



## **Communiqué of partners at the launch of the Regional Programme for the Conservation of Coastal and Marine Zones in West Africa**

This communiqué relates the conclusions of the meeting on the Regional Programme for the Conservation of Coastal and Marine Zones (RPCM), held 12 June 2003 in Dakar, Senegal.

The mission of the RPCM is to conserve coastal and marine ecosystems that provide vital resources to the communities and economies of the countries involved, whether through fisheries or tourism. It also takes into consideration the conservation of biodiversity and the cultural heritage of the coastal communities.

The Programme is supported by a large number of partners – ministries responsible for fisheries and environment, universities, professional associations, local communities, NGOs, intergovernmental instruments and regional institutions, including the Subregional Commission for Fisheries (SRCF). Developed through an all-inclusive process, the RPCM brings together over forty institutions in Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, and Cape Verde.

The RPCM, originally an initiative of the International Foundation for the Banc d'Arguin, the World Wide Fund for Nature, IUCN – The World Conservation Union and Wetlands International, has become a coalition of diverse actors. This coalition supports national and regional authorities with the required expertise and resources to achieve the results as proposed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the New Partnership for Africa's Development: the establishment of a network of national and transboundary marine protected areas, the restoration of marine resources, the conservation of local knowledge in natural resource management and the development of ecotourism.

The regional strategy to strengthen marine protected areas allows partners to execute their interventions in a coherent and coordinated manner, based on a shared vision for sustainable development. The partners welcome the engagement of the ten ministries who have signed the Political Statement in the preamble to the Regional Strategy and thereby have expressed their clear political will for innovative collaboration on transboundary resources management.

During the conference, the partners demonstrated:

- Their willingness to act for the conservation of coastal and marine resources, and to promote the development of coastal communities by maintaining a healthy and productive environment;
- Their commitment to clarify and improve the contribution of protected areas to the challenges of sustainable development and poverty reduction;
- Their appreciation of the formalisation, through the signing of the Protocol, of the collaboration between the Subregional Commission on Fisheries and the international non-governmental organisations; and
- Their support for the Vision as put forward in the Programme.

Finally, the participants are convinced that the RPCM is a practical framework that allows technical and financial partners who wish to engage in the implementation of the programme to improve the coherence and efficacy of their actions as well as their communication with other actors involved.

They solemnly promise to provide their support to the continuous development of the RPCM and its partners in the implementation and financing of its Programme of Action.

Dakar, 12 June 2003