

# Gabon creates network of marine protected areas

During his speech delivered at the United Nations, President Ali Bongo Ondimba announced that his government created a network of 20 marine protected areas in Gabon. The protected areas include nine marine parks and 11 aquatic reserves covering 26% of Gabon's territorial waters.



President of the Republic of Gabon Ali Bongo Ondimba, announces the creation of 20 marine protected areas during his speech at the headquarters of the United Nations

“As I have often argued, we cannot approach sustainable management solely from the point of view of conservation. On the contrary, we must also tackle this issue through rational use of the environment in order to give more meaning to its preservation by the people who live in it”, said the president.

The creation of these areas had been preceded by the approval of the project by the Head of State, who is also President of the Strategic Committee of the National Marine Council, the body created in April 2014 with responsibility for formulating national marine policy.

An innovative initiative on the African continent, the creation of this network of marine protected areas confirms Ondimba's commitment to preserving the environment, as well as to implement effective and sustainable management of the nation's marine natural resources. The policy aims to rehabilitate fish stocks, increase the sustainable production of the available fishery resources and protect the marine environment, with multiple positive outcomes for the people of Gabon.

## Significant acceleration of sustainable development

With a network of 13 national parks, representing true treasures of global biodiversity, and more than 800 kilometres of coastline, Gabon – more than 90% of which is covered with forest – is seeing a significant acceleration of its sustainable development policy under the determined drive of Ondimba.

This policy is based on a new model of socio-economic development that is beneficial both to the Gabonese population and to the international community. Its practical implementation can be seen, in particular, in the signing of major environmental agreements such as the Paris Agreement, signed in the context of the COP21 summit.

An exemplary country in the field of sustainable development, Gabon had the honour, in January 2017, of being chosen to coordinate the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC).

During his term in office at the head of CAHOSCC, Ondimba intends to continue the work of his predecessor, the Egyptian president Abdel Fattah Al-Sissi, and “to open up new areas of development in this field that are so crucial to our future in the face of climate change.”

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