WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN MARINE PROTECTED AREAS PROFFESSIONALS NETWORK (WIOMPAN)

Annual Meeting Report 2026
19–20 October 2026
Radisson Blu, Maputo, Mozambique

Overview

The WIOMPAN Annual Meeting brought country chapter representatives and partners together to define the network's direction to 2030 and identify priorities for the next two years. Country exchanges and thematic discussions provided a shared basis for a concise WIOMPAN strategy and the network's contribution to IMPAC6.

The workshop consolidated five outcome statements covering sustainable finance, workforce and skills, evidence and practical management, community governance and recognition, and regional voice and visibility. Participants recorded priorities under each theme and identified experience that chapters could share across the network.



Acknowledgements

WIOMSA and WIOMPAN gratefully acknowledge WildAid and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), through the RECOS project, for their financial support to the meeting and regional participation. WildAid also led the dedicated law enforcement session. We thank ANAC for co-hosting the meeting in Mozambique, and the country representatives, facilitators and partners for their contributions.

ANAC Deputy Director-General's opening remarks

Regional cooperation for marine conservation

Why it matters

Food security

Coastal community resilience

What the network can do

Share practical knowledge

Develop a regional status snapshot

Strengthen marine enforcement and training



Mozambique's National Administration for Conservation Areas (ANAC) hosted the 2026 WIOMPAN Annual Meeting in Maputo. In opening the meeting, ANAC's Deputy Director-General welcomed delegates and highlighted why marine conservation matters to Mozambique's food security, coastal community resilience and sustainable economic development. Drawing on examples from Bazaruto, Primeiras and Segundas, Quirimbas and Maputo National Park, the Deputy Director-General outlined Mozambique's conservation progress and the pressures facing its marine and coastal areas, including illegal fishing and the impacts of climate change.

ANAC invited delegates to share practical lessons from across the Western Indian Ocean and highlighted two ways the network could support their work. The proposed regional status snapshot could bring together information on marine protected and community-managed areas, showing where conservation is advancing and where funding and operational gaps remain.

Workshop process and discussions (DAY 1)

Overview

Day 1 moved from global biodiversity goals and WIOMPAN's regional experience to the needs identified by country chapters. Participants compared country priorities, used a gallery walk to identify where regional collaboration could add value, and drew on those discussions to draft outcomes for 2030.

Setting the global and regional context

Purificació Canals, the chair of the Global Marine Protected Areas Network, showed how marine protected area manager networks can help deliver the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, particularly its targets on restoration, 30×30 and nature's contributions to people. She emphasised effective management over time and highlighted peer exchange, training and cooperation across borders. WIOMPAN President Allen Cedras then reviewed regional progress in WIO-COMPAS certification, peer learning and shared mapping, alongside persistent gaps in site funding and enforcement capacity. His review gave participants a starting point for comparing country needs.

Exchange Country Experience

Country chapter chairs presented marine conservation status snapshots prepared using a common reporting template. Working in four groups, chapter representatives compared their country snapshots and identified needs that recurred across the chapters in their group. They discussed where WIOMPAN could help address those needs and what expertise or experience their chapters could share. Each group captured its shared needs and proposed areas for collaboration on a poster for the gallery walk.

The presentations revealed recurring needs for reliable funding for day-to-day management, stronger frontline capacity, and better evidence on whether management measures are working. They also showed where chapters needed different kinds of support, from implementing management plans to assessing community-managed areas for potential OECM recognition. These findings fed into the gallery walk, where participants considered which needs WIOMPAN could help address through regional collaboration.

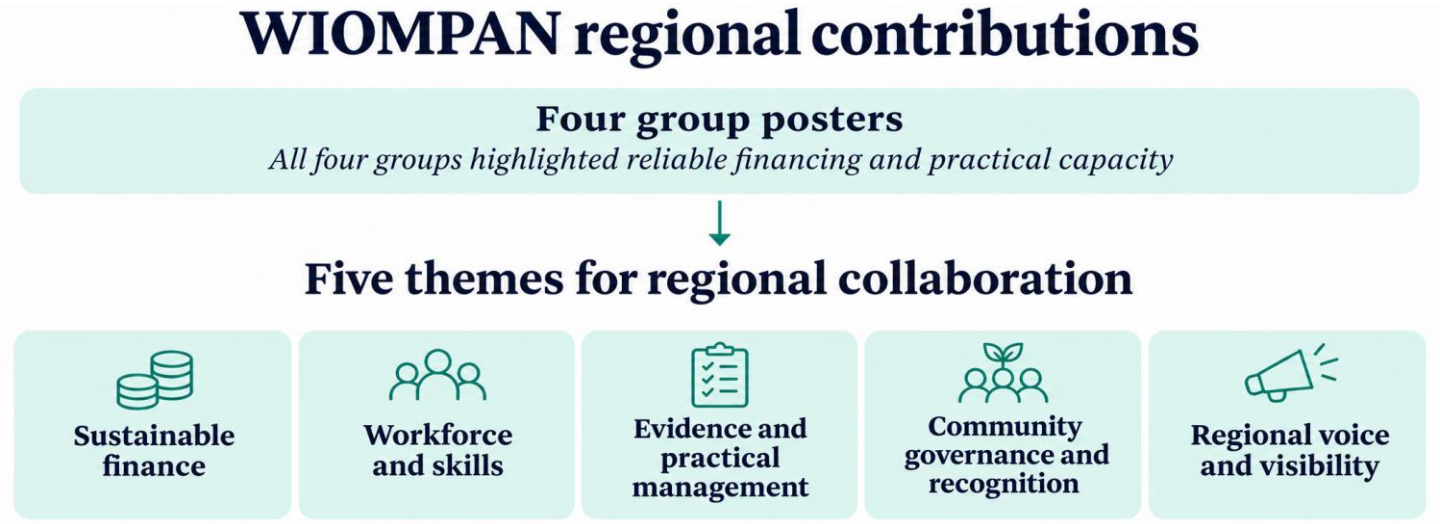


Workshop process and discussions (DAY 1)

WIOMPAN's regional contribution

During the gallery walk, participants reviewed the four posters side by side to see which needs recurred across groups and where chapters could learn from one another. Reliable financing and stronger practical capacity appeared on all four posters. Participants also identified opportunities to share monitoring and management tools, exchange experience on co-management and recognition of community-managed areas and bring country perspectives into regional and global forums.

The walk surfaced practical offers for follow-up, including enforcement training and experience using IMET and EarthRanger. The findings were grouped into five themes that gave participants a basis for drafting the 2030 outcomes: sustainable finance, workforce and skills, evidence and practical management, community governance and recognition, and regional voice and visibility.





Workshop process and discussions (DAY 2)

Overview

On Day 2, participants used the five themes from the gallery walk to define what WIOMPAN aims to achieve by 2030 and identify the 2027–2028 priorities that would advance each outcome. A dedicated session on marine enforcement then examined the competency gaps and support needs of frontline teams. Participants went on to discuss WIOMPAN's participation in IMPAC6 and closed the meeting by identifying the follow-up needed with country chapter chairs to finalise the strategy.

WIOMPAN Outcomes and priorities

Theme	2030 outcome	Workshop priorities
Sustainable finance	WIOMPAN contributes to sustainable funding for MPA operations.	• Evaluate MPA value and costs. • Build skills in financial planning, management and evaluation. • Compile and share information on regional financing mechanisms and assess their feasibility.
Workforce and skills	A competent, skilled workforce effectively manages Ocean Conservation Areas.	• Strengthen regional cooperation and exchanges. • Develop regular training for managers and wardens. • Expand WIO-COMPAS certification across relevant levels.
Evidence and practical management	MPAs use assessments, research and monitoring to adapt management plans and improve conservation outcomes.	• Use IMET or other tools to identify and act on management weaknesses. • Support management plans and annual workplans through technical advice and mentoring. • Link managers with researchers and establish feasible monitoring.
Community governance and recognition	**Proposed · For comment** WIOMPAN connects chapters with peers and technical support to strengthen community-led governance, document conservation results and explore recognition pathways.	• Promote assessment of management competencies in community-managed areas using the LMMA Competency Framework.
Regional voice and visibility	A strong WIOMPAN contributes to regional and global marine targets.	• Recruit through country chapters. • Recognise WIOMPAN members. • Share learning and success stories. • Join regional and global exchanges.

Workshop process and discussions (DAY 2)

Strengthening marine enforcement

The WildAid-led session explored what marine protected area authorities need to build and sustain effective enforcement teams. Participants reflected on how their organisations prepare staff for marine duties, develop their competencies over time and support them to apply those skills in the field. The session linked these questions to WIOMPAN's wider workforce priorities and considered where chapters could learn from one another.

The discussion highlighted structured mentoring for new rangers, with regular feedback and documented assessments of their skills on the job. Speakers also described how authorities can stagger refresher training to maintain patrol coverage, use performance appraisals to identify training needs, and develop experienced staff as in-house instructors.

WIOMPAN at IMPAC 6

Participants discussed how to ensure strong WIOMPAN representation at the Sixth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC6) in Senegal. The congress offers an opportunity for Western Indian Ocean practitioners to share lessons from managing marine protected and conserved areas. WIOMPAN will work with the Global Network of MPA Manager Networks to exchange experience with other regional networks attending the congress and explore opportunities for collaboration.

Two immediate priorities emerged: identify partners who can help more African marine rangers attend and share their frontline experience, and submit WIOMPAN's proposal by 16 November 2026.

Next steps

WIOMSA will work with country chapter chairs to finalise the WIOMPAN strategy. The chairs will review the proposed outcome on community governance and recognition and translate the agreed 2027–2028 priorities into practical actions, identifying who can lead and support each action and what resources are needed.

WIOMPAN will consolidate the country snapshots, follow up with chapters on outstanding data and use the findings to inform the update of the Western Indian Ocean MPA Outlook.

The immediate congress priority is to submit WIOMPAN's IMPAC6 proposal by 16 November 2026. WIOMPAN will also coordinate with the Global Network of MPA Manager Networks to plan exchanges with other regional networks and identify partners who can help more African marine rangers attend and share their frontline experience.

