

TEN-YEAR HIGH SEAS MARINE PROTECTED AREA STRATEGY:

A ten-year strategy to promote
the development of a global representative
system of
high seas
marine protected area networks

Summary Version
As Agreed by Marine Theme Participants at the
5th World Parks Congress,
Durban, South Africa (8-17 September 2003)

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A ten-year strategy to promote the development of a global representative system of high seas marine protected area networks

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Background

The past thirty years of ocean exploration have revealed an incredible diversity of life inhabiting our oceans, including deep ocean ecosystems and communities with a wealth of unique species; however, much of the oceans remain poorly explored or understood.

Despite our lack of knowledge, we do know that the biodiversity and productivity of the high seas--the deep seabed and water column beyond national jurisdiction--are under imminent threat primarily from fishing activities (deep sea trawling, long-lining, etc.). The common assumption that living marine resources are inexhaustible has often been proven incorrect.

Sector-based, single stock and short-term management efforts have failed to protect target species, bycatch species and fragile seabed habitats. Achieving precautionary, integrated and ecosystem-based management is an essential goal.

This *Ten-Year High Seas Marine Protected Area Strategy* (Ten-Year HSMPA Strategy) provides a framework for achieving a vital step towards that goal. It provides a strategy for coordinated action over a ten-year period to develop, establish and effectively manage a representative system of marine protected area networks for the high seas (HSMPAs).

Marine protected areas covering the full range of IUCN protected area management categories can help to ensure biodiversity conservation, species protection, equitable resource use and sustainable exploitation through integrated area-based management.

A representative system of MPAs is essential to protect habitats or ecosystems that are unique, special, fragile or representative on a regional biogeographic basis, including benthic habitats such as shelf edges, cold-water coral reefs, canyons, seamounts, hydrothermal vents, cold seeps and abyssal plains and open ocean features such as eddies, fronts and zones of upwelling.

Similarly, networks of MPAs are essential to link marine ecosystems and better protect species and habitats that depend on processes outside a protected area. An ecologically coherent network of MPAs is crucial for sustaining populations of many animals and plants and particularly for highly mobile seabirds, mammals, turtles, and fish, safeguarding the habitats necessary to critical stages of their life cycle and migratory routes. Most importantly, perhaps, networks can ensure that management failures and natural catastrophes inside and outside these areas do not result in irreversible biodiversity loss.

While more is required to create a sustainable framework covering the world's oceans, a system of HSMPA networks is thus a key mechanism for 1) securing protection from immediate threats; 2) enabling coordinated decision-making involving a range of stakeholders (e.g., fishing, maritime navigation and commercial shipping, marine conservation, seabed mining, etc.); and 3) developing comprehensive, integrated and ecosystem-based oceans management.

The Ten-Year HSMPA Strategy identifies seven core components to focus action over the next ten years and elaborates strategic steps necessary to implement these components. A series of "Tool Boxes" indicate key international and regional fora for promoting HSMPAs, mechanisms for HSMPA establishment, and priorities for research. It was introduced for discussion at the 5th World Parks Congress, Durban, South Africa (8-17 September 2003). This Summary Version contains the seven core components endorsed in World Parks Congress Recommendation 5.23, and key strategy steps as elaborated by marine experts at the World Parks Congress.

Core components and key strategic steps

- I. ENDORSE AND PROMOTE the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Joint Plan of Implementation together with the goal of establishing a global system of effectively managed, representative networks of marine protected areas by 2012 that includes within its scope the world's oceans and seas beyond national jurisdiction, consistent with international law; including through:
 - Identifying and dedicating financial and human resources to raise awareness, educate, conduct research and build capacity;
 - Establishing cost-effective mechanisms and providing venues to educate and raise awareness among stakeholders;
 - Establishing a coalition among like-minded governments, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, scientists, business and industry leaders, fishers and other ocean users, and the media to promote coordinated action and monitor and report on progress; and
 - Promoting the conservation of biological diversity, productivity and species on the high seas and the value of a global representative system of HSMPA networks as tools for this purpose at relevant international organizations and meetings.

- II. CALL on the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to consider an immediate moratorium on deep sea trawling in high seas areas with seamounts and cold-water coral reef communities until legally binding international conservation measures are in place²; including through:
 - Developing global campaigns to inform decision makers and the general public about the value and importance of seamounts and cold water coral reefs;
 - Encouraging scientists and fisheries managers to synthesize current information on seamounts and cold water corals and the impacts of associated fisheries in a way meaningful to decision makers and the general public; and

- Promoting immediate dialogue with the fishing and seafood industries on mechanisms for, and benefits of, protection of these systems, communities and habitats.
- III. UTILIZE available mechanisms and authorities to establish and effectively manage by 2008 at least five scientifically significant and globally representative HSMPAs consistent with international law and based on sound science to enhance the conservation of marine biodiversity, species, productivity and ecosystems, including through:
- Developing explicit proposals for pilot HSMPAs while plans for a representative system of HSMPA networks are under development.
 - Using known opportunities under regional and global agreements to establish HSMPAs through binding and non-binding agreements; and
 - Encouraging broad-based support and endorsement of HSMPAs by any states not party to such agreement and regional and global bodies.
- IV ESTABLISH a global system of effectively managed, representative networks of marine protected areas; including through:
- 1) Taking immediate and urgent action to protect the biodiversity and productivity of seamounts, cold-water coral communities and other vulnerable high seas features and ecosystems and especially to safeguard species and habitats at immediate risk of irrevocable damage or loss; including through:
 - Producing an expedited report on seamount and cold water coral habitats, their biological diversity and associated fisheries as well as options for international action;
 - Identifying within two years priority candidate sites for protection through MPAs;
 - Encouraging full and effective application of the principles and provisions of the UN Agreement on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UN Fish Stocks Agreement) to all high seas (including deep ocean) fishing activities, together with development of tools such as networks of strictly protected/managed areas to ensure long-term protection, conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity; and
 - Promoting, developing and implementing mechanisms to protect vulnerable high seas (including deep ocean) features, ecosystems, habitats and species from human activities at sea, such as fisheries, shipping, dumping of hazardous substances, harmful prospecting, military operations and deep-seabed mining.
 - 2) Taking immediate and urgent action to protect the biodiversity and productivity dependent on large-scale, persistent oceanographic features, such as currents and frontal systems, known to support marine life and contain critical habitat for species such as those listed in the IUCN Red List and the appendices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and related Agreements; including through:
 - Producing a review of such oceanographic features and related biodiversity hotspots to identify priority candidate sites for protection through MPAs; and

- Promoting, developing and implementing mechanisms to enable urgent action to protect threatened marine species, especially highly migratory species, and their habitats from human activities at sea, such as fisheries, shipping, transportation, dumping of hazardous substances, harmful prospecting, and military operations.
- 3) Developing mechanisms to enable urgent and long-lasting protection of non-target species and habitats threatened by high seas fishing activities, particularly by ensuring that measures to mitigate bycatch, incidental catch and habitat/ecosystem damage are developed for and implemented in all relevant fisheries; including through:
- Supporting and promoting all national and international activities to eliminate Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing, inter alia, by outlawing flags of convenience;
 - Assisting in identifying those fisheries whose interactions with non-target species of invertebrates, fish, sharks, turtles, marine mammals and seabirds are causing, or have potential to cause, unnecessary and/or unsustainable levels of mortality, especially of threatened species;
 - Promoting the development and use of new measures, equipment and techniques to mitigate and/or eliminate the bycatch of invertebrates, fish, sharks, turtles, marine mammals and seabirds, especially through dialogue and cooperation with fisher- and industry-based approaches and solutions; and
 - Promoting the mandatory and regulated use of best practice measures, equipment and techniques applied on a fishery-specific basis, to mitigate and/or eliminate the bycatch of invertebrates, fish, sharks, turtles, marine mammals and seabirds, especially through dialogue and cooperation with fisher- and industry-based approaches and solutions.
- V. INITIATE action to identify marine ecosystems, habitats, areas, processes and biodiversity hotspots for priority attention, develop agreed criteria and guidelines for the identification, establishment, management and enforcement of HSMPAs, develop guidance for a representative system of HSMPA networks, establish sustainable financing strategies and determine future research needs and priorities; including through:
- Convening international, regional and national meetings of key stakeholders, researchers and data holders to identify marine ecosystems, habitats, areas, processes and biodiversity hotspots for priority attention and develop criteria and guidelines for the identification, establishment, management and enforcement of HSMPAs;
 - Convening multidisciplinary expert workshops and/or groups to analyse available information to assess potential HSMPAs, to develop a provisional representative system of MPA networks, including appropriate criteria and guidelines, and determine future research needs and priorities within a three-year time frame;
 - Promoting adoption of the criteria and guidelines at relevant meetings;
 - Developing and making available scientific, legal, socio-economic and policy research relevant to the development of a global representative system of

MPA networks and the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity, species and ecosystem processes within the high seas; and

- Convening meetings of groups of key stakeholders including donors, finance institutions and the private sector to discuss options and develop mechanisms for facilitating sustainable financing.

VI. COOPERATE to develop and promote a global framework or approach, building on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, CMS and other relevant agreements, to facilitate the creation of a global representative system of high seas MPA networks consistent with international law, to ensure its effective management and enforcement, and coordinate and harmonize applicable international agreements, mechanisms and authorities in accordance with modern principles of precautionary, ecosystem-based and integrated management and sound governance as defined in the UN principles; including through:

- Requesting those countries which have yet to sign or ratify UNCLOS, and other relevant international agreements (e.g. Kyoto Protocol, Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Fish Stocks Agreement) to immediately ratify and implement these agreements;
- Promoting work pursuant to the CBD, CMS, and UNCLOS, in cooperation with relevant international and regional bodies, to identify appropriate mechanisms for the establishment and effective management of a representative system of HSMPA networks, consistent with international law and based on scientific information;
- Promoting work relating to regional fisheries management and the UN Fish Stocks Agreement to ensure ecosystem based management that recognizes the value of and incorporates the use of HSMPA networks;
- Promoting legally binding commitments for all Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) in respect of implementing sound governance, comprehensive data acquisition and dissemination and best practice management operations including all appropriate elements of current and relevant United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Plans of Action, as key contributions towards the implementation of appropriate conservation and management measures within potential MPAs;
- Promoting cooperation within and between regional seas conventions and other regional bodies (including RFMOs) to address threats at the level appropriate to conserve regional ecosystems and biodiversity (watersheds to open ocean);
- Promoting further work within the United Nations system to improve intergovernmental coordination and cooperation; and
- Supporting high-level consideration of the need for additional mechanisms, including UNCLOS implementing agreements, to facilitate the effective management of a global representative system of HSMPA networks and an effective governance system.

VII. JOIN TOGETHER through formal or informal networks to promote the development of a global representative system of high seas MPA networks within their own

governments and organizations and in broader international forums to achieve protection of the biological diversity, productivity and sustainable use of the high seas, with the global representative system of MPA networks being a principal tool, reporting back on progress at the International Marine Protected Area Congress (IMPAC1) in Geelong, Australia in 2005 as well as at other relevant forums.

These core components and key strategy steps are complemented by a general call for action throughout the life of the Strategy for capacity building, education and awareness raising, stakeholder engagement, and scientific, socio-economic and legal research to further understanding, awareness and the ability to protect high seas biodiversity, species, productivity and ecological processes.

Invitation

Those interested in learning more about high seas biodiversity and coordinating efforts to achieve its protection and sustainable use are invited to contact Kristina Gjerde, IUCN High Seas Policy Advisor at kgjerde@it.com.pl. Additional information is available at iucn.org/themes/marine.

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² Endorsed by Marine Theme Participants at the World Parks Congress as being of significant importance meriting recognition as an emerging issue.

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