

"Green but not blue"

Though Costa Rica had the highest deforestation rate in Latin America in the 1980s, in the following decades its conservation model has enabled the country to safeguard a large part of its biodiversity. Forest cover now accounts for 52% of the nation's territory and 99% of its energy is clean and renewable.

Carlos Alvarado Quesada, who is just about to finish his term as president, is proud of Costa Rica's current track record but believes that the country can go even further. Describing the nation as "green, but not blue", he wants to replicate in marine ecosystems the conservation model that has been successfully implemented in terrestrial ecosystems. This prompted the announcement at the COP26 summit that Costa Rica would be participating in a vast new protected marine area. Governments from Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Panama have signed the new Declaration for the Conservation of the Marine Corridor of the Eastern Tropical Pacific. The region is home to a variety of endangered species of marine mammals, sharks and turtles.

Following this agreement, in December 2021 the president also signed a decree expanding Cocos Island National Park. This will increase the fully protected area by 27 times, from 2,034 km² to 54,844 km². Located 535 kilometers off the southern tip of the Nicoya Peninsula, the Cocos Marine Conservation Area is world renowned for its biological richness and endemism. This new decree, as well as the creation of the Bicentennial Seamounts Marine Management Area, will protect marine resources and ensure the protection of fragile species and ecosystems into the future.

Christian Guillermot, the Vice Minister of Multilateral Affairs, highlighted the value of ocean ecosystems for global health. He pointed out that Costa Rica, which is bordered by two oceans (the Atlantic and the Pacific) has a marine territory that is more than 10 times larger than the continental one. "This implies a source of great wealth for our country, but also represents a great responsibility," said the Vice Minister.

Regarding Ocean Diplomacy, the Foreign Ministry also highlights the value of multilateralism as the ideal way to protect the environment. During the One Planet Summit, Costa Rica, together

with France and the United Kingdom, launched the High Ambition Coalition (HAC) for Nature and People, which aims to protect 30% of the planet's terrestrial and marine ecosystems by 2030. The intergovernmental initiative has the commitment of some fifty countries and the "30X30" goal sets a global target aimed at preventing species loss and protecting ecosystems that are vital for economic security and human health.

"We must protect our terrestrial and marine ecosystems," stated President Alvarado. "Part of our global commitment is to help halt the accelerating loss of species and protect vital ecosystems that underpin both our food and economic security."