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**United Nations  
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**Third consultative meeting on the development  
of an African strategy for ocean governance**  
Online, 15 and 16 June 2021

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

### **Summary by the chair**

1. There are several mechanisms governing the ocean space in Africa. These mechanisms, however, are characterized by gaps, duplication, and weak cooperation, coordination and linkages across sectors. Considering the immense value of healthy oceans to Africa's sustainable development, an African strategy for ocean governance has been envisioned to facilitate the implementation of coordinated efforts and to bridge gaps within and between existing governance frameworks.
2. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), at its fifteenth session, in 2015, 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. In the Nairobi Declaration on Turning Environmental Policies into Action through Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges in Africa, of September 2018, adopted by AMCEN at its seventh special session, African 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.
3. In response to those decisions, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as the provider of secretariat services for AMCEN, carried out background studies and organized consultative meetings in November 2018 and October 2020 to assist member States in developing the strategy.
4. After the regional consultations, UNEP developed a draft African strategy for ocean governance. The draft strategy presented objectives, strategic pillars and several scenarios for the effective governance of oceans in Africa.
5. The third regional consultative meeting on the development of an African strategy for ocean governance was held online, on 15 and 16 June 2021, to present and discuss the draft strategy, find consensus on its form and content and provide a way forward for its finalization before its submission for endorsement to AMCEN and the relevant bodies of the African Union.
6. The third consultative meeting on the development of an African strategy for ocean governance resulted in the conclusions and recommendations set out below.

### **A. Key messages from the high-level segment**

7. Despite the recognition that Africa's oceans are some of the richest environmental resources in the world, acknowledgement of their importance as a source of income for steering the growth of African economies remains low. A sustainable blue or ocean economy holds great promise for contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the achievement

of the Sustainable Development Goals and the realization of the aspirations of Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want.

8. In Africa, the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa, 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy) of the African Union, the Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa (the Lomé Charter), the Blueprint for Africa's Blue Economy Strategy, and other continental frameworks are the vehicles that drive the vision on oceans. They offer an unparalleled overarching framework that can help coordinate actions around the development of the sector as envisioned in Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

9. The Africa 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", a term that refers to marine-based economic development. A strong blue economy will lead to improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

10. The African strategy for ocean governance should define where we want to go as a continent; shape the method to get there; bring together all partners and resources; and bring together the visions and needs of all existing frameworks covering coastal and marine resources for the social and economic development of the continent. The strategy must match the ambitions of Agenda 2063 of the African Union, the 2050 AIM Strategy and all other regional frameworks.

11. The strategy should be a living document that connects existing strategies and policies relevant to ocean governance; should catalyse the implementation of the objectives of regional seas programmes, regional fisheries bodies, regional and subregional economic communities, and the African Union; should include a concrete and clear strategic vision to address the weak implementation of existing instruments and mechanisms; should establish a clear institutional framework and the capacity to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination in Africa; and should envisage a sustainable blue economy and adequate stakeholder engagement.

12. The strategy is not a replacement for existing efforts in the region but rather a tool that should be used to catalyse their coordinated and effective implementation.

13. The negative impacts of climate change on the oceans and coastal environments and on the livelihoods of people in Africa are many and diverse and those impacts bring an extra level of difficulty to an already challenging context.

14. The role of women is key, since they play a central role in the value chains of coastal livelihoods and are often the ones most impacted by external shocks. For instance, in the fisheries sector, women are involved all along the value chain (from fishing and aquaculture to processing, marketing and trade).

15. Africa must build 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. Using participatory and inclusive vulnerability assessments as building blocks will help to direct actions for strengthening resilience and supporting successful disaster responses.

16. Therefore, 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 Africa's 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.

## **B. Key messages and recommendations for the draft strategy**

17. The main gaps in ocean governance were identified as limited cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination; weak implementation and enforcement; weak science-based management; and limited stakeholder engagement in ocean management.
18. Other gaps identified in ocean governance frameworks included insufficient guidance on deep stakeholder engagement; imbalances in the power of stakeholders in decision-making processes; a lack of scenario planning to demonstrate the impact of decisions in certain sectors on other sectors, or feedback loops; insufficient valuation of ecosystem services; a failure to maintain the centrality of ecosystem-based management in decision-making; a lack of understanding of cumulative impacts, including in land-sea interfaces; and a lack of transparency and accountability in ocean governance institutions.
19. It was reiterated that the strategy should aim at using existing institutions rather than creating new ones. One of the concerns in terms of existing institutions and mechanisms is that they often focus on only one sector, and to foster cooperation, there needs to be a multi-sectoral approach to ocean governance.
20. With regard to the gaps in the current draft strategy, it was proposed that the strategy should outline clear resource mobilization strategies, provide for an effective science and policy interface and advocate for a clear structure to promote private sector engagement. The strategy should also take an ecosystem approach, in which inland waters and their effect on oceans and ocean governance are taken into account. Coherence in addressing transboundary issues of shared waters and marine spatial planning should be included as critical elements of the strategy.
21. For effective governance, the strategy should advocate for policy harmonization in the region and should guide national efforts to develop legislation on ocean governance.
22. Science for ocean governance is directed towards policy development. Strengthening the science-policy interface is an important objective of the draft strategy. Science should address the impacts of ocean warming and its urgent mitigation.
23. Cooperation should be enhanced across the continent and should include ocean governance cooperation between other regions and continents.
24. The draft strategy recognizes the important role of regional mechanisms, such as regional seas programmes, regional economic commissions and regional fisheries management organizations, in supporting and implementing ocean governance. The continental strategy needs to 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.
25. It is important to clarify the terminology to be used for the proposed overarching mechanism, which will ensure clear parameters for its functioning, alignment with existing structures and the support that is needed. To avoid duplication with existing mechanisms, the strategy should clearly highlight whether the ultimate goal is designing a treaty, a protocol, a convention or a statutory document.
26. In describing the functioning of the proposed overarching mechanism, vertical and horizontal linkages should be included, depicting networking among existing mechanisms horizontally and linkages between national, regional and continental policies vertically. This will ensure ease of uptake and implementation by countries.
27. With regard to the possible scenarios presented in the draft strategy, all of the scenarios present different but crucial tenets of ocean governance. To ensure a holistic and cross-sectoral strategy, all proposed scenarios should be merged, and crucial elements of each should be adopted to ensure an effective governance mechanism for oceans.

28. The strategy was born through AMCEN, and therefore a new scenario should be added, with the possibility of the overarching mechanism being anchored within the structures of AMCEN.
29. All the scenarios presented require power relations to be addressed. The interests of marine extractive activities, notably fishing and mining, will continue to dominate decision-making processes until power relations are addressed. The valuation of ecosystem services can assist in levelling the playing field and can tip decision-making processes so that they are underpinned by maintaining healthy oceans rather than by realizing business gains.
30. On monitoring and evaluation, the development of indicators that are linked to the proposed pillars in the strategy is key to an effective monitoring and reporting framework. Indicators should correlate with the key issues that the overarching mechanism seeks to address. For example, coordination should be added as one indicator and activities should be identified to achieve effective coordination. A review mechanism can be based on the African Union review mechanism and other mechanisms. Rules and regulations should be applicable to the advisory body.
31. To include all ocean-related waterways, the title may be reviewed to read as African governance for water and seas.

### **C. Next steps**

32. The meeting decided on the following way forward:
- (a) Revise the draft strategy and incorporate all comments (August 2021);
  - (b) Establish a small working group composed of representatives of the African Union Commission, UNEP, ECA, New Partnership for Africa's Development and the AMCEN President (June 2021);
  - (c) Review the revised draft strategy (September 2021);
  - (d) Develop an action plan and its financial implications based on the agreed scenarios (November 2021);
  - (e) Elaborate on monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (November 2021);
  - (f) Submit the revised draft strategy to member States and stakeholders and hold the fourth consultative meeting (December 2021);
  - (g) Submit the strategy to AMCEN and the organs of the African Union for approval (February 2022).
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