



UN Ocean Conference 2022

Submission from Nekton Foundation to Interactive Dialogue 2: Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems

Nekton's mission is to accelerate scientific exploration and support nations to conserve and sustainably manage their ocean, for all our planet's life. Nekton is a UK-registered charity who co-develop and co-produce expedition-based deep-sea research with partners in the Indian Ocean. Together we create the scientific data and media content to amplify ocean prioritisation, accelerate ocean literacy and inform and catalyse sustainable marine governance. Through our collaborations, expeditions, technology development, research, broadcast films and high-profile communications and events, we aim to make a difference.

The ocean although connected globally is not uniform. Instead it is a complex mosaic of three dimension biomes, comprising vastly different habitats that are home to a rich diversity of life. They therefore provide many equally diverse benefits to humankind.

Highly diverse and productive coral reefs are important ecosystems and a priority for protection globally. There is vastly more attention on shallow and coastal habitats, up to 30m deep than reefs below 30m (deeper reefs) despite the latter providing many essential services such as food security and cultural services. Deeper reefs are poorly explored due to high cost, complicated logistics and the general perception of facing fewer threats.

Area-based management tools such as marine protected areas (MPAs) are shown to conserve biodiversity and promote sustainable fisheries, while evidence is accumulating that they can enhance mitigation, adaptation and resilience to the effects of climate change and other stressors.

At present, most deeper reef habitats are unprotected, despite being under threat from a multitude of stressors (e.g. overfishing, pollution, and climate change, with seabed mining possible in the near future). The few deeper reef habitats that are protected, are often included incidentally and rarely explicitly included as part of purposeful management plans and designation targets. We believe there is urgent need to change this.

A wholistic approach is essential to ensure a prosperous and resilient ocean and therefore it is essential to include deeper reefs in conservation and management strategies.

Yours Sincerely

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