

Message of the *Monaco Blue Initiative 2012*

The Oceans are currently subject to grave threats and pressures, both globally and locally, due to the current methods of exploitation. Indeed, these will lead to the progressive and inevitable depletion of natural resources and the degradation of precious ecosystems.

We now have the ability to exploit marine resources deeper and further away than ever before. However, with more than 350 million jobs linked to the oceans and 1 billion people in developing countries depending on fish as their main source of protein, there has never been a more crucial time to protect marine resources so as to ensure food security and socio-economic development.

After the previous editions of the Monaco Blue Initiative, Marine Protected Areas were identified as essential tools for the protection of marine biodiversity and sustainable management of marine areas. Through the improvement of marine activities management, Marine Protected Areas must preserve ecosystem services and become local projects for sustainable marine development.

The expert figures assembled, including scientists, economists, entrepreneurs, decision-makers and politicians, presented their collective opinions and experiences on the 4th June 2012 at the International Exposition of Yeosu in Korea. The participants were able to share a wide range of approaches, and commit to the following principles for the establishment of locally accepted Marine Protected Areas, based on the novel concept introduced above.

Widen the scope

- The main aim of Marine Protected Areas is to preserve marine ecosystems through the regulation of human activities. The conservation of natural marine resources, marine biodiversity and the quality of a habitat constitute economic assets, both for the sustainability and effectiveness of existing activities and to favour the creation of new activities that would respect ecosystems.
- Marine Protected Areas must be veritable projects of sustainable development, integrating not only environmental, but also economic and social aspects, from their initial design and assessment to the creation and monitoring plan of Marine Protected Areas.
- It is therefore desirable to adopt a more flexible approach for Marine Protected Areas, including strictly regulated areas (no-take) and other areas where economic activities are under management plans based on the ecosystem approach, to ensure their compatibility with conservation targets.
- If strictly regulated zones must imperatively be developed around the most sensitive natural areas; to cover 10% of the surface of the oceans by 2020 conforming to the targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity; managed areas in surrounding zones should cover the oceans more globally.
- The preservation of marine resources through the regulation of fishing is crucial for all Marine Protected Area projects. If these management measures can include no-take

zones, their influence on surrounding zones will ensure the restoration and sustainability of resources, hence supporting sustainable fishing.

- The higher quality of ecosystems and biodiversity will favour the development of new activities that would benefit from natural resources without directly affecting their richness: ecotourism, biotechnologies, aquaculture...
- Other emerging activities that do not directly utilize ecosystem services can be compatible with the preservation and regeneration of biodiversity, either directly or alongside protection: renewable energies, such as offshore wind farms...
- Overall, the environmental and economic approaches must be developed together. We need to work towards a deeper understanding of potential and existing synergies between ecosystem protection and economic potential, from Marine Protected Areas to Marine Spatial Planning.

Engage the local players

- Marine Protected Areas must associate the local population and stakeholders, notably economic players, from the initial design through to the monitoring program. This collaboration will ensure that the opinions and interests of every concerned party are accounted to identify all possible constraints, brakes and opportunities.
- The collaboration between stakeholders, but also the improved training, education and awareness of managers, stakeholders and visitors are essential aspects in the project. Only through this improved collaboration can we change our relationship with the environment and the sea.
- The understanding, acceptance and appropriation of the project by various stakeholders is essential for the respect of management measures and therefore for the true effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas. Local players can also contribute to the monitoring and enforcement of Marine Protected Areas.
- It is essential to take into account the traditional practices that have often proved their durability, but also ensure that new activities or changes brought to existing activities do not lead to the exclusion of local populations.
- Marine Protected Areas can regulate not only the pressure on natural resources, but also the access to these resources, promoting local economic benefits.
- The funding of observation, monitoring and management measures for Marine Protected Areas must reflect the benefits: valuating the beneficial effects of the preservation of species and natural habitats for local economic activities (rights of access, utilisation fees...), but also international funding for the beneficial effects on the global environment.
- Individual or collective rights may be attributed in the long term for the exploitation of natural resources, to empower local players and strengthen their interest in the sustainable management of protected areas.
- The governance of protected areas must reflect the association between preservation and economic development by implicating the authorities and administrations concerned by environmental and socio-economic issues at varying scales, both on shore and at sea.

Act fast

- The development of Marine Protected Areas can be initiated, for most cases, using the current knowledge of marine biodiversity richness and existing or planned activities. Further studies can take place during this process.
- This development requires the creation of financial mechanisms and appropriate tools for the establishment of national and local strategies for Marine Protected Areas, such as laws, regulations and specific organisations to manage the areas.
- The main priority is the involvement of local actors to the Marine Protected Area project, while the technical aspects (enforcement, monitoring...) may be settled over time.
- Projects must be able to evolve once in place, taking into account the results of ecosystem monitoring but also the evolution of economic activities and their impact on the ecosystems. It is therefore essential that the governance that led to the establishment of the Marine Protected Area can be extended with the monitoring plan and the evolution of the program.

Develop an integrated approach

- While land protected areas provide useful references and experiences, the specificities of marine biodiversity require a more particular approach.
- Marine Protected Areas are integrated environmental and socio-economic projects that must include all marine activities from the surface, down through the water column to the seabed. The constant pressure on our coasts necessitates the regulation of coastal activities and development.
- The management of Marine Protected Areas must be coordinated at the regional level, as networks that are coherent with large marine ecosystems. This regional coordination will favour the exchange of experiences and allow us to make the most of these programs.
- The creation of high seas Marine Protected Areas is still particularly challenging. However, these are essential for the protection of specific ecosystems and the management of large marine ecosystems. The consolidation of International governance and the coordination of regulating tools are now crucial. Management measures will have to be adapted to respond to the remoteness of certain areas.
- Marine biodiversity must be recognized as a specific and essential aspect of global balance on our planet, and will need to be given particular attention within the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).