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## *African Ministerial Conference on the Environment*

### **African Ministerial Conference on the Environment**

#### **Eighteenth session**

Online, 13, 14 and 16 September 2021  
and Dakar, 12–16 September 2022\*

## **Progress in the development of an African ocean governance strategy**

### **Note by the secretariat**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. Despite the recognition that Africa's oceans are some of the richest environmental resources in the world, their importance as a source of income for steering the growth of African economies is yet to be fully tapped. A sustainable blue economy holds great promise for contributing to the success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the realization of the aspirations of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.
2. In recognition of the enormous value of healthy oceans to Africa's development, the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), at its fifteenth session, held in 2015, adopted the Cairo Declaration on Managing Africa's Natural Capital for Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication, in which it resolved to develop a governance strategy, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and regional seas conventions, on oceans and seas in Africa for the effective management of the region's shared maritime resources.<sup>1</sup>
3. During the sixteenth session of AMCEN, held in Libreville in June 2017, ministers acknowledged that the sustained contribution of oceans to national economies depends upon, among other things, the use of effective governance frameworks.<sup>2</sup>
4. The call for the development of an African ocean governance strategy was further reaffirmed in the Nairobi Declaration on Turning Environmental Policies into Action through Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges in Africa, adopted by AMCEN at its seventh special session, in September 2018.<sup>3</sup> The African ministers for the environment agreed to promote the growth and

\* In accordance with the decision taken at the meeting of the Bureau of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment held on 26 May 2022, the eighteenth session of the Conference, which was adjourned on 16 September 2021, will resume as an in-person meeting in Dakar from 12 to 16 September 2022.

<sup>1</sup> The report of the ministerial meeting of the fifteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment is available at [africangroupofnegotiators.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Ministerial-report-of-15th-session-of-AMCEN-E.pdf](http://africangroupofnegotiators.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Ministerial-report-of-15th-session-of-AMCEN-E.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> The report of the ministerial meeting of the sixteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment is available at [wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25881/amcenmin\\_rep2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25881/amcenmin_rep2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>3</sup> The report of the ministerial meeting of the seventh special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment is available at [wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26809/AMCENSS7MinisterialReport.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26809/AMCENSS7MinisterialReport.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

development of the regional ocean sector in a sustainable blue economy pathway and support the mainstreaming of aquatic biodiversity in all productive sectors with a view to sustainably harnessing the blue economy.

5. At the seventeenth session of AMCEN, held in 2019 in Durban, South Africa, the African ministers of the environment adopted the Durban Declaration on Taking Action for Environmental Sustainability and Prosperity in Africa,<sup>4</sup> in which they recognized that “oceans and freshwater sources play a critical role in the economic development of the continent, and the need to promote a more sustainable balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability”.

6. The African Green Stimulus Programme, which was adopted following the eighth special session of AMCEN, in December 2020, recognizes the importance of investing in the “blue economy”, referring to “a marine-based economic development that leads to improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities”.

7. Most recently, at the fourth ordinary session of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment, held from 13 to 15 December 2021, the Africa Strategy on ocean governance was discussed and an overview of the ongoing consultative process for establishing a draft ocean governance framework in collaboration with UNEP was presented.<sup>5</sup>

## **II. Rationale for an ocean governance strategy**

8. There are a number of ocean governance mechanisms in Africa. The 2011 Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa, the 2050 Africa’s Integrated Maritime Strategy, the 2016 Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa (the Lomé Charter) and other continental frameworks are the vehicles driving the vision for oceans. They offer an unparalleled overarching framework that can help coordinate actions around the development of the sectors as envisioned in Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda, as well as in the Africa Blue Economy Strategy, which guides the development of an inclusive and sustainable blue economy that becomes a significant contributor to continental transformation and growth, through advancing, among other things, knowledge concerning environmental sustainability and water body policies, institutions and governance.

9. Despite the existence of those ocean governance mechanisms in Africa, governance challenges are hampering the harnessing of the full potential of the continent’s ocean resources. The existing mechanisms show gaps, duplication and weak cooperation, coordination and linkages across sectors. Considering the immense value of healthy oceans to Africa’s sustainable development, an African ocean governance strategy was envisioned to facilitate coordinated efforts and bridge the gaps within and between the various mechanism.

10. The strategy is intended to serve as an overarching framework that facilitates the implementation of existing ocean governance instruments of the African Union and other relevant regional mechanisms, such as regional seas conventions and regional fisheries bodies. The strategy should enable integrated and sustainable ocean governance that is inclusive and health-oriented and contributes to the achievement of Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

## **III. The need to sustain the value of ocean resources in Africa**

11. The continent is endowed with abundant coastal and aquatic resources that, if sustainably harnessed, can create tremendous socioeconomic transformations.<sup>6</sup> Thirty-eight African States share a coastline that extends over 47,000 km. Approximately 64 per cent of the land area of Africa is covered with inland water sources, including 63 shared river basins. This network of ocean and aquatic resources sustains natural life and provides ecosystem goods and services that are inextricably linked

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<sup>4</sup> The report of the ministerial meeting of the seventeenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment is available at [wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/30786/AMCEN\\_17L1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/30786/AMCEN_17L1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>5</sup> Report and recommendations of senior officials of the fourth ordinary session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment (STC4/ARDWE/EXP, p. 36).

<sup>6</sup> Economic Commission for Africa, *Africa’s Blue Economy: Opportunities and Challenges to Bolster Sustainable Development and Socioeconomic Transformation* (Addis Ababa, 2018).

with life on the continent.<sup>7</sup> A significant proportion of Africa's population lives in coastal regions and the density of the human coastal population is increasing every year.

12. The region's rich coastal and marine resources include mineral deposits, oil and gas and biodiversity. Coastal and marine resources are also important for human settlements. Some coastal countries in the region, such as Angola, Gabon and Nigeria, are large players in the world's oil industry, while in countries such as Sierra Leone and Tanzania, coastal resources are important sources of construction materials, including sand, gravel and limestone. Phosphate mining and salt extraction are also key coastal activities in Africa.<sup>8</sup>

13. Fisheries and aquaculture contribute approximately \$24 billion to the African economy and employ more than 12 million people.<sup>9</sup> The value of the maritime industry is estimated to contribute approximately \$1 trillion a year<sup>10</sup> and 90 per cent of the continent's imports and exports are conducted by sea.<sup>11</sup>

14. Seaports are crucial to facilitating trade in most African countries, which are dependent on exports of raw materials and imports of food, manufactured goods and fuel. Ports in Africa handled an estimated 265 million tonnes of cargo in 2009, a figure that is expected to rise to more than 2 billion tonnes by 2040. Seaports provide access to regional, continental and world markets for the 16 out of 54 countries in Africa that are landlocked.<sup>12</sup>

15. Moreover, coastal tourism alone is one of the fastest-growing marine-based economic activities worldwide, estimated to be worth \$8.4 billion for coral-reef-rich nations alone. Coastal tourism currently generates 8.1 per cent of the continent's GDP and is valued at more than \$177 billion, accounting for 6.5 percent of total employment or more than 22 million jobs. More importantly, tourism is the primary economic sector in several small island developing States, including Cabo Verde, Mauritius and Seychelles, where it contributes 45 per cent, 24 per cent and 65 per cent of GDP respectively.<sup>13</sup>

16. The oceans and seas of Africa offer tremendous potential and opportunity to develop both non-renewable energy sources, such as oil and gas, and renewable energy sources, including wind, tides and waves, only a fraction of which has been exploited.

#### IV. The need to reverse the adverse effects of ocean exploitation

17. According to the 2014 report of the Africa Progress Panel, illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing represents between \$10 billion and \$23 billion worldwide every year, of which \$1.3 billion occurs in West Africa (\$300 million from Senegal alone, equivalent to 2 per cent of its GDP in 2012).<sup>14</sup> Most of the illegal, unregulated and unreported catches can be attributed to vessels navigating under foreign flags. World Bank experts estimate that losses from the overexploitation of fishery resources amount to \$225 million for Indian Ocean islands economies alone.<sup>15</sup>

18. In 2014, it was estimated that mangrove deforestation resulted in \$42 billion in economic losses annually.<sup>16</sup> The overexploitation of fishery resources and mangrove deforestation have

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<sup>7</sup> Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, *Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Synthesis* (Washington, D.C., Island Press, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Africa Progress Panel, *Africa Progress Report 2014: Grain, Fish, Money: Financing Africa's Green and Blue Revolutions* (Geneva, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> World Bank and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The Potential of the Blue Economy: Increasing Long-term Benefits of the Sustainable Use of Marine Resources for Small Island Developing States and Coastal Least Developed Countries* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Moritz Bollmann et al, *World Ocean Review 2010: Living with the Oceans* (Hamburg, Maribus, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Economic Commission for Africa, *Africa's Blue Economy*.

<sup>13</sup> UNEP, *Emerging Issues for Small Island Developing States: Results of the UNEP/UNDESA Foresight Process* (Nairobi, UNEP, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Africa Progress Panel, *Africa Progress Report 2014: Grain, Fish, Money: Financing Africa's Green and Blue Revolutions* (Geneva, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> World Bank, "Africa Program for Fisheries". Available at [www.worldbank.org/en/programs/africa-program-for-fisheries](http://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/africa-program-for-fisheries). Accessed on 20 July 2022.

<sup>16</sup> UNEP, *The Importance of Mangroves to People: A Call to Action*. van Bochove, J., Sullivan, E., Nakamura, T. (eds). (Cambridge, United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre, 2014).

undermined the natural capacity and ability of the ocean and aquatic resources to regenerate.<sup>17</sup> Marine litter reaching the ocean from land-based sources is a major problem for both marine life and the natural beauty of the beaches. It is estimated that by 2050, there will be more plastics than fish in the ocean.<sup>18</sup>

19. Industries and oil spills also have adverse effects on the marine environment. In West Africa, the oil producing countries in the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem alone discharge about 4 million tonnes of waste oil yearly into the coastal and marine environment.<sup>19</sup> Widespread oil pollution, in the Niger Delta also results in ecological, public health and security problems.<sup>20</sup> Other sources of marine pollution include wastewater discharges and effluents from logging, manufacturing industries and oil refining. There are several hotspots of land-based sources of pollution that have been identified in Africa, which governance mechanisms have not been very successful in addressing and controlling.

20. Discussions on the maritime domain in Africa have increasingly been dominated by the issue of piracy and armed robbery at sea. In West and Central Africa, a variety of challenges threaten the safety, security and sustainability of the maritime space, from piracy and armed robbery at sea to illicit oil and fuel activities, trafficking of all sorts, smuggling and various environmental crimes.

21. Ports in Africa, though crucial for international trade, are blighted by low efficiency that translates into both economic and environmental losses. Similarly, the coastal tourism sector is faced with a narrow range of tourism products, lack of prioritization and insufficient capacity. As an example, there are very few countries that own or operate cruise ship tourism business. The ability of Governments to govern coastal and maritime tourism is often hindered by weak municipal authorities as well as illegal or shadow business deals and practices. Furthermore, in the Western Indian Ocean region, coral cover, an important tourist attraction, has declined to 30 percent.<sup>21</sup>

22. More than 80 of Africa's river and lake basins are shared by two or more countries.<sup>22</sup> Those freshwater bodies also face exploitation; however, governmental support for the conservation or development of lakes remains low in many African countries, with little money allocated from national budgets. Although Africa's lakes are limited and sensitive resources that call for proper care and management, they remain among the most abused of the continent's natural resources.<sup>23</sup>

## V. Consultative meetings on the development of the African ocean governance strategy

23. In response to the AMCEN decisions, UNEP, which serves as the secretariat for AMCEN, carried out background studies and organized three consultative meetings on ocean governance. The objective of the consultative meetings was to provide a platform for discussions and consultations among member States and key stakeholders on the draft African ocean governance strategy.

24. The first consultative meeting was held in Nairobi on 29 and 30 November 2018.<sup>24</sup> The meeting served to identify the gaps in ocean governance in Africa and to narrow down the main gaps as being the multiplicity of actors; multiple silos of governance; overlapping treaties and activities; inadequate coverage of marine protected areas; lack of common political and economic agenda on ocean exploitation; lack of coordinated approach to ensure maritime security; and limited funding for policy implementation.

<sup>17</sup> L. Burke and others, *Reefs at Risk Revisited* (Washington, D.C., World Resources Institute, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> World Economic Forum, *The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the Future of Plastics* (Geneva, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Towards Ecosystem-Based Management of the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem* (New York, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> P. C. Nwilo and O. T. Badejo, "Impacts and Management of Oil Spill in Nigerian Coastal Environment", in *Proceedings of the International Conference on the Nigerian State, Oil Industry and the Niger Delta* (Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Harey Publications, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> D. Obura and others, on behalf of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, *Coral Reef Status Report for the Western Indian Ocean* (Indian Ocean Commission, 2017).

<sup>22</sup> [wwfeu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/waterinafricaeng.pdf](http://wwfeu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/waterinafricaeng.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> UNEP, *Africa's Lakes: Atlas of Our Changing Environment* (Nairobi, 2006), chapter 1, available at [unep.net/atlas/africaLakes/downloads/chapters/Africas-Chapter1-Printer.pdf](http://unep.net/atlas/africaLakes/downloads/chapters/Africas-Chapter1-Printer.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> The Chair's summary for the first consultative meeting is available at [wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27138/Chair\\_Summary.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27138/Chair_Summary.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

25. The second consultative meeting, which was held virtually owing to the coronavirus disease pandemic, took place on 21 and 22 October 2020.<sup>25</sup> The meeting served to outline the strategic pillars of the draft ocean governance strategy. They included the scope of the strategy; institutional and capacity strengthening; linkages to regional and global structures; cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination; and science-policy interface stakeholder engagement.
26. Following the initial consultative meetings, UNEP developed a first draft of the African ocean governance strategy, presenting the purpose, goal and objectives of the strategy, its strategic pillars and scenarios for developing and implementing African ocean governance frameworks.
27. Subsequently, the third consultative meeting, also virtual, was held on 16 June 2021<sup>26</sup> to review the structure and content of the draft African ocean governance strategy.
28. The three consultative meetings confirmed that there is a need for an overarching governance framework to be established under the strategy. The form and function of such a coordinating mechanism need to be further defined, elaborated and agreed upon. Further, given the multiplicity of governance frameworks and issues touching on different areas in the African ocean space, there is a need forums in which sectors can meet to address specific needs and issues and to support the work of the overarching mechanism.

## VI. Recommendations from the consultative meetings

29. The main gaps in ocean governance were identified as being limited cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination; weak implementation and enforcement; weak science-based management; and limited stakeholder engagement in ocean management. The key messages were that the strategy should:
- (a) Resolve the imperfect information concerning the monetary and non-monetary value of ocean biodiversity and ecosystems, which can distort trade and misguide investment and policy decision-making;
  - (b) Strengthen the institutional capacities of States to accelerate the implementation of important policies and legislation and to fast-track progress on Sustainable Development Goal 14;
  - (c) Accelerate access to sustainable financing, including in the context of financial mechanisms such as the special stimulus plan, facilitated by the liquidity and sustainability facility proposed by the Economic Commission for Africa, which can mobilize private sector investment, debt swaps, green and blue bonds and carbon credits and trading;
  - (d) Strengthen the capacities of States to efficiently use the synergies between Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other key Sustainable Development Goals, mainly Sustainable Development Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and production and Sustainable Development Goal 13 on climate action;
  - (e) Strengthen the capacities of States to produce quality data and disseminate scientific and indigenous knowledge;
  - (f) Promote South-South cooperation, including through the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, in addition to the existing North-South cooperation;
  - (g) Ensure that environmental sustainability is the bedrock of the draft African strategy on ocean governance to increase the momentum on the implementation of the blueprint for the Africa Blue Economy Strategy;
  - (h) Ensure the engagement of regional economic communities and ensure inclusiveness with regard to different stakeholders, including the private sector, women and young people, in order to accelerate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14 and the realization of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want;

<sup>25</sup> The Chair's summary for the second consultative meeting is available at [wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/35097/Chair%27s%20summary%20-%20K2002864.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/35097/Chair%27s%20summary%20-%20K2002864.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>26</sup> The Chair's summary for the third consultative meeting is available at [wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/37920/AOGS%20chairmans%20summary%202021.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/37920/AOGS%20chairmans%20summary%202021.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

- (i) Bring together the vision and needs of all existing frameworks covering the coastal and marine resources for the social economic development of the continent;
- (j) Catalyse the implementation of the objectives of regional seas programmes, regional fisheries bodies, regional and subregional economic communities and the African Union;
- (k) Outline clear resource mobilization strategies, provide for an effective science and policy interface and advocate for a clear structure to promote private sector engagement;
- (l) Take an ecosystem approach, in which inland waters and their effect on oceans and ocean governance are taken into account;
- (m) Include coherence in addressing transboundary issues of shared waters and marine spatial planning as critical elements;
- (n) Provide for building of capacity at the local level to implement mitigation and adaptation measures that are based on local needs and experiences and on existing institutions and processes;
- (o) Be broad enough to allow issues specific to regions and nations to be addressed in more detail at a level that is closer to the priority issues of a particular region or country.

## **VII. Next steps for the finalization of the African ocean governance strategy**

30. At the third consultative meeting for the development of the African ocean governance strategy, it was agreed that a small working group be established, composed of representatives of the African Union Commission, UNEP, the Economic Commission for Africa, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the AMCEN President, under the leadership of the African Union's Commission of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, to:

- (a) Review the revised draft strategy;
- (b) Develop an action plan and its financial implications based on the agreed governance scenarios;
- (c) Elaborate on monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;
- (d) Report to AMCEN on the development of the African ocean governance strategy.

31. The working group, with the support of UNEP, will hold meetings to finalize the draft strategy. A final regional consultative meeting will be held in 2023 to validate the strategy before it is submitted to the structures of AMCEN and the African Union for formal adoption.

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