

International organizations support WWF marine project in Mozambique

Maputo, Mozambique – Several international organizations have joined forces with WWF to conserve Mozambique's unique marine habitat and wildlife.

The partnership, consisting of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Foundation, International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN) and Conservation International (CI), will provide financial support to activities being implemented by WWF in and around the country's Primeiras and Segundas Islands.

"The main goal of this project is to create a functioning protected area in the Primeiras and Segundas Archipelago area so that we can protect the unique habitat, as well as threatened and endangered species," said Helena Motta, WWF-Mozambique's Country Coordinator.

An education programme targeting fishermen is already underway to further enhance and raise awareness on the need for protecting birds, marine turtles, coral reefs, sharks, whales and dolphins.

The islands are home to green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) where more than 25 nesting sites have already been protected on the islands. Other turtle species include the hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and the loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*). WWF has been tagging many of these turtle species for scientific research and to help them being accidentally caught by local fishermen nets.

The islands are also home to thousands of birds, including a colony of more than 30,000 nests of sooty terns (*Sterna fuscata*) and greater crested terns (*Sterna bergii*), which nest there between May and November. The bird sites are currently being protected by a local fishermen's association. Groups of Humpback Whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) are also frequently seen at this time around the islands, further enhancing the need to provide some measure of protection and management.

"We are not only working to improve the status of the local wildlife, but also to improve the living standards of the people who depend on these waters for their livelihoods," Motta added.

This includes working with locals on sustainable fish and prawn management, and promoting tourism development in the region.

The new partnership will complement the efforts of the government of Mozambique in implementing an integrated development plan for the region's marine and coastal resources. Support has also been provided to build capacity for the local organizations, including fishermen associations, to implement activities aimed at protecting endangered species and sensitive habitats.

END NOTES:

- International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN), established in 2000, is a collaborative effort of leading conservation organizations and agencies that are working to halt and reverse the decline in health of the world's coral reefs. UNEP, a partner of ICRAN, serves as the Secretariat for the Nairobi Convention, which aims at improving the marine and coastal management and protection in Eastern Africa
- Conservation International is a non-governmental organization that created the Global Conservation Fund (GCF) and has been providing funding to conservation activities in locations of high biological diversity in the world.

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