

RIFS-Blogpost

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[Dachzeile]

The Marine Regions Forum 2023 - Navigating Ocean Sustainability

1 This year's Marine Regions Forum focuses on the Western Indian Ocean.

“Individually we are one drop. Together we are an ocean” – this is one of my favorite quotes. In the current climate, it serves as a reminder that even when the challenges seem overwhelming, the combined efforts of individuals and communities can cultivate a positive future. As I reflect on the key moments in global ocean governance over the years, such as the legally binding international instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) or the negotiations for a global treaty against plastic pollution, I can't help but feel a sense of both urgency and hope.

Although the progress underscores a growing recognition and political will to protect the ocean, the challenges remain immense. The Marine Regions Forum, established in 2019 with funding from the German Ministry of Environment, via the German Environment Agency and the European Union, will help to deliver change by working towards the implementation of global and regional goals through more effective stakeholder engagement. The Marine Regions Forum is an inclusive exchange platform for different stakeholders from the world's marine regions to come together and find effective and scalable responses to pressing ocean sustainability challenges.

The 2023 Marine Regions Forum follows in the wake of the 2019 conference, which was held in Berlin and had a global focus. This time, it applies a regional lens to the Western Indian Ocean and will be hosted by the United Republic of Tanzania with the Republic of Seychelles and in close partnership with the Nairobi Convention Secretariat and other key stakeholders. For three days, from November 7th to 9th, the Forum will bring together actors and stakeholders from across the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) and beyond.

But why focus on marine regions, and particularly now on this region? Given the vastness of the ocean, further progress will require unique solutions tailored to the challenges and opportunities of a marine region, in this case the WIO region. Spanning the waters off East Africa, the WIO is a biodiversity hotspot, home to diverse marine life, coral reefs, mangroves and other vital ecosystems. Its coastal communities rely on the ocean for their livelihoods and sustenance. As with all, it is also a region facing numerous challenges, from overfishing and habitat degradation to the impacts of social inequality and climate change.

However, the WIO boasts a multitude of initiatives and efforts aimed at safeguarding the marine environment and the people depending on it. The 2023 Marine Regions Forum recognizes this and aims to complement these endeavors. It provides an opportunity for informal exchanges, a platform for bringing these initiatives together, and a means to strengthen coordination among them. It also

! Zum Aktualisieren der Textelemente, Zitation markieren und dann F9 drücken !

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aims to facilitate exchanges between the world's marine regions, fostering mutual learning between the WIO and other regions, while also facilitating knowledge exchange.

How does the Forum meet the needs of the WIO? Inclusivity is crucial for the overall societal shift towards sustainability, including in ocean governance processes, and it is central to the planning of the 2023 Marine Regions Forum. Preparatory research and deep engagement with regional stakeholders and partners were combined, ensuring that the themes and lenses guiding discussions genuinely reflect the region's needs and challenges. Collaborating closely with the Nairobi Convention Secretariat and other regional partners in the WIO, stakeholders jointly shape and lead specific sessions with clear expected outcomes in sight.

With this latest iteration of the Marine Regions Forum I hope that we are addressing the specific ocean challenges and contributing to bridging gaps in regional ocean governance. As we come together from November 7th to 9th, it's a reminder that we can shape a more sustainable future for people and planet.

More information:

- [Website of the Marine Regions Forum](#)
- [Project description on the RIFS website](#)

