MPAtlas protection level data, which captures the impacts of a range of different activities and likely provides a more comprehensive picture.

SKYTRUTH 30X30 PROGRESS TRACKER

Built by *SkyTruth*, a nonprofit conservation technology organization, with support from the *Bloomberg Ocean Initiative*, the *30x30 Progress Tracker* is a free, interactive platform designed for the general public to see — at a glance — how well the world is doing on enhancing ocean protection globally in line with the goal of protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030. It's based on August 2024 data from WDPA, MPAtlas and geospatial mapping. The platform can be used by civil society campaigns to track country-by-country progress, and by government agencies and policymakers to gain insights on 30x30 and compare countries' progress. The goal is to make information about 30x30 more accessible and transparent to everyone, including those in local communities who are directly impacted by this ambitious conservation effort.

ANNEX 2:

Country-level data on marine conservation and effectiveness

Table 4 *National share of marine protected areas (MPA and OECM) in 2022 and 2024, compared to the total national marine area (%); the share of likely effective protection in 2024 (Protection level: fully or highly protected) of the total national marine area (%); and the area assessed for protection level by 2024 of the total national marine area (%). Source: SkyTruth & MPAtlas, August 2024.*

Country	ISO 3	2022	2024		
		Ocean area under conservation (%)		Likely effective protection (%)	Marine area assessed for protection level (%)
Albania	ALB	1.1	1.1	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Algeria	DZA	0.1	0.1	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Angola	AGO	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8
Antigua and Barbuda	ATG	0.3	0.5	0.0	0.3
Argentina	ARG	46.7	46.7	11.0[a]	45.2
Australia	AUS	43.1	48.3	18.5	44.7
Azerbaijan	AZE	1.0	1.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Bahrain	BHR	17.8	17.8	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Bangladesh	BGD	7.5	7.5	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Barbados	BRB	0.0	0.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Belgium	BEL	37.7	37.7	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Belize	BLZ	11.8	11.8	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Brazil	BRA	26.6	26.6	3.2	24.6
Brunei	BRN	0.0	0.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Bulgaria	BGR	8.0	8.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Cambodia	KHM	1.4	1.4	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Cameroon	CMR	11.1	11.1	0.0	12.5
Canada	CAN	14.4	14.4	0.2	10.6
Cape Verde	CPV	0.1	0.1	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Chile	CHL	41.1	41.2	0.0	39.9
China	CHN	0.6	0.6	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Colombia	COL	40.3	40.3	1.5	48.2

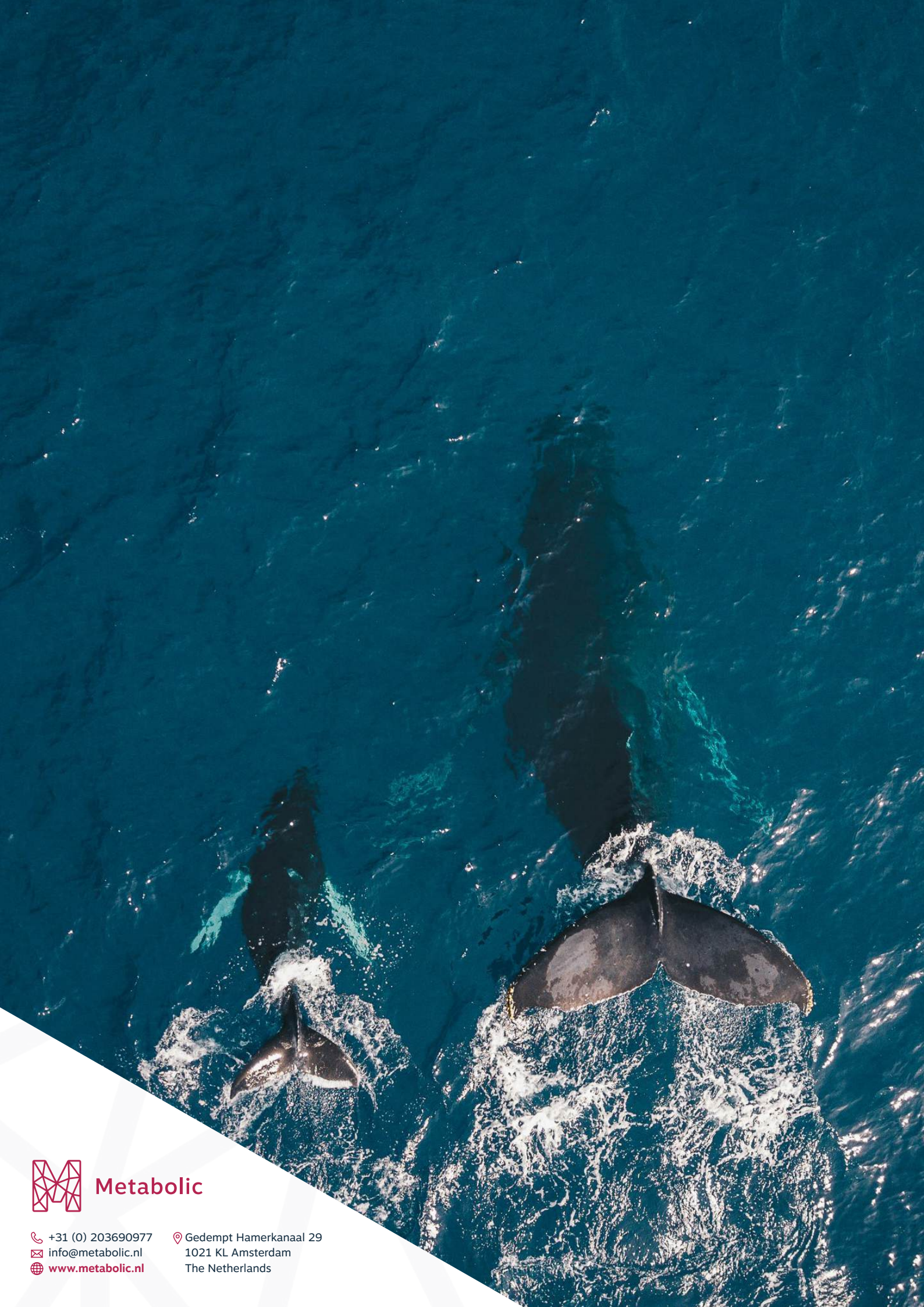
Country	ISO 3	2022	2024		
		Ocean area under conservation (%)		Likely effective protection (%)	Marine area assessed for protection level (%)
Comoros	COM	0.3	0.3	0.0	28.4
Costa Rica	CRI	28.7	28.7	0.3	93.6
Croatia	HRV	9.1	9.1	0.0	0.0
Cuba	CUB	4.0	4.0	0.5	2.1
Cyprus	CYP	8.6	8.6	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Democratic Republic of the Congo	COD	0.2	0.2	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Denmark	DNK	0.9	0.9	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Dominica	DMA	0.0	0.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Dominican Republic	DOM	12.1	12.1	0.0	32.1
Ecuador	ECU	19.5	19.5	15.0	78.1
Egypt	EGY	4.1	4.1	0.0	0.1
El Salvador	SLV	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.1
Equatorial Guinea	GNQ	0.2	0.2	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Estonia	EST	18.5	19.1	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Fiji	FJI	0.9	0.9	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Finland	FIN	11.9	11.9	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
France	FRA	22.5	22.5	2.6	36.6
Gabon	GAB	26.8	26.8	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Gambia	GMB	0.6	0.6	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Georgia	GEO	0.8	0.8	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Germany	DEU	45.3	45.3	0.0	3.0
Greece	GRC	4.6	4.6	0.1	0.7
Grenada	GRD	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.8
Guatemala	GTM	0.9	0.9	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Guinea	GIN	0.6	0.6	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Guinea-Bissau	GNB	1.4	1.4	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Haiti	HTI	2.8	2.8	0.0	1.3
Honduras	HND	4.6	4.6	0.0	4.4
Iceland	ISL	0.4	0.4	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*

Country	ISO 3	2022	2024		
		Ocean area under conservation (%)		Likely effective protection (%)	Marine area assessed for protection level (%)
Indonesia	IDN	3.0	3.0	0.1	0.3
Iran	IRN	0.7	0.7	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Ireland	IRL	2.3	2.3	0.0	6.7
Israel	ISR	0.6	0.6	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Italy	ITA	10.7	10.7	0.0	7.8
Jamaica	JAM	1.2	1.2	0.0	0.5
Japan	JPN	7.3	7.3	0.0	5.9
Jordan	JOR	2.9	2.9	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Kazakhstan	KAZ	52.2	52.2	0.0	48.5
Kenya	KEN	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.02
Kiribati	KIR	11.8	11.8	0.0	11.9
Kuwait	KWT	3.1	3.1	0.0	0.4
Latvia	LVA	16.0	16.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Lebanon	LBN	0.2	0.2	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Liberia	LBR	0.1	0.1	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Lithuania	LTU	22.9	22.9	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Madagascar	MDG	0.7	0.7	0.0	3.1
Malaysia	MYS	4.8	4.8	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Maldives	MDV	0.1	0.1	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Malta	MLT	7.8	7.8	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Marshall Islands	MHL	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.1
Mauritania	MRT	3.7	3.7	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Mauritius	MUS	0.0	0.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Mexico	MEX	22.1	22.1	4.7	20.1
Monaco	MCO	99.7	99.7	0.0	100.0
Montenegro	MNE	1.2	1.2	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Morocco	MAR	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0
Mozambique	MOZ	1.4	1.4	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Myanmar	MMR	0.5	0.5	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Namibia	NAM	1.7	1.7	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Netherlands	NLD	31.9	31.9	0.0	17.0

Country	ISO 3	2022	2024		
		Ocean area under conservation (%)		Likely effective protection (%)	Marine area assessed for protection level (%)
New Zealand	NZL	49.5	49.5	2.0	48.0
Nicaragua	NIC	3.7	3.7	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Nigeria	NGA	0.0	0.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Norway	NOR	4.4	4.4	0.0	2.7
Oman	OMN	0.3	16.2	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Pakistan	PAK	0.1	0.1	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Palau	PLW	98.7	98.7	77.9	96.6
Panama	PAN	26.3	26.3	20.6	85.1
Papua New Guinea	PNG	0.1	0.1	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Peru	PER	7.6	7.8	0.0	7.3
Philippines	PHL	3.4	3.4	0.1	0.1
Poland	POL	24.1	24.1	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Portugal	PRT	4.5	4.5	0.2	2.3
Qatar	QAT	2.3	2.3	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Republic of the Congo	COG	3.6	3.6	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Romania	ROU	21.0	21.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Russia	RUS	1.9	1.9	0.8	1.4
Saint Kitts and Nevis	KNA	4.4	4.4	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Saint Lucia	LCA	0.2	0.2	0.0	2.3
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	VCT	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0
Samoa	WSM	0.1	0.1	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
São Tomé and Príncipe	STP	0.0	0.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Saudi Arabia	SAU	2.7	2.7	0.0	4.9
Senegal	SEN	1.4	1.4	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Seychelles	SYC	32.7	32.7	0.2	32.6
Sierra Leone	SLE	1.7	1.7	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Slovenia	SVN	3.7	3.7	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*

Country	ISO 3	2022	2024		
		Ocean area under conservation (%)		Likely effective protection (%)	Marine area assessed for protection level (%)
Solomon Islands	SLB	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
South Africa	ZAF	14.7	14.7	1.8	11.0
South Korea	KOR	1.9	1.9	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Spain	ESP	12.7	12.7	0.0	5.3
Sri Lanka	LKA	0.1	0.1	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Sudan	SDN	6.9	6.9	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Suriname	SUR	1.6	1.6	0.0	1.0
Sweden	SWE	16.0	16.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Tanzania	TZA	2.3	2.3	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Thailand	THA	5.0	5.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
The Bahamas	BHS	7.6	7.6	0.1	4.0
Timor-Leste	TLS	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.5
Tonga	TON	0.1	0.1	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Trinidad and Tobago	TTO	0.0	0.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Tunisia	TUN	1.0	1.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Turkey	TUR	0.1	0.1	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Turkmenistan	TKM	3.6	3.6	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Tuvalu	TUV	0.0	0.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Ukraine	UKR	19.6	19.6	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
United Arab Emirates	ARE	11.0	11.0	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
United Kingdom	GBR	68.3	68.3	38.9[a]	66.1
United States	USA	26.1	26.1	24.9	31.8
Uruguay	URY	0.6	0.6	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Vanuatu	VUT	22.6	22.6	0.0	23.1
Venezuela	VEN	4.2	4.2	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*
Vietnam	VNM	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0
Yemen	YEM	0.4	0.4	*Not assessed*	*Not assessed*

[a] *Includes MPAs located in disputed territories (Malvinas/Falkland Islands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands).*



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