The third International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC3) engaged 1500 participants from 87 nations; it gathered a vast range of expertise, owing to the diversity of participants, including marine protected area (MPA) managers, scientists, political decision-makers, representatives of local authorities and local communities, civil society, artists and industry executives.

Despite the many advances made since IMPAC2 in 2009, the general findings regarding biodiversity remain alarming: the number of marine species listed on IUCN's Red List keeps growing.

IMPAC3 participants stressed their commitment to meeting the Aichi targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and especially Target 11 which calls for the protection of at least 10 percent of the oceans by 2020. They also recalled that this target has a qualitative aspect as well as a quantitative one. Quantitatively, a long road remains ahead as MPA coverage today is less than 3 percent. In qualitative terms, it is important to keep in mind that the Aichi targets require that marine protected areas form a comprehensive, well-managed and ecologically representative network. The congress also pointed out the importance of creating and managing marine protected areas in the high seas, which must be recognized through substantial adjustments of the legal context to the high seas.

**General Recommendations**

The major outcomes of the congress are summarized under six general recommendations.

1. Mobilizing local and national networks, and binding them into a global network of marine protected areas, in order to make local approaches and global strategies converge.

2. Opening up to the private sector, through partnerships that will forward governance and support spatial planning processes. The high seas are also concerned by this necessity.

3. Urgently entering negotiations to reach and implementing agreement of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea geared at the conservation of the high seas. This agreement must provide for the creation of high-seas marine protected areas with an international status. The congress recognized the importance of regional approaches [and stresses the importance of adopting two high-seas MPAs currently under consideration in the Antarctic Ocean.]

4. The necessity of regional approaches, which constitute the appropriate scale to devise many solutions, particularly on governance issues.
5. The inadequacy of existing financing mechanisms: this finding of the congress requires that innovative, sustainable financing solutions be devised and that synergies be optimized between financing programs run by various funders and donors. In particular, the congress welcomed the initiative aimed at the creation of a trust fund for the Mediterranean.

6. Finally, the sea has cultural, philosophical and spiritual value. The congress stressed that taking into account this immaterial dimension is essential to engage society as a whole in the conservation of the oceans.

**Specific Recommendations**

Below are the specific recommendations pertaining to the focal themes of the Ajaccio Ministerial Conference.

**Regarding the Benefits of Marine Protected Areas**

- A fundamental benefit is that MPAs provide a reference point against which we can understand the impacts of our activities and what wise management could and should deliver – how can we restore if we don’t know what healthy marine ecosystems look like?

- A second benefit is in support of ecosystem services – the wealth of obvious and sometimes less obvious benefits with which the ocean environment provides us all in our daily lives. The Aichi targets now reference ecosystem services – there is an urgent need to build this into our thinking and actions. We can clearly see ecosystem services are in decline. The benefit is that this will move us from talking about MPA costs to talking more about MPA values. Flowing from this are a better appreciation of benefits, more appropriate action, and a sounder basis to discuss issues such as equality.

- A third benefit area is management for resilience. When we look at the deteriorated state of the ocean and at downward trends, we need to have strategies and actions that rebuild resilience and protect it where still healthy. MPAs provide that opportunity and benefit.

- Fourth is the role MPAs should play as the heart of wider sea management and planning. On land we do planning as a matter of course. When we think of the ocean we need to build in MPAs as a fundamental basis of the marine planning framework – nesting them at the core of different scales in ocean management. They then underpin all we do with the objective of ensuring ocean health is a cornerstone of moving forwards.

- And a fifth and fundamental point is a clear need to accelerate building the MPA network and all its benefits. Sharing knowledge in the form of best practices across regions and at global scales, to increase capacity in our community, and to reach out to new constituencies and sectors, is fundamental to future success. Sharing together, learning together, and benefitting together.
Regarding Regional Policies

- Developing specifically regional tools such as protocols and appendices to the Regional Seas Conventions in order to reach the marine objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and particularly the Aichi marine targets.

- Developing the spatial planning of marine activities on a regional scale, based on an integrated ecosystem approach that underscores the socioeconomic dimension of marine protected areas.

- Interlinking various regional initiatives, whether led by public institutions, NGOs or sectoral organizations, and fostering synergies and complementarities between these networks of players.

- Creating regional centers that can deliver common instruments, enhance collective expertise, make data widely available, and provide technical and scientific support to policy-makers and marine integrated-management programs.

- Fostering, and capitalizing on, a diversity of cooperation ventures at the sub-regional scale so as to lend overall coherence to national strategies on marine protected areas; and integrating these sub-regional approaches into regional strategies, implemented through with adequate cooperation instruments.

- Develop interregional cooperation so as to pool know-how and facilitate new actions that are coherent on an a large scale, so as to reflect major natural cycles, the migration of marine species, and the interconnectedness of ocean ecosystems.

- Fostering a dynamic approach by taking into account and anticipating global trends such as climate change, and by making better use of modelling and adaptive-approach tools at the regional scale, in order to increase resilience.

Regarding the High Seas

- Utilize all facilitation means, including education, to raise awareness of high-seas ecosystems in their full diversity, i.e. pelagic ecosystems (sunlit areas), bathypelagic ecosystems (in depths ranging from a few hundred meters to several thousand meters) and benthic ecosystems.

  Foster the general realization that the high seas, which represent nearly 60 percent of the oceans, is the blue heart that supports life on Earth.

- Improve knowledge of high-seas ecosystems through scientific research, given that only a small percentage of the ocean floor has so far been explored and that we still have a defective understanding of the functioning of pelagic ecosystems.

  Share existing knowledge, and in particular that gathered by fisheries and the deep-sea mining industry.
Apply adaptive-management principles by incorporating new knowledge into management plans.

Lend more transparency to the processes for the identification of sites such as the CBD’s Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) and the FAO’s Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs), and harmonize these processes.

- Define a global legal instrument, within the framework of the Convention on the Law of the Sea, to create and manage MPAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJs), in recognition of the fact that current instruments for the high seas, being sectoral and partial, do not allow for the creation of MPAs in the full sense of the phrase. The question of MPAs may be envisaged as just one part of a broader agreement encompassing several aspects of high-seas conservation.

- Recognize existing MPA-creation initiatives in the high seas at the regional level (Regional Seas Conventions, e.g. OSPAR, Mediterranean; or alliances such as in the Sargasso Sea) while recognizing their vulnerability in terms of third-party effectiveness against those who are not part of these regional instruments.

Recognize also the role that regional fisheries-management organizations may assume in managing MPAs at the regional level.

Recognize that the implementation of any future MPA protocol of the Convention on the Law of the Sea must be region-based and rely either on the Regional Seas Conventions, whose mandate must be enlarged, or, where these are missing, on ad hoc conventions, in particular when it comes to MPA designation processes, which must fit into the framework of marine spatial planning, and on their governance.

- Build capacities and promote cross-sectoral cooperation among all those active in the high seas.

Promote cross-sectoral cooperation and collaboration to develop the means and technologies required for the management of high-seas MPAs.

Engage civil society transparently in all negotiations and processes relative to the designation, creation and management of marine protected areas in the high seas, in recognition that these ecosystems and the goods and services they provide are part our world heritage.