

Key Takeaways Of Seminar On World Environment Day 2026:
“MARINE CONSERVATION IN PAKISTAN: FROM PLANS TO ACTION”

1. **Marine ecosystem is important to climate resilience:** Protecting Pakistan's seas is essential for climate resilience, biodiversity, and economic well-being. Healthy marine ecosystems, including mangroves and coastal habitats, support livelihoods, strengthen resilience to climate change, conserve biodiversity, and contribute to sustainable development, making marine conservation a national priority rather than just an environmental concern.
2. **From declaration to implementation:** Declaring MPAs is only the first step; the real challenge is ensuring their effective management and implementation through clear governance, sustainable financing, enforcement, monitoring, community engagement and long-term implementation that delivers real ecological and social benefits.
3. **Governance through multi-stakeholder coordination:** MPA governance can be strengthened by bringing together federal and provincial agencies, maritime and defense institutions, local communities, academia, and conservation organizations to support effective and integrated marine management. The need for stronger coordination between provincial authorities, federal agencies, maritime organizations, tourism operators, and conservation bodies was identified as a core issue.
4. **Meet 30 x 30 Targets:** Pakistan has made important progress by declaring Astola Island, Churna Island, and Miani Hor as Marine Protected Areas, but together they cover less than 1% of the country's marine waters. To meet international commitments such as the 30x30 target, Pakistan must accelerate the designation of additional MPAs, revive the Indus Canyon MPA proposal, and recognize OECMs and community-managed conservation areas as part of an integrated marine conservation network.
5. **Establish Dedicated MPA Management and Monitoring Offices:** For Marine Protected Areas such as Churna Island, which lack nearby infrastructure, Pakistan should establish strategically located base offices and field stations on the mainland. These offices can support regular patrolling, scientific monitoring, stakeholder coordination, tourism management, emergency response, and enforcement activities. Locations such as Hub, Gadani, or other suitable coastal settlements could serve as operational hubs for managing offshore protected areas. These offices can also help build Pakistan's capacity from BBNJ treaty compliance.
6. **Marine Conservation in the Indus Delta Canyon:** The Indus Delta Canyon is already recognized internationally as an Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area (EBSA), an Important Marine Mammal Area (IMMA), an Important Shark and Ray Area (ISRA), and a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA). Given its exceptional ecological significance, a comprehensive marine conservation and management framework for the canyon should be developed in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including government

agencies, Pakistan Navy, fisheries authorities, coastal communities, and conservation organizations.

7. Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) to Complement MPAs and accelerate progress towards Pakistan's 30x30 Conservation target: other effective Area-Based Conservation Measures like community managed fish sanctuaries, mangroves etc are an effective and practical way to move towards sustainably managing our coastal resources and meeting international commitments.

8. Invest in Ocean Awareness and Community-Based Conservation: Support public awareness programmes, eco-tourism, citizen science, and community engagement initiatives that allow people to experience and understand marine ecosystems and nature-based conservation.

9. Check Unauthorized infrastructure development within MPAs: Construction of buildings, accommodation facilities, walkways, and other infrastructure has reportedly taken place within Astola Island MPA without obtaining the required approvals from the custodian agency, the Balochistan Forest and Wildlife Department.

10. Regulate tourism activities: Tourism operations, including visitor accommodation and recreational facilities, are being conducted without a clear regulatory framework, potentially undermining the conservation objectives of the protected area. Installation of lighting and tourist facilities may disrupt the behavior of nesting turtles, migratory birds, and other species that depend on dark, undisturbed environments.

11. Regulate Destructive Fishing Practices: Destructive fishing practices emerged as a major threat to Pakistan's marine ecosystems and the effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas. Speakers highlighted concerns regarding bottom trawling, the capture of juvenile fish, the harvesting of "kachra fish" for fishmeal production, and the widespread problem of ghost nets that continue trapping marine life long after being discarded. Boats entering protected areas should be registered. Sustainable fishing gear should be mandatory. Core, buffer, and transition zones should be physically marked.

12. Clearly Demarcate MPA Boundaries and Zones: Establish and visibly mark Marine Protected Area boundaries, including core, buffer, and transition zones, through buoys, signage, and navigational markers. Clear demarcation will improve awareness, facilitate enforcement, reduce user conflicts, and ensure that fishermen, tourism operators, and other stakeholders understand and comply with the regulations applicable to each zone. This would also ensure sustainable livelihoods and economic benefits from these natural resources.

13. Protection of Mangroves and Coral Reefs as key climate resilience measure: Integrate marine conservation into climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies by protecting and restoring mangroves and coral reefs, which serve as natural

barriers against tsunamis, storms, coastal erosion, and other climate-related hazards while enhancing coastal resilience.

14. Prepare a National Marine Protected Areas Action Plan (2026–2030): A cross-cutting takeaway that emerged from the discussion is to prepare a National Marine Protected Areas Action Plan bringing together all relevant stakeholders under a common implementation framework with clearly assigned responsibilities, timelines, financing mechanisms and monitoring indicators to support Pakistan’s 30×30 commitments and broader ocean governance objectives. The key takeaways and recommended actions along with suggested responsible entities are enlisted in the table below.

S No.	Key Takeaway	Suggested Action	Lead / Responsible Organizations
1	Marine Ecosystems for Climate Resilience	Integrate marine conservation into climate adaptation, coastal resilience and disaster risk reduction planning.	MoCC&EC, NDMA, Provincial Governments, Pakistan Navy, IUCN, WWF-Pakistan
2	From Declaration to Implementation	Develop and implement management plans, monitoring systems, financing mechanisms, and enforcement frameworks for all MPAs.	MoCC&EC, Balochistan Forest & Wildlife Department, Sindh Wildlife Department, IUCN, WWF-Pakistan
3	Governance through Multi-Stakeholder Coordination	Establish an inter-agency MPA coordination mechanism involving federal and provincial agencies, maritime institutions, local communities, academia and NGOs.	MoCC&EC, Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Provincial Governments, PMSA, Pakistan Navy
4	Achieving the 30×30 Target	Expand MPA coverage, identify new MPAs, revive Indus Delta Canyon MPA, and incorporate OECMs into national conservation planning.	MoCC&EC, Provincial Governments, NIMA, IUCN, WWF-Pakistan
5	Dedicated MPA Management and Monitoring Offices	Establish coastal field stations and operational hubs for monitoring, enforcement, research, tourism management and stakeholder coordination.	Provincial Wildlife Departments, MoCC&EC, Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Pakistan Navy
6	Marine Conservation in the Indus Delta Canyon	Start stakeholder consultation, finalize management framework and initiate conservation and monitoring measures.	MoCC&EC, Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Sindh Government, Pakistan Navy

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7	Scale-up OECMs	Identify, assess and formally recognize OECMs including mangroves, fish sanctuaries, IMMAs and community-managed conservation areas.	MoCC&EC, Provincial Governments, IUCN, WWF-Pakistan
8	Ocean Awareness and Community-Based Conservation	Support ocean literacy programmes, eco-tourism initiatives, citizen science projects and community stewardship programmes.	MoCC&EC, NIMA, IUCN, WWF-Pakistan, Academia, NGOs
9	Control Unauthorized Activities in MPAs	Ensure all infrastructure development within MPAs undergoes environmental review and approval by designated management authorities.	Provincial Wildlife Departments, MoCC&EC, District Administrations, Coast Guard, PMSA
10	Regulate Tourism Activities	Develop sustainable tourism guidelines, visitor management plans, carrying capacity assessments and wildlife-friendly infrastructure standards.	Provincial Tourism Departments, Wildlife Departments, MoCC&EC, Tourism Operators
11	Regulate Destructive Fishing Practices	Restrict bottom trawling near MPAs, regulate fishmeal production, control ghost nets, enforce gear restrictions and protect fish nursery grounds.	Fisheries Departments, Ministry of Maritime Affairs, PMSA, Provincial Governments
12	Demarcate MPA Boundaries and Zones	Install buoys, navigational markers and signage to clearly identify core, buffer and transition zones and improve enforcement.	Provincial Wildlife Departments, PMSA, Pakistan Navy, Port Authorities
13	Protect Mangroves and Coral Reefs as Climate Resilience Measure	Implement restoration programmes, establish coral monitoring systems, promote blue carbon initiatives and integrate ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction measures. Mainstream marine ecosystems into Pakistan's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plan (NAP), provincial climate adaptation	MoCC&EC, NDMA, Provincial Forest & Wildlife Departments, Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Pakistan Navy, IUCN, WWF-Pakistan, UNDP

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		strategies, and coastal resilience programmes. Promote blue carbon and ecosystem-based adaptation initiatives to access international climate finance and strengthen long-term resilience.	