

PRESS RELEASE

AIR CENTRE AND MBON ANNOUNCE NEW SECRETARIAT

Marine biodiversity scientists celebrate having a new Secretariat to coordinate the world Marine Biodiversity Observation Network (MBON), now hosted by the AIR Centre located in Terceira island, Azores.

The agreement between MBON, AIR Centre and the Azores Regional Fund for Science and Technology was celebrated in November 2018. It establishes a partnership that fosters the scientific knowledge and the development of technology-driven solutions using Earth Observation. The goal is to contribute to effective management policies for ocean biodiversity and ecosystem services locally in the Azores, and internationally for the Atlantic and globally.

As Portugal is a maritime nation and a leader in developing objectives and targets for the international Convention on Biological Diversity, it is committing to help organize the MBON. This is also a major contribution to advance the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.



Image Credits: Copernicus Sentinel data [2020]

MBON is a “coalition of the willing” who agree to share knowledge and know-how to evaluate changes of biodiversity in the ocean, including data, products, protocols and methods, data systems and software, to inform and support ecosystem-based management and the long-term health and use of marine ecosystems. MBON was established as a theme of the GEO BON (Group on Earth Observation Biodiversity Observation Network), supported by 110 member countries, to grow a global community of practice, to develop and share best practices and standards on how to collect and share data about life in the sea. A grand challenge is to focus on Essential Ocean Variables and Essential Biodiversity Variables that can be used to track changes in how and why the abundance and distribution and diversity of organisms in the sea are changing. Using common methods for monitoring these biodiversity variables in the ocean is critical to



help understand how changes in any one location are related to changes over larger areas, including regional seas and globally. Common methods are also fundamental to monitor change over time.

MBON will showcase the latest thinking, discoveries and plans for reporting trends in ocean life at the GEO BON virtual Open Science Conference & All Hands meeting (<https://conf2020.geobon.org/index.php#intro>).

The MBON Secretariat will coordinate and focus this community of practice on solving problems of society. The AIR Centre is an internationally networked organization, oriented to foster job creation and knowledge-driven sustainable economic development in Atlantic regions. It addresses and integrates space, climate, earth, ocean, energy, and data sciences and promotes cooperation in alignment with national/regional priorities and global challenges. It builds on and expands the abilities of individual organizations, and it advances selected scientific and technological domains and their constellations of actors towards shared targets. For that, it recruits and orchestrates a complex web of organizations and individuals to deliver change and social impact through concrete actions. The AIR Centre and its Earth Observation Laboratory (EO Lab) located in Terceira Island, Azores will provide technical and logistical support to the MBON Secretariat with the allocation of dedicated staff.

“It was with great pleasure that I accepted this new professional challenge” says Joana Soares, Executive Secretary of MBON and Project Officer of the AIR Centre. “I hope to help find solutions to conserve coastal and marine biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Azores and elsewhere around the world”.

“We are excited to see the commitment of the Azores and Portugal to support the international science and operations community by standing up the MBON Secretariat at the AIR Centre”, said Frank Muller-Karger of the University of South Florida and one of the international co-chairs of the MBON.



Myliobatis aquila in Azorean waters.

Image source: João Bernardo Barreiros, Azorean Biodiversity group, cE3c- Centre for Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Changes, University of Azores.

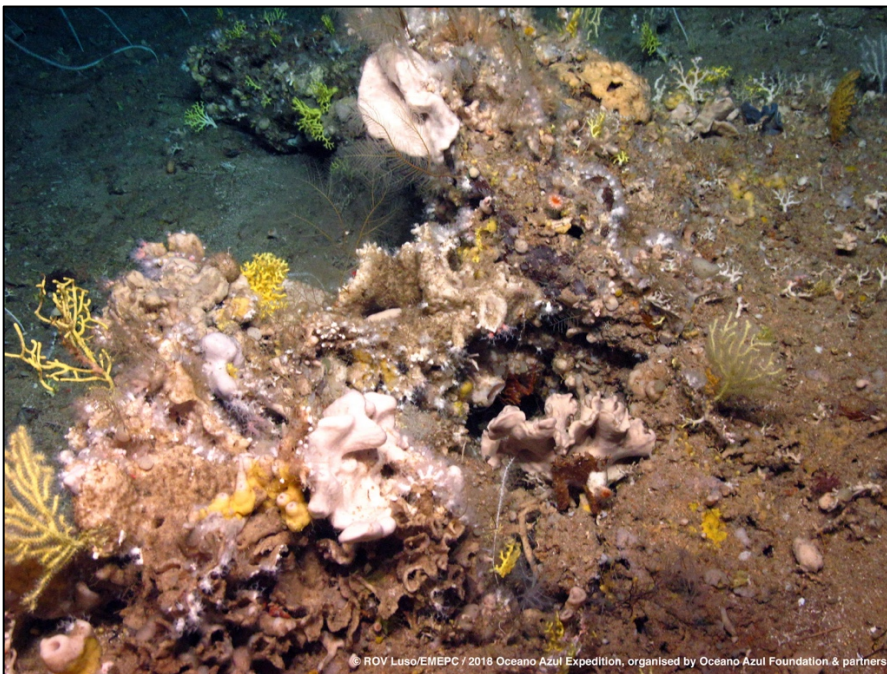


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Schools of Sarpa salpa and Mycteroperca fusca in Formigas, Azores.

Image Source:: JFONTES@ImagDOP/UAz



Seamount summits along the Mid-Atlantic Ridge within the Azores region host a great diversity of octocoral and sponge species.

Image source: © ROV Luso/EMEPC / 2018 Oceano Azul Expedition, organised by Oceano Azul Foundation & partners (provided by Carlos Dominguez-Carrió, Deep-sea ecology, IMAR – Institute of Marine Research, Department of Oceanography and Fisheries of University of Azores).

AIR CENTRE - ATLANTIC INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

Headquarters: TERINOV – Parque de Ciência e Tecnologia da Ilha Terceira, Canada de Belém sn, Terra Chã 9700-702 Angra do Heroísmo, Portugal

Lisbon Office: Palácio das Laranjeiras. Estrada das Laranjeiras, 205 1649-018 Lisboa- Portugal

Telephone: +351 21 723 10 62

Email: info@aircentre.org