



## **Governance of the seamounts in the SWIO**

*How to regulate the exploitation and control of the exceptional natural heritage associated with seamounts?*

**Status of the issues.** In the regional governance of the Indian Ocean developed for the high sea and areas adjacent to it, the place given to the management of areas beyond the national jurisdiction of coastal States is very marginal. This is the case for the seamounts, some of which >200 nautical miles EEZ will be attached to countries claiming an extension of their continental shelf to guarantee the exclusive rights of exploitation (benthic living or mineral resources), whereas other will keep an open-access status. However, all of these highly productive zones are at the crossroads of fisheries, ecosystems conservation and governance considerations for their management.

**Why is it important?** Because of (i) the lack of knowledge and their vulnerability to exploitation without real legal framework both for the water column and the benthos, or because of non-compliance practices; and (ii) the urgency of the agenda of Law of the Sea's reforms (opened in 2017) aiming at the international maritime area with a future international legal binding agreement for new governance on the high seas.

**What policy proposition to the COP?**

- Integrate natural and social sciences knowledge around this issue and make them accessible to decision-makers to enable States and the Nairobi Convention to be better informed and thus initiate a legal framework for the management of the seamounts.
- Consider the option of extending the competence of the Nairobi Convention towards the near high seas and the deep sea, therefore beyond the EEZ boundaries.
- Go towards the establishment of MPAs on high and deep seas using a weight-of-evidence (WoE) approach.