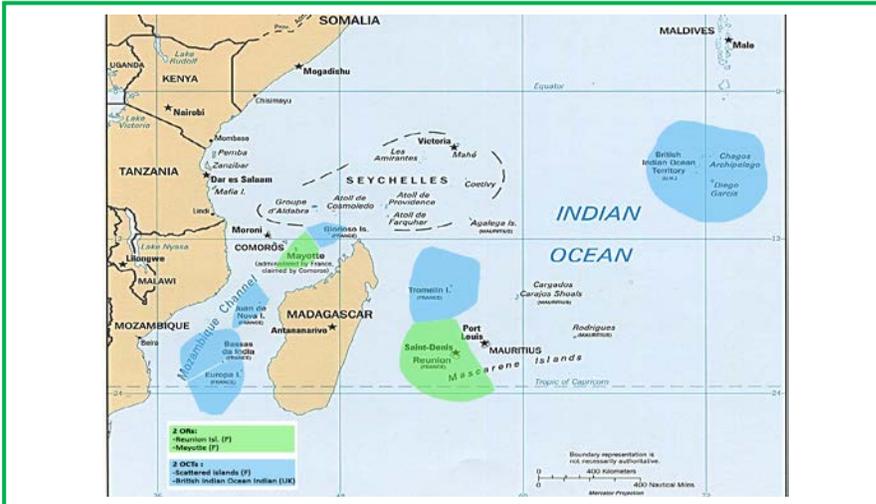


BEST

VOLUNTARY SCHEME FOR BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN TERRITORIES OF EUROPEAN OVERSEAS



INDIAN OCEAN



Facts & figures

Geography

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Total area: | 1,657,286 km ² |
| Land area: | 2,992 km ² (0.2%) |
| -2 ORs (F) | 2,889 km ² |
| -2 OCTs (F & UK) | 103 km ² |
| Protected / managed land area: | 2,209 km ² (73.8%) |
| Exclusive economic zone (EEZ): | 1,654,294 km ² (99.8%) |
| -2 ORs (F) | 383,439 km ² |
| -2 OCTs (F & UK) | 1,270,855 km ² |
| Marine protected / managed area (MPA and/or MMA): | 660,766 km ² (39.9%) |

| | |
|---|--|
| Overseas Regions (Governance/Dependency): | Mayotte (F), Reunion (F), Scattered Islands (F), British Indian Ocean Territories (UK) |
|---|--|

Socio-economic facts (of populated ORs)

| | Mayotte | Reunion |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Total population: | 212,645 (20%) | 837,900 (80%) |
| Population density: | 564 per km ² | 334 per km ² |
| Average annual GDP: | 6,575 €/cap. | 17,520 €/cap |
| Main income sources: | Public admin., services, trade | Services (incl. tourism), construction |

Biodiversity

Threatened ecosystems*:
Mayotte: relicts of tropical dry and humid forests

Endemic species**:

- Mayotte:** 42 plants, 63 insects, 54 mollusks, 2 amphibians, 6 reptiles, 2 birds;
- Reunion:** 240 plants, 600 insects, 20 mollusks, 7 reptiles, 11 birds, 1 mammal
- Scattered Islands:** 2 mollusks in Europa, 1 reptile in Glorioso probably extinct
- BIOT:** 1 species of coral

Some threatened species***:

- Reunion Island day gecko (*Phelsuma borbonica*),
- Reunion cuckooshrike (*Coracina newtoni*), the dugong (*Dugong dugon*), green (*Chelonia mydas*) and hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) sea turtles, Madagascar Pond-heron (*Ardeola idae*), etc.

Current situation & main challenges

Socio-economic context

The EU Outermost Regions (ORs) in the Indian Ocean, **Reunion** and **Mayotte**, are densely populated whereas no permanent residents are found in the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) **Scattered islands** and the **British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)**, also geographically known as the Chagos Archipelago.

Reunion has been a French overseas territory for more than 50 years and benefited from progressive development of its economy and population. Strong infrastructure development boosted it, but unemployment rate remains twice higher than in mainland France. **Mayotte** is structurally lagging behind other French Overseas entities and any other European region in most indicators (GDP, education, private sector, social benefits, and environmental care). First EU funds to the youngest EU OR should offer opportunities to invest in lacking infrastructure (e.g. extended sanitation network) and to increase levels of public services (including in the environment sector).

Legal and political context

Reunion is part of the Indian Ocean Commission, gathering most of the islands of the Western Indian Ocean. As such, the island is well integrated regionally and holds strong economic and political links with its neighbors. The local authorities ratified Nairobi Convention, a regional agreement for the protection, management and development of the marine and coastal environmental protection of the region. It also hosts the French Southern and Antarctic Lands (TAAF) managing the Scattered Islands (around Madagascar). **Mayotte** gained its overseas territory status in 2011 and remains under international dispute with neighboring Comoros. The close proximity and strong cultural and demographic ties combined with a huge economic differential explain the illegal immigration issue, having impacts on many aspects, challenging Mayotte's development and environment. Both, Reunion and Mayotte, have local assemblies directly elected by their inhabitants, and executive power is held by the *Préfecture*, under the supervision of a *Préfet* (prefect) appointed by the President.

Scattered islands never had an indigenous or permanent population but scientists and military are now regularly present in some of these territories, administered by the TAAF and supervised by a *Préfet*. **BIOT** once had an indigenous population but today only hosts major military facilities (USA and UK) and is administered by a commissioner from the UK. Territorial waters form one of the world's largest marine protected areas (MPAs) encompassing almost the entire EEZ. Sovereignty of both OCTs remains under international dispute (with Madagascar and Comoros for Scattered Islands; and with Mauritius, and Seychelles for BIOT).

Current conservation status

Threats and pressures on biodiversity

Reunion: fires in altitude semi-dry forests, infrastructure development (esp. roads), wild harvesting of rare plants, invasive alien species (IAS), tropical cyclones, volcanic activity, coastal waters' pollution, overfishing

Mayotte: soil loss, bad agricultural practices, fires, IAS, uncontrolled urban development, water sewage and lack of sanitation network, illegal harvesting, lack of enforcement of environmental laws, lack of wastes management

Scattered islands & BIOT: poaching & illegal fishing. IAS, climate change, intensive military activities (Diego Garcia)

Current investments

Reunion: Reunion national park, reusable energies, scientific research

Mayotte: Mayotte Marine Park started in 2012, National Office for Forests (ONF) opened their local office in 2012 taking over public forests' management to catch up with national legislation, development of a network of new protected area (namely in ridge forests), progressively increasing marine regulations enforcement (fishing, coastal harvesting, poaching on sea turtles and on marine reserves)

Notable investment initiatives in conservation:

Mayotte Marine Park and Glorioso Marine Park (one of the **Scattered islands**, in connection with Mayotte waters), Biodiversity strategy collectively engaging a wide range of stakeholders into sustainable development & conservation, extension of the small protected areas network.

Reunion: extensive actions to fight IAS, UNESCO programme on world heritage natural site, Reunion NP.

BIOT: various scientific missions, with Chagos Trust in particular

Notable investment initiatives in sustainable development:

Mayotte: Set up of waste management and stocking facilities (following EU standards) to avoid previously preeminent wild dumps, creation of advice structures to improve energy consumption (and power save) at various scales (companies & administrations, domestic use, transport, house constructions, etc.)

Critical areas for action

Mayotte: increase scientific knowledge on environmental assessment (many rich natural habitats remain poorly known) so as to further conserve/protected ecosystems, develop new protected areas (with actual protection) and improve enforcement of environmental laws (that are currently rarely used), despite being part of a world biodiversity hotspot, there is currently only one actual reserve under real management & protection, ensure sustainable development through consideration of biodiversity assets, with legal schemes being currently written and biodiversity strategy promoted by IUCN and increase environmental outreach among population and leaders.

Reunion: better consideration of ecosystems and biodiversity in development plans and urbanization to prevent further fragmentation of natural habitats, boosting renewable sources of energy, fighting against fires, IAS and illegal harvest of protected natural products

Scattered Islands & BIOT: increase efforts on fight against IAS, better enforcement to prevent poaching in these remote territories, scientific research to further develop knowledge and monitoring of local ecosystems and species.

Important conservation activities

COREXERUN

Budget: €2,571,548 (2009-2015) EU LIFE+ and other funds
Activities: Conservation, restoration and reconstitution of semi-dry forest on Reunion Island, through inventories, harvest and multiplication of 48 xerophile species, fight against IAS, reintroduction of 9,000 plants, building a network of experts, volunteers, focal points, etc.

Results: increased knowledge, identified efficient new conservation protocols, strengthened rare species' populations, restored 30 hectares of forest relicts, experimented restoration to 9 hectares of recently disappeared forest, gather wide range of stakeholders.

Migration Routes of Megaptera Novaeangliae (MIROMEN)

Budget: € 209,252 total (2012-2014) including € 198,138 from BEST preparatory action

Activities: Studying the migratory routes and populations of humpback whales visiting Reunion islands in the Indian Ocean (satellite telemetry tracking with Argos tags).

Results: acquisition of new datasets about humpback whales paths throughout the Western Indian Ocean, identification of connectivity and distinctions between several groups of population, gathering and networking regional/global experts, and wider data sharing to better document the species.

Biodiversity strategy for sustainable development in Mayotte

Budget: € 125,000 (2012-2015) Préfecture de Mayotte, Conseil Général de Mayotte, DEAL

Activities: establish a reference [baseline document](#) and [a roadmap](#) to better integrate biodiversity in Mayotte's development (years 2013-2020), collectively engage stakeholders into activities having a positive impact on biodiversity. +2 studies: terrestrial ecosystem services of Mayotte and ecosystem red list assessment of its mangroves.

Results: 51 structures (state services, local political leaders, NGOs, etc.) involved, 5 major stakes identified with 20 critical activities to lead. Prioritization established for forthcoming projects, general follow-up of on-going environment projects. Contributed to raise local interest on mangroves conservation and on terrestrial ecosystems' value.

Useful links

- [Nairobi Convention](#)
- [BEST III : Indian Ocean hub](#)
- [Indian Ocean Commission](#)
- [Reunion National Park](#)
- [Mayotte Marine Park / Glorieuses Marine Park](#)
- [Chagos Conservation Trust](#)
- [Scattered islands \(îles Eparses\), TAAF](#)
- [IUCN French Committee, overseas programme](#)
- [Reunion island Regional administration](#)



Indian Ocean hub

