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Short Report – 2017 UN Ocean Conference

Nairobi Convention Focal Points meeting 12 April 2017

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On the preparatory meeting for the Ocean Conference that was held on 15-16 February in New York

- 1- Side event organized by the Swedish government with the Secretariat of the Nairobi Convention and WWF:

A host of side events was a big part of the conference (25 in total), with the Swedish government co-hosting a lunch time event on implementing the Blue Economy in the Western Indian Ocean, together with the Secretariat of the Nairobi Convention and WWF. The side event outlined the principles of the sustainable Blue Economy and presented new findings of how the economy in the Western Indian Ocean region is underpinned by ocean wealth, and how sustainable ocean use can benefit the region now and into the future.

The Swedish Deputy Prime Minister spoke about the importance of regional collaboration and Sweden's experience and interest. Sweden is interested in supporting the development and implementation of the SDG14 roadmap based on experiences from the Baltic Sea and its long term support to the regional oceans agenda. A representative from the Seychelles (through its Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change) outlined the Blue Economy strategy and MSP process in the Seychelles, followed by representatives of Mozambique (the Director of Planning of the Ministry of the Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries) and Madagascar (the General Programme Coordinator from the Oceans State Secretariat) speaking about opportunities and challenges for their countries on Blue Economy. WWF (the Northern Mozambique Channel initiative Leader) presented the findings of the recently released WIO Economy report, and the Nairobi Convention Secretariat representative (the UNEP Head of Marine Programme) spoke about how regional collaboration via the regional seas convention works.

Finally there was a brief discussion on what needs to be done to forge a Blue Economy in the Northern Mozambique Channel in particular. The side-event did not have enough time to discuss in depth on the regional integrated ocean management approach and the road map for implementing SDG14 through this approach, with a view to forge a joint declaration for partnering at the June Ocean Conference.

- 2- Main session:

Following this preparatory meeting, the Call for Action is to be negotiated during the months of March and April, to have a final draft for adoption at the Conference. The zero draft of the outcome document has come out in March. The dates for consultations are: 7 and 9 March, and 20-21 March, at the UN HQ in New York.

Partnership dialogues: Concept notes for the seven partnership dialogues will be elaborated, and countries need to engage with the drafting groups of these documents to ensure their concerns are covered in.

Voluntary commitments: A web portal has been set up to help gather voluntary commitments on SDG14 implementation. Countries are encouraged to submit their voluntary commitments. The portal is open now and until the Conference.

Side events: The deadline for submitting requests for side events is 31 March. Side events need to have at least one government partner. The Ocean Village: there are plans for an Ocean Village on the North Lawn, on the UN grounds.

On progress towards preparations for the Oceans Conference in June 2017

The Nairobi Convention, PROG and WWF are coordinating between themselves in order to help the region in profiling itself in New York in June.

WWF is leading on a process decided during a meeting organized by the Nairobi Convention and WWF in November 2016 in Zanzibar. One of the resolutions of that meeting was to ensure that Madagascar, Mozambique, Seychelles and Tanzania, participate at the UN Oceans Conference preparatory meeting on 15-16 February 2017 in New York, and define the way forward with the countries from there. It was then agreed with Madagascar, Mozambique and Tanzania that they will work with WWF to respectively conduct a national process to prepare the countries' participation to the UN Oceans Conference. A national SDG 14 workshop in each country will occur (completed for Madagascar at this time of writing) to improve understanding of the SDGs and SDG 14 in particular, start identify a roadmap for the national governance of SDG 14, and to start defining the commitments to be made in New York.

Seychelles has agreed to host the regional workshop (week of May 15th) that will primarily bring the 4 countries (other WIO countries will be invited to participate) and relevant stakeholders to discuss around their national plans and commitments towards SDG 14, including potential joint commitments that could be made at the Ocean Conference in June. In June, WWF would consider supporting the participation of the 4 countries to the Ocean Conference, however such decision will depend on the outcomes of the discussions at country and regional levels.