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## PRESS RELEASE

### **RAMPAO BOARD UNANIMOUSLY APPROVES COTE D'IVOIRE'S APPLICATION TO BECOME RAMPAO MEMBER STATE**

**[Dakar, 31-10-2023]** - The West Africa Marine Protected Areas Network (RAMPAO *in french*) is delighted to announce that its Board has officially approved Cote d'Ivoire's membership of the Network, marking a historic step in the strengthening of a coherent and interconnected network of MPAs in West Africa.

This membership bears witness to Cote d'Ivoire's commitment to protecting its rich marine and coastal resources. This political will was given concrete expression in Presidential Decree N° 2022-448 creating the Grand-Bereby Marine Protected Area.

"In line with its international commitments, Cote d'Ivoire created its first MPA, covering 5 identified sites, by decree issued by the Council of Ministers on 6 July 2022. Its membership of RAMPAO will undoubtedly help to build synergies between managers on one hand, and between managers and technical stakeholders involved in the management of MPAs in West Africa on the other," says Mr. Degrâce N'da Kognan, Director of Ecology and Nature Protection at Cote d'Ivoire's Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development (MEDD).

Marine Protected Areas are essential for preserving biodiversity, restoring coastal habitats and promoting sustainable fishing, among other things. Their role as nature-based solutions to mitigate the effects of climate change in the most vulnerable regions, notably West Africa, is well established.

For Ms Marie Suzanna TRAORE, Executive Secretary of RAMPAO, "marine biodiversity transcends borders, and it is together, in the unity of our commitment, that we can federate actions for functional MPAs in West Africa. RAMPAO is delighted to work with the Ivorian authorities, conservation organizations and all stakeholders to promote shared governance of MPAs.

Cote d'Ivoire has thus joined the eight countries that are currently members of RAMPAO network, which comprises some fifty Marine Protected Areas.

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#### **About RAMPAO :**

The West Africa Marine Protected Areas Network (RAMPAO) is an organization working for the governance and the management of Marine Protected Areas in the West African region. It covers the coastal countries of West Africa region and currently has around fifty Marine Protected Areas. RAMPAO works closely with member countries, MPA managers and local communities to promote the conservation of biodiversity and the restoration of marine and coastal habitats.