



The French legal framework to protect coral reefs

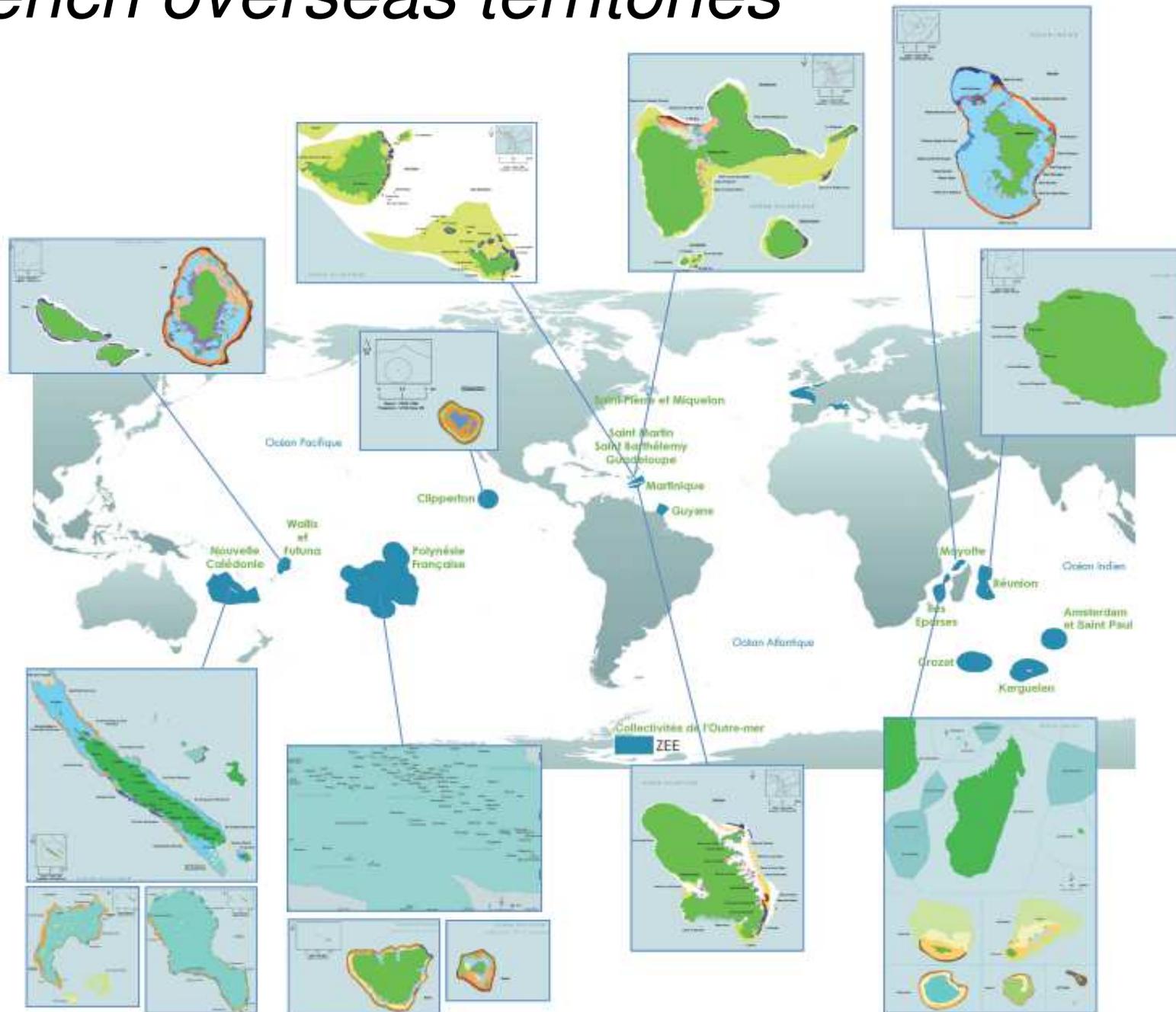
Law for Biodiversity, Nature and Landscapes Recovery – August 2016

To stop the loss of biodiversity in overseas and preserve its role in the adaptation of territories to climate change, the State sets itself as objectives, with the support of its public institutions under supervision and in consultation with local authorities, concerned:

- 1° To develop and implement a territorial action program to protect 55,000 hectares of mangroves by 2020;*
- 2° To develop, as part of the French initiative for coral reefs and on the basis of a review of the health status of coral reefs and associated ecosystems conducted every five years, **an action plan contributing to protect 75% of coral reefs in French overseas territories by 2021.***

In the framework of this action plan, the State sets itself the objective of prohibiting, in areas under French sovereignty or jurisdiction, dredging operations of the seabed in which coral reefs are present, with the exception of dredging operations aimed at ensuring the continuity of the territory through maritime flows. In addition, seabed dredging operations aimed at ensuring the continuity of the territory by maritime flows must avoid the destruction of coral reefs as much as possible.

French overseas territories



French overseas territories



- 11 different territories, spread over 3 oceans
- Different levels of autonomy between islands: in the Pacific, local governments have their own competency to protect environment
- 55 000 km² of coral reefs
- More than 40 000 km² to protect

What has been done so far?



- Specify the scope of the law
- Diagnostic on Marine Protected Area coverage of coral reefs
- Inventory and effectiveness analyse of tools existing to protect coral reefs

Specify the scope of the law



« **Coral reefs** » defined as an ecosystem to protect.
Lagoons and passes must be included.

Coral reef	Reef ecosystem
8 500 km ²	55 000 km ²

Specify the scope the law

« **Protection** »

- Spatial protection as MPA is not the only way to protect coral reefs.
- Land management tools must be included in the set of protection tools with regards to the impact of land use activities on coral reef.
- There is a graduation of tools existing to be considered in our plan of action, from the strongest regulatory tools to awareness raising tools.

Diagnostic on MPA coverage of coral reefs



- 65% of french coral reefs are already included in an MPA (according to the French definition and including all IUCN categories) and could be considered as protected.
 - When we consider strong protections, only 5% of coral reefs are covered
- => What is at stake is more the effectiveness of measures to protect coral reefs better than the quantified target**

Inventory and effectiveness analyse of tools existing to protect coral reefs

Main outputs:

- We need more strong protection tools (No take zone, regulatory species protection...) to improve the effectiveness of coral reef protection
- Within MPAs already existing, we need to improve management measures targeting specially coral reef protection
- Land based activities spatial planning (e.g. water management and urban planification tools) is necessary but not sufficient to reduce the impact of human activities on land.
- We need to improve the mix between different type of tools in order to optimise their efficiency (e.g. strong protection tools together with awareness raising one)

Plan of action: first draft

General principles:

- This action plan must focus on non climate related pressures
- It must be built within the respect of local competencies
- It is urgent to act. We need to go fast and to focus on concret actions
- The quantified target must be considered as a mean to create a collective dynamic and a national mobilisation to protect our coral reefs. It's not worth to loose time on definitions and on numbers.
- We need to try, to experiment, to be bold

To monitor and mitigate climate change impacts on coral reefs

To assess every 5 years the state of French coral reefs

To improve communication and awareness raising

To strengthen knowledge on coral reefs

To strengthen the sea protection strategy

- To improve enforcement means (control)
- To ban capital dredging and dumping activities which can lead to mutilation of coral reefs
- Regulatory coral species protection

To effectively reduce pressures coming from land

- To make the validation of MPAs mandatory for water and waste management projects
- To preserve wetlands ecosystem in order to improve water quality

To build a coral reef restoration strategy

- To develop innovative research projects to strengthen coral reef resilience
- To launch a grant program targeting pilot experimentation projects on restoration

To enhance crisis management

- To integrate coral reef resilience in emergency plans already existing to face cyclones and/or pollutions
- To develop an emergency plan to face biological crisis like bleaching or invasive species

Conclusions



Recently, the prime Minister has recalled the importance of overseas territories in terms of biodiversity and has endorsed some of the main orientations planned highlighting in particular:

- Improve crisis management
- Strengthen means of control
- Grant program on restoration
- Support to research activities on resilience