



UN Decade of Ocean Science

Regional Consultation Workshop for Africa and the Adjacent Island States

Concept Note

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IOC contacts: Mika Odido (m.odido@unesco.org) & Alison Clausen (a.clausen@unesco.org)

1. Introduction and Context

The marine realm is the largest component of the Earth’s system. Its role in providing services, such as food and coastal protection that support life on Earth and human well-being has long been recognized. The ocean’s fundamental role in stabilizing the earth’s climate is also increasingly becoming understood. However, the ocean is in peril. Numerous studies, including the First World Ocean Assessment, note the cycle of decline in ocean health, with changes and losses in the structure, function and benefits obtained from marine systems. Productive habitats from coastlines (mangroves), coastal shallows (corals and seagrass), open ocean and deep seas (ocean benthos) are being lost or degraded. Over the coming decades, a rapidly changing climate, growing global population, rising food prices, and environmental stressors will have significant, yet highly uncertain, impacts on the ocean and thus on food security and human welfare.

The 2030 Agenda adopted by all nations offers a concerted framework of action to set the ocean on a path to sustainability. It also highlights the strong interactions between the ocean and many other societal goals of the 2030 Agenda, such as gender, equity, health, sustainable economic development, food security and climate change.

To achieve these global goals and increase knowledge on the fundamental role of the ocean for human existence, scientific understanding of the ocean response to pressures and management action is required. Ocean observations and research are also essential to predict the consequences of change, design mitigation and guide adaptation to cope with the many ways the ocean affects human lives and infrastructure at different spatial and temporal scales. Yet to date, and despite the ocean covering 71% of our planet and great advancements in the last 50 years of ocean research and observations, significant gaps in our knowledge remain. For example, only 5% of the ocean floor has been mapped at high resolution and only around 10% of Exclusive Economic Zones are covered by marine spatial plans. Without increased scientific knowledge on the ocean and its interactions with human and social systems, it will be impossible to meet the ambitious objectives of Agenda 2030.

Box 1: Outcomes of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

The six desired societal outcomes of the Decade are:

1. A **clean** ocean
2. A **healthy & resilient** ocean
3. A **predicted** ocean
4. A **safe** ocean
5. A **sustainable & productive** ocean
6. A **transparent & accessible** ocean

In response to this need, in 2017 the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed the [“United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development”](#) for the 10-year period

beginning on 1 January 2021. “The Decade” as it is referred to throughout this document offers the ocean community a once-in-a-life-time opportunity to join efforts, mobilize resources, create innovative partnerships, and engage governments in moving towards the *Ocean We Need for the Future We Want*. Building on the several decades of international cooperation in ocean research and observations, as well as the policy-relevant goals defined by the 2030 Agenda and other ocean frameworks, the Decade aims to catalyze action to achieve high level scientific and technological breakthroughs, and thus realize a set of six priority societal outcomes for the world’s oceans (refer Box 1).

The Decade is currently in the preparation phase, which will run until the end of 2020. From the outset of Decade planning, it has been recognized that the process needs to be inclusive and give a strong voice to stakeholders from Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries, as well as women and youth in order to ensure regional and local definition of the Decade’s outcomes and objectives. Following a first Global Planning Meeting in May 2019, a series of regional consultation workshops is currently being undertaken to implement this bottom up approach to preparation and planning.

A regional workshop for Africa and the Adjacent Island States will be convened from 27-29 January 2020, in Nairobi (Kenya) hosted by the Government of Kenya and co-organized with the IOC-UNESCO, the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA), and the Secretariat of the Nairobi Convention (UN Environment).

2. Objectives of the Workshop

The Africa and Adjacent Island States regional workshop offers a crucial opportunity to co-design mission-oriented research strategies in line with the 2030 Agenda and continental and regional initiatives such as Africa’s Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050. This event will gather ocean leaders, champions and key stakeholders and will facilitate regional, interdisciplinary discussions across sectors (such as ocean science and technology; ocean policy and sustainable development; business and industry; NGOs and civil society; donors and foundations) to identify concrete deliverables and partnerships to meet the Decade’s six societal outcomes. Discussions will be centered on countries’ needs and priorities in terms of transforming knowledge systems; accelerating transfer of technology; enabling training and education; and fostering science-policy dialogues and thus ensure consideration of these needs in the overall Decade preparation process. Specifically, the Workshop will aim to:

- a. Communicate the purpose and expected results of the Decade to all stakeholders and generate interest in participating in the Decade.
- b. Brief the participants on proposed arrangements for the Decade, including structure and governance, and solicit feedback
- c. Engage and consult the ocean community concerning the implementation plan for the Decade, including identifying priorities in research or in capacity development and training
- d. Discuss priority themes or topics that may be part of the Decade in line with the six identified societal outcomes (refer Box 1).
- e. Identify initial opportunities for investment, partnerships, and resource mobilization for the Decade

3. Workshop Process

The workshop structure will be organized around two plenary sessions and a series of Working Group sessions. In order to promote the development of scientific solutions and application that are responsive to the sustainable development agenda (Agenda 2030 and other frameworks e.g. SAMOA

SIDS Pathway, UNFCCC, the Sendai Framework), the Working Groups will be organized around the six societal outcome that have been defined in the Decade Roadmap document.

The Working Groups will address both deep disciplinary understanding of ocean processes and solution-oriented research to generate new knowledge needed to achieve a given societal outcome. They will map existing networks and science initiatives that can contribute, identify major knowledge gaps that are hindering sustainable development, and prioritize research priorities and data requirements. They will delineate a number of potential partnerships with concrete deliverables in terms of ocean sustainability that should be further developed in the framework of the Decade. Aspects related to marine technology and capacity development will also be addressed.

Side-events showcasing specific and successful regional initiatives/programs/networks may be organized during lunch breaks and at the end of the working days, depending on the interest of participants.

See below for the indicative workshop program.

4. Expected Outcomes of the Workshop

The workshop is expected to produce information on the following issues to feed into the overall Decade preparation process:

- Knowledge gaps and regional ocean science priorities for the 2030 Agenda
- Existing relevant networks/initiatives and potential future priority actions
- Existing partnerships and stakeholders and potential for new collaborations
- Priorities in capacity-development/training
- Priority themes and topics to be addressed by the Decade
- Other regional initiatives and meetings to be aligned with the Decade

5. Workshop Participants

It is anticipated that there will be 80 - 100 participants from national and local government, civil society and NGOs, researchers, funders, private sector, and community representatives. Participants will be drawn from a range of natural and social science themes that are relevant to the Decade including fisheries, blue economy, conservation, data management, climate change, ocean safety, or indigenous and local community resource use. The co-hosts aim to maximize geographic, gender and generational diversity amongst participants notably through the provision of travel support to under-represented groups. Registration for the workshop is open until December 20, 2019 via this link:

<https://en.unesco.org/ocean-decade-africa-workshop>

6. Indicative Program

Day 1	8.30 – 9.00am	Welcome & opening remarks
	9.00 – 10.00am	Introduction to the Decade and overview of the planning process Overview of workshop objectives and methods Introduction to use of sli.do
	10.00 – 10.15am	Coffee break
	10.15 – 11.15am	Panel 1: Setting a regional vision for the Decade
	11.15 – 11.45am	Methodology and organization for working groups
	Lunch & Side Events	

	1 – 4.30pm (with coffee available)	Parallel working groups on 'A clean ocean' & 'A healthy & resilient ocean'
Day 2	8.30 – 8.45am	Brief summary of Day 1 & programme for Day 2
	8.45am – 12.00pm (with coffee available)	Parallel working groups on 'A predicted ocean' & 'A safe ocean'
	Lunch & Side Events	
	1.30 – 4.30pm (with coffee available)	Parallel working groups on 'A sustainable & productive ocean' & 'A transparent & accessible ocean'
Day 3	8.30 – 8.45am	Brief summary of Day 2 & programme for Day 3
	8.45 – 10.00am	Working group report back and discussion
	10.00– 10.15am	Coffee break
	10.15am – 12.00pm	Panel 2: Capacity development & transfer of marine technology– obstacles, needs & opportunities
	Lunch & Side Events	
	1.30 – 2.30pm	Panel 3: Resource mobilisation & partnerships
	2.30 – 2.45pm	Coffee break
	2.45 – 3.45pm	Panel 4: Ocean literacy & communications
	3.45 – 4.30pm	Summary & next steps Close of workshop

<https://www.oceandecade.org/events/94/Regional-workshop---Pan-African-and-Surrounding-Island-States---UN-Decade-of-Ocean-Science-for-Sustainable-Development-2021-2030>