

# EASTER ISLAND BECOMES THE LARGEST PROTECTED MARINE RESERVE IN THE REGION



The indigenous Rapa Nui people, who inhabit the Chilean Easter Island, have approved the creation of the largest marine protected zone in Latin America. This leaves Chile at its highest levels of land and marine conservation, the government announced on September 4.

More than 60% of the indigenous Rapa Nui people decided to protect a total area of 720 thousand square kilometers. The vote was announced by the Chilean government. **It was the first time the discussions with the indigenous people led to a creation of such an area in Chile.**

As a result of the vote, which involved 642 people, fishing will be limited to artisanal purposes. The administration of the marine reserve will be borne by both the Chilean state and representatives of the Rapa Nui community. With this initiative, it aims to protect the island from industrial fishing. Moreover, to recover overexploited species, ensure biological diversity and the subsistence of the island's indigenous community.

For long there had been complaints from the indigenous people and environmental organizations. In October 2015, the government of Michelle Bachelet responded with the announcement of the creation of this reserve, subject to the will of the Rapa Nui. Government, activists and indigenous people have celebrated the result, but they agree that there is still much to be done in the area.

**According to the authorities, three billion people today depend on marine and coastal biological diversity.** It is a sector which employs more than 200 million people and accounts for 5% of the world GDP.

The Convention for Biological Diversity, which includes more than 190 countries, sets the goal of shielding 10% of the oceans by 2020. Today, only 3.5% of them are protected and 1.6% fully protected, according to the latest report of the United Nations Environment Program.

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