# Executive summary

The United Nations List of Protected Areas periodically reviews the global protected area estate and highlights progress achieved by countries in expanding their national protected area networks.

The 2018 edition of the UN List is the fifteenth release since the publication of the first version in 1961 – 62, and is a review of progress since 2014. It shows that the protected area estate worldwide has continued to expand since 2014, both on land and in the marine environment. In fact, the area protected in the marine environment has nearly doubled since 2014. This is partly due to the designation of some very large marine protected areas in many regions.

While increases in coverage are an important indicator of the determination of governments to meet Aichi Target 11, covering greater areas will not alone halt the loss of biodiversity. **For this reason, this report has a particular focus on the management effectiveness of the world’s protected areas. This is the first time that the UN List has included this aspect as a focus for analysis.**

The importance of understanding the effectiveness of protected areas has been part of the international discussions on protected areas for over 30 years. Today, a large number of countries undertake management effectiveness evaluations of their protected areas on a systematic basis. However, the compilation of updated management effectiveness information for the publication of this edition of the UN List revealed that this concept is still unknown in many countries and that little information and guidance on the use of the different tools to assess management effectiveness is available.

Over 230,000 protected areas are currently documented in the World Database on Protected Areas; and information on management effectiveness is available for just under 1% of them. Considerable further efforts are therefore required to understand how effectively protected areas are managed and to promote the uptake of the different management effectiveness assessment tools that have been created. In addition, work is required to determine how effective protected area management translates into the delivery of positive outcomes for nature and people.