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Conservation of ‘crown jewels of the ocean’ to be strengthened at UN meeting



1 December 2010 – Managers from the 43 marine sites on the World Heritage List of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation ([UNESCO](#)) began their first-ever meeting in Hawaii today to explore ways of strengthening the conservation of these “crown jewels of the ocean.”

The meeting in Honolulu, which ends on Friday, coincides with the official ceremony for the inscription of the [Papahānaumokuākea](#) Marine National Monument which was added to the World Heritage List in August.

“World Heritage – the very words evoke the global mission to protect the most exceptional and iconic places in the world,” [said](#) Francesco Bandarin, UNESCO’s Assistant Director General of Culture.

He noted that out of nearly 6,000 marine protected areas now designated worldwide, only 43 have the highest internationally recognized status for conservation – UNESCO World Heritage Listing.

The gathering, co-organized by UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre, seeks to bring together a stronger community of site managers to play a bigger role in tackling the challenges of ocean conservation.

Today, approximately 1.4 million square kilometres of ocean are protected under the World Heritage Convention, including five of the ten largest marine protected areas on the planet.

Considered the “crown jewels of the ocean,” these sites are recognized by the international community for their exceptional beauty, biodiversity, or unique ecological, biological, and geological processes.

Marine World Heritage was first recognized by UNESCO in 1981 with the inscription of Australia’s Great Barrier Reef Marine Park on the World Heritage List. It was subsequently joined by emblematic sites such as The Galapagos Islands, Ha Long Bay, Tubbataha Reefs National Park, the Wadden Sea and The Everglades.

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