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**United Nations  
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**Second consultative meeting on the development  
of an African strategy for ocean governance**

Online, 21 and 22 October 2020

Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

**Outcome of the second consultative meeting on the  
development of an African strategy for ocean governance**

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**Chair's summary**

1. In the Cairo Declaration on Managing Africa's Natural Capital for Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication, adopted by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) at its fifteenth session, in 2015, African ministers for the environment agreed 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 and call for a regional conference to address the matter by 2016." 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, held in Nairobi in September 2018, ministers for the environment urged African States to promote the growth and 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. Accordingly, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which serves as the secretariat for AMCEN, carried out background studies, organized a scoping workshop in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, from 23 to 25 July 2018, and convened the second consultative meeting to assist member States of the African Union in developing an African strategy for ocean governance.

2. The first consultative meeting on the development of an African strategy for ocean governance was held at the headquarters of UNEP, in Nairobi, from 18 to 21 November 2018, to discuss possible elements to be included in an African strategy for ocean governance.<sup>1</sup> The meeting was organized by UNEP and was attended by 45 participants from African countries, international organizations, regional seas programmes, regional economic bodies and research institutes.

3. The second consultative meeting on the development of an African strategy for ocean governance was held online on 21 and 22 October 2020 to discuss possible elements to be included in the strategy. The meeting was organized by UNEP and was attended by participants from African countries, international organizations, regional seas programmes, regional economic bodies and research institutes.

4. The two-day meeting resulted in the conclusions and recommendations set out below.

\* UNEP/ASOG/WG.2/1.

<sup>1</sup> UNEP/ASOG/WG.1/5.

## **A. Scope of the strategy, linkages to regional and global structures, cooperation and coordination and the implementation of existing and future strategies**

5. Participants agreed that the African Union had a political and leadership role to play in driving the implementation of the strategy. A regional technical working group was needed to provide technical and operational guidance for implementation at the regional level. Under the African Union framework, regional seas conventions, regional economic commissions, transboundary lake and/or river basin commissions and other subregional mechanisms should be tasked with mobilizing countries and stakeholders.

6. It was agreed that vision-setting was a very important part of the development of the strategy. The objective of the strategy should be closely linked with protecting and safeguarding Africa's natural capital, which was closely linked with human welfare at the regional, national and local levels.

7. There was limited compliance and implementation of existing strategies, policies and other instruments, e.g., oil spill contingency plans. A compliance committee, which could be in charge of conducting reviews of compliance with existing mechanisms, might be included in the strategy.

8. The African strategy for ocean governance would support the implementation of existing strategies based on existing institutional and human resource capacity in Africa. In the light of the importance of institutional and human resource stability, capacity-building and the strengthening of existing institutions would play an important role in the strategy.

9. Participants suggested that the strategy should focus on research and development. The needs related to infrastructure for research and development should therefore be specified in the strategy.

10. The strategy should serve as a framework to connect existing strategies at the subnational, national and regional levels and to promote their implementation.

11. Participants suggested a structure with two levels of national coordination and cooperation. Politically, a high-level interministerial committee was proposed to support coordination and cooperation. Operationally, a technical cross-sectoral working group would drive strategy implementation.

12. The African strategy should be linked and harmonized with global and other regional frameworks, such as multilateral environmental agreements, based on the experience shared by a participant country on its national coordination committee for the implementation of multilateral environment agreements, where different ministries worked on enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation.

13. Given the importance of land-based sources of pollution in the protection of marine environments, the African ocean governance strategy should include a section on land-based activities that affect the quality of the marine environment and marine and coastal resources.

14. Integrated approaches to bring all ocean-related sectoral bodies and ministries together should be a key element of the ocean governance strategy. Such approaches should also connect the management of marine and coastal areas.

15. Participants proposed that breaking the objectives down into as many steps as were required for each country would provide enough flexibility to handle specific local and/or regional features. Once the steps were identified and set up, monitoring and reporting could be addressed to finalize budgets and funding, including for capacity-building.

## **B. The ecosystem approach and science for ocean governance**

16. Participants agreed that a science-policy platform would be needed, based on the existing scientific networks in Africa. Under the platform, regular meetings could be held to discuss research priorities, strategies and collaborative work. Regional marine research strategies could also be developed jointly. Regional seas programmes could be instrumental in organizing such dialogues.

17. Financial support and capacity-building for existing research and development institutions should be included in the strategy.

18. Scientists and researchers should play a role in ocean governance and in the ocean governance strategy. Some research gaps between developed and developing countries should be filled, particularly those related to the high seas or areas beyond national jurisdiction.

19. Participants were of the view that, under the strategy, each State should designate a national science and research institute for the blue economy and ocean governance to undertake research and to gather and analyse data to inform policy dialogues, formulation and implementation. Alternatively, a

research hub for ocean governance composed of national scientific institutions could be constituted to perform the same functions. Participants agreed that scientific data were important. The importance of socioeconomic data for good decision-making was emphasized.

20. The African ocean governance strategy should include articles on the collection, aggregation and use of Africa's own data on the oceans. The strategy might include the establishment of an African oceanographic research/data centre or a network of national oceanographic research/data centres.
21. Some tools that should be fully used within the ocean governance strategy included marine spatial planning, integrated coastal zone management and ecosystem-based management, using oceans ecosystem performance indicators aligned with the objectives of the strategy and taking into account and including the various human activities and different stakeholders in marine and coastal areas. Ecosystem-based management should be based on available data and information. Marine spatial planning at the national and regional levels should be part of the strategy. Participants proposed that subregional organizations and/or regional seas programmes could carry out marine spatial planning and/or integrated coastal zone management to bring the involved countries together at the subregional ecosystem level.
22. Participants considered that it would be important to develop ecological quality objectives at the continental level for a range of different ocean sectors and stakeholders.
23. Participants supported the development of specific, measurable and timebound indicators to be used by African countries to monitor progress in the implementation of the strategy.

### **C. The blue economy and stakeholder participation**

24. Participants agreed that the blue economy involved not only economic development but also social issues and a healthy marine environment. Addressing economic, social and environmental issues through a sustainable blue economy approach should be a fundamental element of the strategy. The ecosystem approach should be used to connect environmental, social and economic issues.
25. Maritime security and climate change should be fully taken into consideration in the ocean governance strategy, including by considering the provisions of existing strategies such as the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy.
26. The African Union has developed the *Africa Blue Economy Strategy* and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa has developed a publication entitled *Africa's blue economy: a policy handbook*, which should be fully used to implement the *Africa Blue Economy Strategy* and the proposed ocean governance strategy for Africa.
27. Private sector engagement should be systematic. Sectoral groups related to the blue economy should be included in the development and implementation of the ocean governance strategy and sectoral environmental impacts should be detailed therein.
28. Some participants recognized that conservation communities, in particular non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, were not being engaged in ocean governance.
29. Ocean governance programmes should include a policy to engage women and youth. Policies for their empowerment and employment in ocean sectors should be clarified in greater detail in the strategy owing to their importance for ocean governance in Africa.
30. The blue economy should not be seen in isolation, as the concept was connected to the concepts of the green economy, the circular economy and resource efficiency. Related approaches should be applied to land-based source of pollution, marine resource use and addressing climate change.
31. The management of freshwater resources and ecosystems should be more closely integrated with that of the marine environment and the ocean-based economy.

### **D. Way forward**

32. With the support of UNEP, a draft African ocean governance strategy would be prepared for member States of the African Union to review and forward for the consideration and use of AMCEN and the African Union Commission.