

13th WIOMSA Symposium: IOC strengthens its commitment to Marine and Coastal Conservation

Mombasa (Kenya) October 3rd, 2025 – The Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), through its project "Resilience of Populations and Ecosystems in the South-West Indian Ocean" (RECOS), participated in the 13th Scientific Symposium of the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) from September 28 to October 3, 2025. This major regional event brings together researchers, decision-makers, and practitioners around sustainability and resilience issues in the coastal and marine zones of the Western Indian Ocean region.

The RECOS project's participation reinforces the IOC's commitment to improving scientific knowledge and supporting local and regional stakeholders in the sustainable management of the Western Indian Ocean.

"The IOC's participation via RECOS in the WIOMSA symposium reflects our belief that regional scientific collaboration is an essential lever for strengthening the resilience of coastal communities. By supporting the younger generation of researchers, as well as more experienced researchers, we are investing in the future of the Indian Ocean, promoting innovative solutions tailored to our island realities," said Christophe Legrand, RECOS Regional Project Manager.

Thanks to the support of the IOC's RECOS project, Mariela Razafindralandy, a student at the University of Tulear, was able to *"present [her] research results (...) on marine educational areas, where the feasibility of transferring the scheme to south-western Madagascar is facing socio-cultural obstacles.* She added: *"I will be able to share with my colleagues in Tulear the experiences of this scientific exchange and the benefits of joining a regional network."*

Specifically, the RECOS project contributed to the symposium through several components:

- **Support for emerging scientists:** RECOS enabled **20 researchers**, both young and experienced from IOC member countries, to present their work, exchange with the international scientific community, and strengthen their integration into regional networks.
- **Knowledge production for coastal resilience:** in its scientific component, RECOS supports **five master's and doctoral-level scientific research projects** focusing on the effectiveness of marine protected areas, the impacts of climate change on mangroves, as well as the assessment of impacts of marine and coastal environmental education, all of which were presented scientifically.
- **Co-design of the foundations for a regional scientific network on environmental education in marine and coastal environments:** through a mini-symposium and a roundtable co-organized with IRD, the IOC via the RECOS project continued discussions initiated at UNOC3 on the interest of scientists and other environmental education professionals in fostering regional collaboration through the creation of a **regional scientific network on environmental education in marine and coastal environments**, aimed at sharing experiences, tools, approaches, and best practices in this area.
- **Contribution to the first regional report on the state of seagrass beds** and participation in the development process of a regional strategy on seagrass for the Nairobi Convention: RECOS supported the drafting of national chapters by IOC member states for this report, which was presented during a special session co-organized by IUCN (WIOCOR project) and the RECOS project. This report marks an important milestone in the process of developing a regional

seagrass conservation strategy. Contributors to this report from IOC member states were invited by the RECOS project to participate in the various sessions that will mark the start of this process.

- **Support for the regional mangrove managers network (WIOMN)** and contribution to a regional guide on mangrove monitoring. The RECOS project supports this network and the development of this regional publication by involving mangrove conservation experts from various IOC countries, who participated in the special session dedicated to WIOMN.

Through these actions, the IOC and its RECOS project contribute to strengthening the integration of scientific knowledge into decision-making processes and highlight the importance of regional cooperation in addressing challenges related to climate change, biodiversity preservation, and the sustainability of coastal communities' livelihoods.

About the RECOS Project

RECOS is a **project implemented by the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and co-financed by the Agence française de développement (AFD) and the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM)**. Its objective: to strengthen the resilience of coastal populations to the effects of climate change by restoring ecosystem services. RECOS strengthens the bridges between science and public decision-making in service of the marine and coastal ecosystems of the Indian Ocean. With its scientific partners, the project works to ensure that research informs policy choices in favor of a sustainable and resilient region.

About WIOMSA

The **Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA)** is the reference scientific association in the marine and coastal field of the Western Indian Ocean. Founded in 1993, it brings together researchers, decision-makers, practitioners, and NGOs to promote research, capacity building, and science-policy integration for sustainable management of the region's oceans and coasts. Its biennial Scientific Symposium, recognized as one of the most important in the world in this field, constitutes a unique platform for knowledge sharing and innovation.