

THE THREE WORLD RESTORATION FLAGSHIPS AWARDED BY THE DECADE ON ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

July 2025

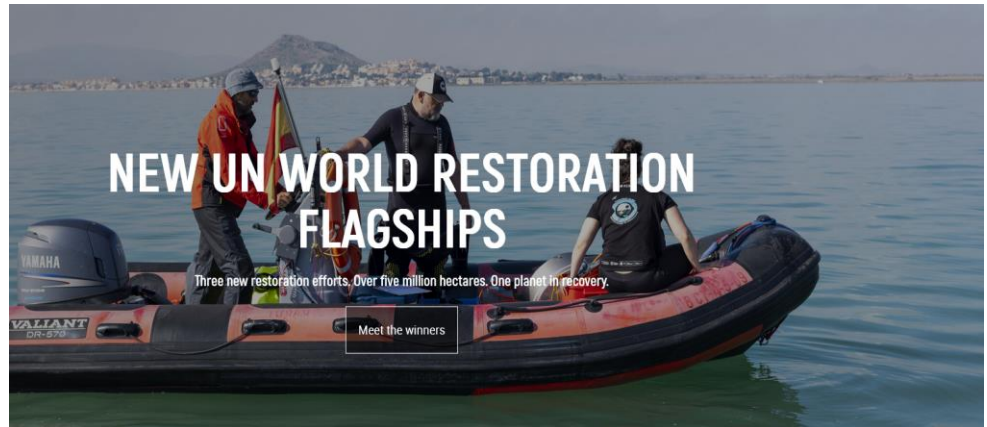
The [UN Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#) and the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN \(FAO\)](#) have named the [World Restoration Flagships for 2025](#), tackling pollution, unsustainable exploitation, and invasive species in three continents. The three new flagships comprise restoration initiatives in the coral-rich Northern Mozambique Channel Region, in more than 60 of Mexico's islands and in the Mar Menor of Spain, Europe's first ecosystem with legal personhood. The winning initiatives were announced at an event during the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France, and are now eligible for UN support. These initiatives are restoring almost five million hectares of marine ecosystems.

The World Restoration Flagship awards are part of the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) – led by UNEP and FAO, which aims to prevent, halt, and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on every continent and in every ocean. The awards track notable initiatives that support global commitments to restore one billion hectares by 2030. World Restoration Flagships are chosen as the best examples of ongoing, large-scale and long-term ecosystem restoration by a group of experts from the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration's network. Selection follows a process with 15 criteria, embodying the [10 Restoration Principles](#) of the UN Decade.

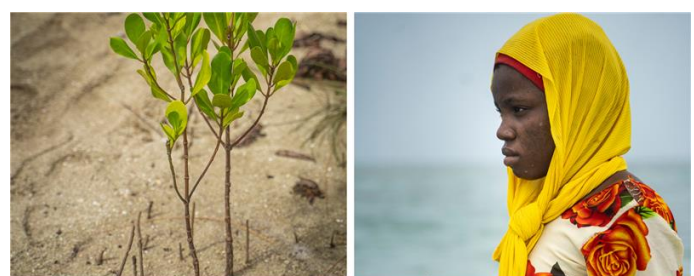
The three new flagships recognized in 2025 comprise the following restoration initiatives:

[The Northern Mozambique Channel](#)

This small region boasts 35 per cent of the coral reefs found in the entire Indian Ocean and is considered its seedbed and nursery. Agricultural run-off, overfishing, and climate change threaten this economically and ecologically important stretch of ocean. Comoros, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Tanzania are already working together to manage, protect, and restore almost 87,200 hectares of interconnected land- and seascapes, benefitting both nature and people. Actions undertaken today to maintain it include restoration of [blue](#) and green forests by creating interconnected restoration corridors, mangroves, and coral reef ecosystems, and improving fisheries management. These efforts, championed by the NGO World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and UN agencies alike, encompass multiple levels and sites, spanning both land and seascapes.



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[Mexico's seabird islands](#)

Recognized worldwide as vital hotspots for biodiversity, particularly for being home to one-third of the world's seabird species, the Mexican islands had long suffered the negative impacts of invasive species. Twenty-six years ago, Mexico's National Commission for Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) and the civil society organisation Grupo de Ecología y Conservación de Islas (GECI) launched an ambitious, comprehensive ecological restoration program, in collaboration with partners from government agencies, civil society, academia, and local communities. Efforts include removing 60 populations of invasive species and restoring seabird colonies, forest landscape restoration. Coupled with implementing biosecurity protocols, the programme restores the island's endemic richness and supports local island communities. Thanks to restoration efforts, 85% of formerly extirpated seabird colonies have returned to the islands, including species at risk of extinction. The initiative will complete the restoration of over 100,000 hectares by the end of the decade in terms of biodiversity value, encompassing almost 100 islands, and protecting over 300 endemic species of mammals, birds, reptiles, and birds.



[Spain: The Mar Menor lagoon](#)

With its famously transparent water, the Mar Menor lagoon is essential to the region's identity, local tourism, small-scale fishing and unique flora and fauna, including water birds. Surrounded by one of Europe's key agricultural regions, it is the continent's largest saltwater lagoon, and its biodiversity has successfully adapted to conditions of extreme temperatures, high salinity, and low levels of nutrients. However, nitrate discharges from intensive agricultural activity, as well as other polluting land and marine activities, have led to the lagoon's rapid degradation, including the emergence of damaging algal blooms. A positive turn came when over half a million citizens supported a Popular Legislative Initiative to make the Mar Menor a legal entity with rights. The total area targeted for restoration amounts to 8,770 hectares, representing 7 per cent of the entire basin flowing into the Mar Menor. This area would support Spain's climate change objectives, including its overall national target of restoring 870,000 hectares by 2030. For one of the proposed interventions, the Green Belt, it is estimated to absorb more than 82,256 tonnes CO₂ by 2040 – the equivalent of the annual greenhouse gas emissions from almost 14,000 people in Spain.



The UN General Assembly has declared 2021-2030 as the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#). Led by the UN Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, together with the support of partners, it is designed to prevent, halt, and reverse the loss and degradation of ecosystems worldwide. It aims at reviving billions of hectares, covering terrestrial as well as aquatic ecosystems. A global call to action, the UN Decade draws together political support, scientific research, and financial muscle to massively scale up restoration.

Countries have already promised to restore [1 billion hectares](#) as part of their commitments to the [Paris climate agreement](#), the targets of the Kunming-



Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the [Land Degradation Neutrality](#) targets and the [Bonn Challenge](#). However, little is known about the progress or quality of this restoration. With the World Restoration Flagships, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration is honouring the best examples of large-scale and long-term ecosystem restoration in any country or region, embodying the 10 Restoration Principles of the UN Decade. Progress of all World Restoration Flagships will be transparently monitored through the Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring, the UN Decade's platform for keeping track of global restoration efforts.

In 2022, the inaugural ten World Restoration Flagships were recognized as part of the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#), followed with the recognition of seven initiatives in 2024.

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