BLUE ACTION FUND
A Lifeline for the Ocean

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A NEW LIFELINE FOR A HEALTHY OCEAN

The Blue Action Fund seeks to conserve marine biodiversity for future generations and improve the lives of coastal and island people today. These goals are complementary – halting the dramatic loss of ocean biodiversity by strengthening marine and coastal protection can advance local development and promote sustainable livelihoods in coastal communities.

Our vision is of a carefully managed and sustainably used ocean brimming with healthy marine life that benefits humanity and our environment. By investing in the health of the blue portion of our planet, we can turn this vision into reality.

Non-governmental organizations were among the first to take action to protect the ocean and coastlines and create sustainable opportunities for the communities that rely on them. Launched in 2016, the Blue Action Fund provides a major new boost to NGOs by giving them access to public funding so that their conservation actions can be continued, scaled up and replicated around the world.

“We must conserve the oceans and their resources and use them for sustainable development. The Blue Action Fund is contributing substantially to this endeavour.”

Dr Gerd Müller, German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development
THE OCEAN – AN ENDANGERED HABITAT

All life on Earth depends on a healthy ocean. The global ocean covers 70% of the surface of our planet and makes up over 90% of its living space. The ocean generates 50% of our oxygen, and absorbs more than 90% of our excess heat as well as over 30% of our carbon dioxide. It regulates our climate, provides us with fish, energy and minerals, and is an endless source of recreation and inspiration.

Almost half the global population lives in coastal areas and hundreds of millions of people are dependent on ocean-based economies like fishing and tourism. Particularly in developing countries, where 97% of the world’s fishers live, fish are a vital source of both protein and income. Marine ecosystems such as mangrove forests and coral reefs protect against storm tides, typhoons and floods – a service that is vital in the face of climate change.

But all this is at risk. A perfect storm of mounting human pressures, climate change and poor management is threatening our ocean and coastlines. Sea water is becoming warmer and more acidic, fish stocks are being overexploited, mangroves decimated, and the ocean is the final destination for never-ending flows of plastics and untreated pollutants. Add the economic pressures – from deep-sea mining and oil production to tourism and shipping – and the burden is becoming too much for marine species and ecosystems to bear.

It is time to invest in strategic action to put a stop to this spiral of ocean decline. After all, we will never achieve a sustainable, peaceful future without a healthy ocean. Conserving the world’s ocean and reversing the devastating loss of marine biodiversity is one of humanity’s greatest challenges.

The ocean generates 50% of our oxygen

- 35% of mangrove forests are extinct
- 75% of coral reefs are seriously endangered
- 93% of fish stocks are fully (60%) or over-exploited (33%)
- 90% of seabirds have plastic in their stomachs
Just under 7.5% of the ocean is included in marine protected areas

Despite its immense importance, only a small fraction of the global ocean is effectively protected and responsibly administered.

Today, just under 7.5% of the ocean is included in marine protected areas (MPAs), compared to the 15% of terrestrial areas included in conservation areas.

The world’s governments have committed to a global target of achieving 10% marine protection by 2020, while International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) members have called for the protection of at least 30% by 2030 to ensure sustainability and to build up the ocean’s resilience.

When calculating how far we have to go to reach these global targets, it is important to remember that many existing MPAs offer little real protection in the water. Known as “paper parks”, these sites, while drawn on maps, actually represent a failure of efforts to protect marine resources and ecosystems. Additional political effort, as well as funding, is needed to effectively manage existing marine parks and to establish new parks.

A great deal of ocean protection work still needs to be done, all over the world, and significantly more investment is needed.

“Ocean decline strikes the already disadvantaged and vulnerable the hardest. We expect the Blue Action Fund to enable development through both the sustainable use and protection of marine resources.”

Isabella Lövin, Swedish Minister for Environment and Climate, and Deputy Prime Minister
WHAT WE DO

The Blue Action Fund provides grants to NGOs working in developing countries to conserve marine biodiversity and enhance the well-being of coastal communities.

By combining the funds of major public donors, we provide a one-stop platform where NGOs can access funds to support their work. This creates a conduit between NGOs, who are drivers of change with local expertise and connections, and government bodies keen to strengthen practical conservation action. The projects we fund support local, national and regional marine conservation strategies and are all endorsed by the relevant government authorities. Blue Action therefore perfectly embodies the goals of the Paris Declaration.

Our mission is not to form a new instrument for implementing ocean conservation, but rather to be a flexible financial partner for NGOs who are already making a proven contribution to this field – enabling them to redouble and expand their activities.

The Blue Action Fund issues Calls for Proposals every year and provides individual grants to selected projects in MPAs, potential MPAs, and their buffer zones, focusing on the most vulnerable, biologically significant coastal waters of Africa, Latin America and Asia/Pacific.

Projects receiving financial support must result in measurable outcomes, including:

- Newly established or better managed MPAs or networks of MPAs of regional importance
- Conservation of biodiversity and recovery of fish stocks
- Enhanced local livelihood conditions and food security

“We really appreciate the focus of the Blue Action Fund – supporting coastal communities to secure sustainable futures.”

John Tanzer, Oceans Practice Leader, WWF International

50% of the global population lives in coastal areas
ABOUT US – A LEAN, FLEXIBLE, STRATEGIC FUNDING VEHICLE

A non-profit foundation based in Berlin, Blue Action Fund today has three government funding partners – Germany, through the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in cooperation with KfW Development Bank; Sweden, through the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs; and France, through the Agence Française de Développement (AFD).

Created in late 2016, in response to the clear need for additional financing for ocean protection, the Fund is designed to take advantage of the rigour associated with public donors combined with the implementation skills of recognised NGOs. It is a flexible funding tool that selects projects through open Calls for Proposals, which are appraised and selected with the support of IUCN.

We aim to strengthen relationships and identify potential partnerships between public donors and NGOs and community-based organizations that are already advancing the ocean protection agenda but lack the funds needed to scale up their impact.

We are committed to maintaining a very lean structure, with administrative costs well below 10% of total expenses. Funders are represented on Blue Action Fund’s Supervisory Board, allowing them to set the strategic direction of the Fund and decide on the regional or thematic focus of its Calls for Proposals.

All funded projects must be consistent with national and international laws and protection strategies and support the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

“The Blue Action Fund is a collective opportunity to make a quantitative and qualitative leap for the protection of marine resources. It will help preserve the oceans upon which many communities in developing countries depend.”

Rémy Rioux, CEO, Agence Française de Développement
WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED SO FAR?

In its short lifetime, Blue Action Fund has developed into a leading funding instrument for marine conservation. We are already internationally recognised as providing a cutting-edge solution for filling the gap in ocean protection funding.

Key achievements since the start of operations in 2017 include:

- Successful launch of the programme and grants awarded to projects in Asia, Africa and Latin America
- Three Calls for Proposals – targeting Small Island Developing States, the Western Indian Ocean and East Asian Seas – attracting dozens of project proposals
- Supporting five projects, collectively benefiting 211,000 people and over 175,000 km² of new or improved MPAs
- Expanding from one to three public funders
- Increasing available funding from €24 million to over €65 million.

"The Blue Action Fund is a new and uniquely structured instrument for marine protection. KfW will closely follow the Fund’s activities and support it in the years to come."

Stephan Opitz, Vice President of KfW and member of the Supervisory Board of Blue Action Fund

Funding blue action around the world

Our first five grants were awarded in 2017 and 2018 and involve projects in Small Island Developing States, the Western Indian Ocean and the Eastern Tropical Pacific.
LOOKING FORWARD

The scope of the challenges and threats facing the ocean is enormous. This drives our commitment to continue our growth path, based on the solid foundation that Blue Action Fund has built in its start-up phase.

We aim to welcome more funders and become a truly multilateral foundation.

It is estimated that a global network of marine parks meeting the target of conserving 20–30% of the world’s seas could cost between US$ 5 billion and 19 billion annually to run. While the benefits would far outweigh the investment, this represents a major financing challenge that Blue Action Fund is uniquely positioned to help meet.

Marine conservation is currently high on the global political agenda. Huge additional efforts and financing will be required to meet the deadline for the 2020 Sustainable Development Goal and Aichi Biodiversity targets in time for the adoption of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in Beijing and the UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon.

The Blue Action Fund will seize the opportunity of this political focus to accelerate our support for marine protection and inspire ocean optimism.

With the support of more partners we can help restore a healthy ocean that benefits all humanity.

“We are proud to be part of Blue Action Fund’s efforts to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. Governments, NGOs, philanthropists, businesses – let’s join forces and make sure we conserve and sustainably use the ocean.”

Helen Ågren, Sweden’s Ambassador for the Ocean, Ministry for Foreign Affairs