

## **Western Indian Ocean**

# **Regional Ocean Governance Strategy**

**DRAFT**

**March, 2024**

This DRAFT Regional Ocean Governance Strategy (ROGS) is provided for discussion through the official processes for the preparation of Decisions of the Conference the Parties to the Nairobi Convention (COP11) to be held in 2024.

The Working Papers, Reports of the Task Force Technical Dialogues, workshop report and other background material used to prepare the Draft ROGS will be made available on the Nairobi Convention website as and when cleared: <https://www.nairobiconvention.org/regional-ocean-governance-strategy/>.

The proposals, opinions or views expressed in this draft document should not be taken as representing the views of the NC Secretariat, of the UNEP or any organisation mentioned.

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### Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABNJ/ BBNJ	Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction/ Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction	FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement	FARI	Forum of Academic and Research Institutions
AfDB	African Development Bank	FFEM	Le Fonds français pour l'environnement mondial
AIMS	Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy	FPAOI	Indian Ocean Federation of Artisanal Fishers
AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment	GEF	Global Environment Facility
ATBAs	Areas To Be Avoided (IMO)	GHG	green house gas
AU	African Union	IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
AUDA	African Union Development Agency	IMO	International Maritime Organisation
BBNJ	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (treaty, not in force)	IOC or IOC/COI	Indian Ocean Commission
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity	IOI-SA	International Ocean Institute – Southern Africa
CG	Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Activities in the Western Indian Ocean (previously known as the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia)	IO-MOU	Indian Ocean Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora	IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa	IPBES	Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
COP	Conference of the Parties	ISA	International Seabed Authority
€OFISH	EU-funded, IOC administered regional fisheries programme	JMA	Joint Management Area
EAC	East African Community	LBS	Land-based sources (of pollution)
EIA	Environmental impact assessment	LMMA	Locally Managed Marine Area
		MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
		MASE	Maritime Security Programme (IOC and 3 RECs)

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MCS	Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (fisheries)	SWIOFish	WB-funded regional fisheries programme
MPA	Marine protected area	SWIOFP	Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Project
MPP	marine plastic pollution (and/ or marine litter)	TF	ROGS Task Force
MSA	Maritime Security Architecture	UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
MSP	Marine spatial planning	UNDOALOS	UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea
MTC	Minimum terms and Conditions (of access to fisheries)	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
NC	Nairobi Convention	UNECA	UN Economic Commission for Africa
PFRS	AU fisheries unit	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
PFRS	Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
PSMA	Port State Measures Agreement	WB	World Bank
PSSA	Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (IMO designation)	WEF	World Economic Forum
RCFMI	Regional Centre for the Fusion of Maritime Information	WiMS	Women in Marine Science Network (WIOMSA network)
RCOC	Regional Maritime Operational Coordination Centre	WIO	Western Indian Ocean
REC	Regional Economic Community	WIO-C	Consortium for the Conservation of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems in the Western Indian Ocean
ROGS	Regional Ocean Governance Strategy	WIOGI	Western Indian Ocean Governance Initiative (project/ GIZ impl.)
SADC	Southern African Development Community	WIOMPAN	Western Indian Ocean Marine Protected Areas Management Network
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs	WIOMSA	Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association
SAPPHIRE	Western Indian Ocean Large Marine Ecosystems Strategic Action Programme Policy Harmonisation and Institutional Reforms	WIO-ROG	Western Indian Ocean Regional Ocean Governance
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal	WIO-SAP	Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Protection of the Western Indian Ocean from Land-based Sources and Activities
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	WTO	World Trade Organisation/ World Tourism Organisation
SIOFA	Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement		
SST	Sustainable Seas Trust		
SWIOFC	Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission		

## **PREPARATION OF THE REGIONAL OCEAN GOVERNANCE STRATEGY**

The Regional Ocean Governance Strategy (ROGS) was prepared in response to the decisions of the Nairobi Convention (NC) Conference of the Parties (COP) and a decision of the African Ministers Conference on the Environment Conference (AMCEN).

The ROGS is a suite of recommendations prepared for consideration by the Conference of the Parties of the Nairobi Convention. If approved, each of the actions and approaches recommended will require further dialogues and decisions by the Parties, by the regional institutions involved and by a wide range of other stakeholders, including the business community and civil society organisations.

The ROGS has been developed through a participatory process, based largely on the work of a regional Task Force (TF). The Task Force members were appointed by the member states party to the NC, by the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and by the African Union (AU). These members were complemented by representatives of the private sector, civil society and other regional experts co-opted by the Task Force. The NC Secretariat provided technical support.

Following review through the Nairobi Convention established processes, the ROGS is expected to be considered by the Conference of the Parties (COP) scheduled for mid-2024.

It is expected that the draft ROGS will be made publicly available through the NC website and that additional comments and suggestions from institutions and civil society can be submitted for consideration as part of the review process.

This document is supported by a Background Document, provided separately both to reduce the size of the main ROGS text and to provide the rationale for the content of the ROGS. The Background Document provides details of the mandates and the technical challenges faced by the Task Force. It provides information and links to Task Force Working Papers, reports of the Task Force Technical Dialogues and workshops, and to related technical materials. These materials will be made available on the Nairobi Convention ROGS website.

**Draft Foreword**

**[TO BE INSERTED]**

**Subject to further discussion and to be prepared as a separate document for submission to proposed signatories. Possible signatories: Chair, Nairobi Convention COP; UNEP Executive Secretary, Chair AU/ AMCEN, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean.**

## SUMMARY

The draft Regional Ocean Governance Strategy (ROGS) has been prepared for review by the parties to the Nairobi Convention in preparation for the Conference of the Parties (COP) to be held in 2024.

**Decision.** A draft COP decision notes that the ROGS has been prepared in response to calls by the COP and the request of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, that the nature of the ROGS is advisory and intended to guide and not to mandate actions by the parties.

**Policy framework.** Section 1 sets out the policy framework, including the mandate for the ROGS, the proposed ROGS vision, and its objective and scope. It outlines the principles, guidelines and approaches used, and the rationale for a regional approach.

**State of the WIO.** Section 2 summarises the state of the Western Indian Ocean in terms of maritime security, the blue economy, the state of the marine environment and ocean knowledge, including marine science and technology and human and institutional capacity. It outlines the state of WIO Regional Ocean Governance and the principal financing modalities.

**Priorities.** Sections 3 to 7 identify the regional priorities and the stakeholder engagement activities used to identify the priorities and develop the recommended regional actions for each priority. The priorities are clustered in four groups: maritime security; blue economy; environment and natural resources; and knowledge management and capacity building. It is acknowledged that there are close relationships and overlaps between the clusters.

**Implementation mechanism.** Section 8 describes the proposed implementation mechanism for the ROGS: the institutional arrangements, the financing arrangements and approaches to monitoring and review of the ROGS.

**Background Document.** A separate Background Document provides further detailed information on the relevant policies, the social, economic and environmental status and trends of the WIO and the rationale for the proposed actions and implementation mechanisms. The Background Document also provides links to the working papers, briefs, presentations prepared, the reports of Task Force Technical Dialogues and other related materials.

**DRAFT COP DECISION**  
**(prepared for discussion purposes only)**

**Nairobi Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Western Indian Ocean Region Contracting Parties**

Eleventh meeting, Madagascar [date] August 2024

**Regional Ocean Governance Strategy**

**Preamble**

The Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Western Indian Ocean Region (hereinafter the Nairobi Convention),

***Recalling*** the Nairobi Convention *Decision CP.10/5. Ocean Governance Strategy* which calls for the preparation of an ocean governance strategy for the Western Indian Ocean region as a contribution to an African ocean governance strategy, to the sustainable oceans agenda, to development of the blue economy, to addressing climate change and to other African policies and the initiatives of WIO Countries and of the Regional Economic Communities

***Reaffirming*** their commitments to the United Nations Law of the Sea and other international conventions related to ocean governance and the international principles of sustainable and responsible use of the oceans

***Aware*** of the vital social, economic and environmental role of healthy oceans and the coastal and marine ecosystems and the growing threats to these ecosystems and resources and dependent livelihoods

***Taking note*** of the decision of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the relevant policies and decisions of the African Union

***Appreciating*** the contributions of regional stakeholders in the participatory process to develop the ROGS, and the support of bilateral and international partners

*Decide,*

**Decision CP.11/#. Approval of the Western Indian Ocean Regional Ocean Governance Strategy**

1. To **approve** the Western Indian Ocean Regional Ocean Governance Strategy and its implementation as set out in annex A [main strategy document as amended].
2. To progressively include activities to implement the ROGS within the Nairobi Convention's Programme of Work.

3. To request the Parties to make **best efforts to implement** the strategy through regional cooperation, through the provision of human and other resources, as may be possible, and through alignment of policies and governance mechanisms, including through active engagement of the Regional Economic Communities and other regional and international organisations with mandates related to ocean governance.
4. To request the partners engaged in **supporting** regional initiatives to meet the SDGs, and SDG 14 in particular, to support the implementation of the strategy at national and regional levels and make best efforts to align their activities on oceans in order to drive synergies and efficiency, address resource gaps and avoid fragmentation.
5. To request the NC secretariat to establish **interim** high-level policy, technical, and finance platforms, based on cooperation between existing regional institutions and partnerships, to further develop consensus institutional arrangements, prepare plans for implementation the strategy, and to facilitate access to the resources required for implementation.
6. Following a further participatory process(es), to prepare **recommendations** for effective long-term institutional arrangements capable of addressing all necessary aspects of regional cooperation on ocean governance, where possible by using, adapting, or further developing existing mechanisms.
7. To request the secretariat to **report** on the progress of implementation of the strategy at all regular meetings of national focal points and meetings of the Contracting Parties.



# DRAFT WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN REGIONAL OCEAN GOVERNANCE STRATEGY

## 1 THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

### 1.1 MANDATE, VISION, OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

1. **Mandate.** The decisions of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) (2015) and of the Nairobi Convention Conference of the Parties (COP) call for development of the Regional Ocean Governance Strategy (ROGS).

2. **Vision.** The vision for the Western Indian Ocean Regional Ocean Governance Strategy is:

*“A peaceful stable Western Indian Ocean region with an environmentally healthy ocean and a blue economy based on the protection and conservation of natural resources that delivers sustainable benefits with due regard to equity and wellbeing.”*

3. **Objective.** The objective of the ROGS is:

*“To develop a regional mechanism through which the key regional stakeholders can cooperate in a coherent and structured manner to achieve the vision.”*

4. **Scope.** The technical scope of the strategy includes all aspects of the ocean and coastal environment, the blue economy and the related communities, institutions, productive activities, risks and opportunities. The ROGS does not attempt to resolve all the complex challenges facing ocean governance in the WIO but provides a framework for WIO countries and regional institutions to cooperate more effectively to focus their joint priorities, based on a common understanding of the state of ocean governance and the blue economy. The ROGS focuses on selected priorities. It also creates a framework for future regional actions on numerous other priorities and in order to meet emerging challenges. Guided by the COP decisions, the ROGS focuses on enhanced cooperation between existing regional institutions and adaptation of existing arrangements. It avoids creating new regional institutions, unless critical gaps are identified but focuses on the empowerment and adaptation of the existing institutions and arrangements. The policies and activities of the existing regional organisations are assumed to largely already reflect national aspirations and positions, but can benefit from further alignment through the ROGS.

5. **WIO region.** For the purposes of the ROGS, the geographical scope of the WIO is taken to be: *“the relevant jurisdictional areas of the parties to the Nairobi Convention and the adjacent large marine ecosystems (LMEs)”*. This geography extends beyond the national jurisdictional areas of the parties where the LMEs, the populations of living aquatic resources, or the related physical processes extend beyond these limits.

### 1.2 POLICIES AND COMMITMENTS

6. Policy support for the development of the ROGS is provided through a wide range of high-level global and regional instruments and declarations and numerous national commitments. These include: commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals, to Agenda 2063 *‘The Africa we want’*, to AU policies and strategies on climate change, on maritime cooperation and on the blue economy. The policies, protocols, or strategies approved by the Regional Economic Communities and by the WIO countries also inform and guide the ROGS process and priorities.

7. The UN Convention on the law of the Sea (UNCLOS) requires countries to cooperate on ocean governance both with other countries and with global and regional institutions. These obligations range from suppression of piracy, to prevention of pollution and conservation of biodiversity. WIO countries are party to numerous other international conventions and treaties, under which the countries incur international legal obligations to cooperate on ocean-related matters, including on shipping, climate change, science and human rights. In addition, WIO countries have also made numerous international ocean-related commitments which are not legally binding. These include commitments related to the SDGs, through the Global Ocean Forum, with respect to the UN Decade for Ocean Science and through commitments to various action plans and codes of conduct.

### **1.3 PRINCIPLES, GUIDELINES AND APPROACHES**

8. Global principles of sustainability, human rights and international cooperation are a cornerstone of the ROGS. The ROGS takes account of the core values and approaches set out in key global and regional instruments. These include those set out in the UN Charter, in the Constitutive Act of African Union and in the foundation instruments of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). The principles and approaches underpinning the ROGS include: the Rio Declaration, the polluter pays principle and the participatory, precautionary, ecosystem, and circular economy approaches. Numerous other internationally-accepted principles and guidelines inform the priority actions set out in the ROGS. The parties to the Nairobi Convention have also approved a range of protocols which direct and frame the ROGS. These provide guidance on pollution, on coastal zones and on biodiversity and set out numerous non-binding regional provisions and commitments.

9. The ROGS takes account of the special circumstances of small island developing states, of least developed countries and marginalised communities. It draws on international guidelines and plans of action, including on fisheries, shipping, trade, biodiversity, the blue economy, and on sustainable investment. In addition to the mandates and higher-level guidance, the ROGS takes due account of the existing regional cooperative arrangements at sector, business and scientific levels, and contributes to the proposed African (continental) ocean governance strategy. The ROGS aims to use the best available science and scientific information to inform collective regional decisions through participatory, inclusive and transparent processes and to contribute to global initiatives on sustainable oceans.

### **1.4 RATIONALE FOR A REGIONAL APPROACH**

10. The ROGS has a regional rather than national focus. This means that the priority regional activities must add value to the design, financing or implementation of national priorities, as the national priorities are the core drivers. This added value will accrue through building mutual trust, shared understanding and policy cohesion. The regional approach will improve national effectiveness in numerous ways, including through synergies among activities and shared lessons. It will generate cost savings, and facilitate joint financing, efficient use of scarce resources, avoidance of duplication or conflict, and drive more coherent or targeted use of knowledge and science. A regional approach will create economies of scale, open new trade and business opportunities, and facilitate common positions in global dialogues or negotiations.

National ocean strategies generally call for increased regional cooperation, through the AU, through the RECs and through established international and regional organisations. Many regional priorities are already addressed by the existing regional cooperation arrangements. They are expressed through existing policies or targeted through existing regional programmes and initiatives. A key task of the ROGS is to build a framework to consolidate and enhance these diverse cooperative arrangements and initiatives - across the institutional ocean space; across sector and thematic boundaries; and across technical and scientific domains. The ROGS aims to resolve policy divides by developing common understanding and consensus on priorities and approaches, by building on existing institutional foundations and relationships and facilitating synergies between sectors, and through addressing on cross-cutting challenges, such as finance and resourcing. The ROGS is intended to guide a regional journey. The ROGS is not an end in itself, but a means of joining hands on such a journey.

## 2 THE STATE OF THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN

11. **Framework.** Informed regional decisions on ocean governance require a shared understanding of the state of the WIO environment, the regional blue economy and the flow of sustainable benefits to WIO communities. The ROGS will provide a framework to progressively build this common understanding of the state of the WIO, shared knowledge of the trends and changes in the WIO, and the drivers of these changes by:

- a) consolidating and presenting available information on key quantitative and qualitative environmental, social, economic and governance indicators and indicating the sources of such information; and
- b) using an ocean accounts framework as a means of progressively compiling available information across sectors and themes to provide ‘science-based’ advice for governance.

12. **Ocean wealth and flow of benefits.** The state of the WIO can be reflected by two ‘higher-level’ indicators, which are captured by a system of ocean accounts. Sustainable oceans means that ocean wealth and the flow of benefits from the oceans increase, or at least remains stable and that the benefits do not come at the cost of reductions in the ocean’s capital. The indicators of state and flow, of wealth and sustainable benefits are compiled as follows:

- a) the ocean wealth or ‘blue’ capital indicator combines the value of the natural capital (e.g., coral reefs), produced capital (e.g., green ports) and human capital (e.g., education, governance) in ocean sectors and the associated coastal areas
- b) the flow of benefits indicator combines the ‘production’ and value of coastal and ocean goods and services. For example, the measure of ‘flow’ aggregates the value of fisheries production, tourism receipts, port services and of blue carbon sequestration and other goods and services to generate an estimate of the total value of ocean output. Where quantitative estimates are not currently feasible or available, they can be progressively developed from qualitative information (e.g., the area of mangrove or healthy coral).

13. **The role of the ROGS.** Rather than generating the raw data, the task of the ROGS is to provide the framework for making this knowledge available for policy decisions and to ensure a balance between sector and thematic interests. This involves several tasks:

- a) synthesising and verifying critical information across sectors and themes to inform governance decisions at national, REC and regional levels, through reviews, science to governance conduits and cross-sector communication and shared knowledge
- b) developing means of linking fragmented information in dashboards, hubs or platforms and in particular ensuring coherence and coordination between national, regional and global assessment processes to align the various processes and the underlying data in terms of metrics or methodologies
- c) generating public awareness of the importance of healthy oceans to support increased political will for investment in sustainability and behavioural change.

### 2.1 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

14. Three major sources of information enable the progressive development of a ‘regular process’ to report on the state and trends of the WIO. These are broadly classified below and selected available information summarised in the Background Document:

- a) global indicators of state and change, such as the SDG indicators, governance and business climate indicators produced by or for each country
- b) global assessments, including Sub-Saharan African or island states contributions to these assessments

- c) regional assessments, reviews or reports prepared at WIO, African or Indian Ocean levels, such as those prepared on the blue economy, on marine conservation, on state of the coasts, critical ecosystems or on pollution
- d) national assessments, reports and accounts, including national environmental accounts and satellite accounts for the blue economy.

15. **Indicators.** The ten SDG 14 indicators are a useful measure of sustainable oceans. However, these indicators may not always reflect the ‘reality on the ground’ or information required for decisions. They need to be complemented with additional verifiable social, blue economy and governance indicators. Some of these may be drawn from other SDG indicators, for example, indicators on poverty (SDG1), food supply (SDG2), education (SDG4), climate action (SDG13) and many others.

16. **Global assessments.** The WIO contributions to global assessments and data sets provide standardised information on status and trends of those targets in the WIO. These assessments include the World Oceans Assessment, assessments of biodiversity, protected areas, climate change, fisheries, and governance (see the Background Document for selected global and regional assessments).

17. **Regional and national assessments.** Many regional assessments provide details on the state and trends of the WIO. Available information includes information on fish stocks, coasts, biodiversity, marine protected areas and the blue economy. The regional assessments are often based on national studies which generate information on governance, on the investment climate and on priority sectors such as fisheries, tourism or offshore oil and gas. activities A regional ecosystem monitoring framework (under preparation) also identifies specific indicators. The regional assessments provide the information to reinforce regional cooperation; to build political will in the face of growing threats to ocean health; to exert regional ‘peer pressure’ and to identify support needed by less advanced countries.

18. **National ocean strategies and plans.** The ROGS draws on the existing national oceans strategies, blue economy plans and related instruments. The Background Document summarises selected quantitative and qualitative information and an initial phase of ROGS implementation can be tasked with preparing a more comprehensive synthesis. The ‘State of the WIO’ is briefly reported under four clusters: (i) maritime security; (ii) blue economy; (iii) environment and natural resources; and (iv) knowledge and capacity building. Many cross-cutting issues and actions are shared across these clusters. For example, sustainable fisheries (blue economy cluster) benefits from maritime security, from a healthy ocean environment, from knowledge of the fish stocks and the advice of informed fisheries specialists and marine research institutions.

## **2.2 MARITIME SECURITY**

19. Maritime security underpins ocean governance by supporting compliance with the rule of law regarding the sustainable use of the oceans. While the benefits of maritime security are not readily estimated, the losses from an absence of maritime security are clear. Somali piracy cost the region an estimated \$1.2. billion/ year. The global costs were in the order of \$9 billion. Recent threats to shipping in the Red Sea have resulted in an increase in shipping traffic of up to 50% through the Mozambique Channel or around the Cape of Good Hope thereby increasing the risks of maritime incidents, such as spillages.

20. Piracy, fisheries enforcement and illicit trafficking have fostered regional cooperation. This is formalised through the Djibouti Code and its Jeddah Amendment. The Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security and Safety serves as a high-level forum. The regional Maritime Security Architecture includes traffic monitoring and operational centres established under the MASE project. The Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Activities (CG) also serves as a forum for cooperation with external partners. Several points emerge from regional dialogues:

- a) the high cost of maritime security is likely to require ongoing external support and arrangements for rapid and coordinated response to any ‘crisis’ continue to be required
- b) the current cooperative arrangements are relatively weak and may benefit from stronger institutional links, such as MOUs, rapid response plans, communications and ‘hot pursuit’

protocols, ‘long-arm’ jurisdiction covenants, and the possible establishment of a corps of regional compliance officers, empowered to apply the laws of multiple jurisdictions when on joint at-sea patrols. Remote sensing technologies and AI may offset or reduce the costs of maritime awareness and compliance control

- c) maritime security involves a complex set of strategic and political issues and without constant high-level attention and commitment such issues can undermine effective regional cohesion and cooperation.

### **2.3 BLUE ECONOMY**

21. **Blue economy.** The term ‘blue economy’, as used in the ROGS, is used in two different contexts. It is used to refer to all forms of economic activities related to oceans, seas and coasts. However, when referring to investment or ‘development’, the term ‘blue economy’ includes the notion of sustainability, or to “the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and continued ocean ecosystem health”. Many WIO countries and RECs have blue economy strategies in various stages of development or implementation. The African ‘continental’ blue economy strategy prepared by the AU the term ‘blue economy’ also refers to economic activities related rivers and inland water bodies as included in the definition of blue economy.

22. **Economic value.** The gross marine product of the WIO (equivalent to the annual marine GDP, or ‘market value’ of marine production and services) has been estimated to be at least US\$20.8 billion. The total ocean wealth (or estimated capital value of the ocean and ocean ecosystems) of the Western Indian Ocean region has been estimated at \$333.8 billion. This estimate does not include the value of non-market goods and asserts, such as some ecosystem services or cultural values. Approximately 60 million people in the WIO live within 100km of the coast.

23. The WIO blue economy is heavily influenced by global economic trends. These include inflation, rising national debt, increased business risk and fragmentation in some supply chains and in trade relations. The impact of the recent pandemic on tourism is one such example. Information on the scale and type of regional public and private blue investment is not readily available. Despite commitments to support the sustainable development agenda by the ‘global north’, regional leaders recognise that there is a growing technology and investment gap. The region will need to ensure the inclusion of the ocean economy in calls for an overhaul of the global financial architecture.

24. **‘Mega’ projects.** Two types of large-scale investment dominate the blue economy: (i) oil and gas exploration and extraction; and (ii) development of hub, or gateway ports and their associated land corridors. These investments are orders of magnitude larger than any others and have major influence on the national economies. The total capital investment for oil and gas exploration activities in Africa reached \$5.1 billion in 2022. African enterprises accounted for less than one-third, as foreign investors finance and execute most of these activities. Port and corridor (road, rail and pipeline) investments are also linked to the oil, gas and the other extractive industries in the interior of the continent. Despite confirmed hydrocarbon resources, the scale, financing and investment timescale for many of the projected investments (such as LNG terminals and new port development) remains uncertain. A substantial part of the ‘corporate’ blue economy in many WIO countries is either owned by, or operated by, non-WIO enterprises. Sectors with prominent external capital investment include shipping, tuna fleets, ports, offshore extractive industries and tourism.

25. **Shipping.** Shipping accounts for over 95% of Africa’s intercontinental trade. A high proportion of global shipping is controlled by relatively few multinationals. Some port management in the region is outsourced internationally. For numerous reasons, several major port development projects have been scaled down. The efficiency of several of the major transport corridors to the landlocked countries has improved significantly in terms of reduced port transit time and costs. However, the performance of most of the region’s container ports is well below the global average and has an impact on the costs of both imports and exports.

26. **Fisheries.** Two key regional tuna stocks are considered overfished and about 40% of assessed coastal fisheries are considered overfished. There have been substantial advances in community co-



management of small-scale fisheries, in a regional agreement on minimum terms and conditions of access for tuna fisheries. There have also been major advances in understanding of ecosystem connectivity and in mariculture development. Rising ocean temperatures and acidification is projected to alter the distribution and productivity of many target species. The progressive loss or degradation of most of the WIO's coral reefs will have major social and economic impacts on coastal fishing communities.

27. **Tourism.** Tourism continues to recover from COVID-19. The larger corporate operators have had the reserves and capacity to rebuild, but in the absence of support packages, many smaller enterprises have faced difficulties. Support for 'tourism SMEs' is weak or non-existent in many countries and at the regional level. Tourism also suffers from the capture of benefits by global 'discount tourism' operators, high internal travel costs, and high GHG emissions. Tourism accounts for about 10% of global GHG emissions, of which transport is about 75%. In all countries, the growth of tourism results in increased emissions. Emissions from aviation may not be accounted for within national emissions (NDCs). Tourism studies and stocktakes strongly indicate the need for transformation of 'high carbon' tourism, stronger linkages between policy and climate actions, including 'climate justice' and the use of climate finance to support transitions. Certification schemes for sustainable or responsible tourism are often weak and global sustainable tourism standards or schemes may be difficult to apply in a community or guesthouse tourism model.

28. **Net benefits.** In aggregate, the net balance of payments for the regional blue economy is likely to be negative for several reasons. Most key inputs (energy, manufactured goods) are imported, many from outside the region. A significant part of the value added may not be captured in the local economy. Opportunities for inter-regional trade are limited, and the circular blue economy is in its infancy. However, quantitative information on the balance of trade and on net benefits from the blue economy and intra-regional 'blue commerce' are lacking.

29. **Blue carbon.** The value of mangrove, seagrass and wetlands as carbon sinks is well recognised in the region and these habitats have been mapped in most WIO countries. Site-specific estimates of carbon capture and burial and the related monitoring and verification mechanisms are still under development. Consequently, access to carbon credits remains at an early stage. The modalities for community engagement in generation and distribution of possible revenues are also at an early stage.

## **2.4 MARINE ENVIRONMENT**

30. **Historical trend.** Historical trends have generally been negative although some of these trends have been reversed in recent decades. Historically, there have been declines in mangrove and seagrass habitats, degradation of coral reefs, loss of marine and coastal biodiversity and decline in endangered species. For example, Kenya and Tanzania lost about 18% and Mozambique lost 27% of mangroves habitats over the last several decades. The losses are directly attributable to human actions, such as the use of mangrove timber for firewood or for house construction, clearance for construction of salt or shrimp production units, pollution, landfill, and changes in the environmental flows of rivers. Some key indicators of status and trends are not systematically compiled, or are not readily available across sectors and themes. Regional information on key indicators is gradually being systematically collected, compiled, standardised, and interpreted in a regular manner. Initiatives to correlate such information in GIS databases are also under way.

31. **Pollution.** Information on transboundary pollution is limited, including for coasts, oceans and shared river basins. NC protocols address land-based sources and emergency spillages at sea. Major sources of land-based pollution include: untreated urban waste water and mismanaged solid waste; agricultural runoff of nutrients and agricultural chemicals; and industrial pollution, including from mining. Deforestation and land use change is resulting in sedimentation and contributing to coral mortality. Regional action plans on marine plastic pollution and on marine litter have been prepared and reviewed through the IOC and NC respectively. Guidelines and standards for water quality have been prepared and are under review. Regulatory measures on single-use-plastics exist in many countries.

32. Information on the scale and trends of marine pollution is deficient for many countries, including for known pollution hotspots. Enforcement of many regulatory measures remains weak. Many countries in the region lack a regular, systematic and effective marine pollution monitoring and reporting system. Attempts to address these inadequacies include the recent production of a set of Guidelines for Water Quality produced under the NC for the WIO. Financing of actions to address pollution is challenging. For example, the projected national and municipal financing for management of urban liquid and solid waste appears unlikely to meet targets for marine environmental quality. Marine noise pollution has received little attention.

33. **Conservation of biodiversity and critical ecosystems.** Regional leaders have recognised the threats to biodiversity, to critical ecosystems and to ecosystem health. There is high-level awareness of the value of coral reefs, mangroves, wetlands, seagrass and seamount habitats. WIO countries have actively committed to global targets and frameworks for biodiversity and marine conservation. Numerous initiatives have been launched. These include the Nairobi Convention protocols, marine spatial plans (MSP), establishment and extension of marine protected areas (MPAs) and integrated coastal zone management projects. Measures have targeted the protection of threatened or endangered species, such as turtles, dugongs, sharks and seabirds. Biodiversity concerns have been embedded in fisheries management and coastal development, and in MSP and MPA design.

34. Area-based management initiatives in the WIO are of particular importance for both conservation and sustainable resource use. Most WIO countries have marine spatial plans in various stages of development or implementation. Many MSPs are associated with targets for establishment of marine protected areas, such as the 30x30 initiative, the 'Great Blue Wall initiative', or the development of community-based, or locally-managed marine areas (LMMAs). Several transboundary MSPs and/ or MPAs are also progressing, both in the island and mainland countries, and a regional Framework for MSP in the WIO has recently been developed by the NC in order to guide MSP processes in the region. These initiatives are supported by national and regional networks (such as WIOMPAN); by sharing of knowledge through common GIS databases; by the identification of biodiversity hotspots and critical connectivity; and through the MPA networks. Projects and programmes have multiple sources of support from national, regional and international sources, including from conservation and community-based NGOs and civil society organisations.

35. **Climate change.** All WIO countries are party to the UNFCCC agreements and have prepared national climate change plans. The NC prepared a WIO regional Climate Change Strategy in 2015 while the AU has also prepared a climate change strategic plan (2022-2032). These plans are guided by and aligned with global commitments and initiatives on oceans and climate change. These include the Marrakesh Partnership, the Global Climate Action work programme, the Lisbon Declaration, declarations by the group of island states and many others. National climate vulnerability scores (excluding France, Réunion) range from 57/100 (Mauritius) to 34/100 (Somalia). WIO countries score particularly poorly (18-36/100) on the Social Readiness component of this index.

36. Many of the region's coastal blue carbon sinks have been mapped, although blue carbon projects and financing are at an early stage. Several investments are directed at green ports and reduced emissions from shipping and port operations in line with IMO agreements on emissions reduction.

37. The 'climate agenda' is evolving rapidly. The regional understanding of vulnerability, climate risk and the costs and benefits of mitigation and adaptation is improving. The opportunities for affordable climate finance are increasing; However, the human and institutional capacity to access and effectively use these funds remains a constraint for both public or private investment.

38. **Coral reefs and other critical habitats.** The capital value of WIO coral reefs is estimated at \$18 billion (2021) and the flow of benefits at over \$8 billion per year. About 40% of coral reefs are located in MPAs, although only 2% are located in 'fully protected' MPAs. Models project significant declines in shallow-water coral cover in the WIO in response to multiple stressors (the projected decline ranges from 20-80%). Despite a major increase in awareness, the scale of the potential economic losses to fisheries, to tourism and of coastal infrastructure may not be effectively communicated to decision-makers. Even if global GHG emissions are reduced, ocean temperatures, the key driver of coral bleaching, will continue to increase. This suggests that, while advocacy and action on climate change

mitigation of remains fundamental, the coral reef ecosystems will benefit from substantially reducing local stressors, such as from fishing and pollution. Many coral reefs are part of a complex of inter-related habitats, such as seagrass beds and mangroves so that the support for adaptation and changes in behaviours apply across these complex coastal ecosystems.

## **2.5 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

### **2.5.1 Status and trends in ocean knowledge, science and public awareness**

39. **Environmental.** Regional knowledge and scientific understanding of marine environmental management has expanded significantly. Public awareness of the challenges to sustainable oceans has grown markedly. There has been growth in sustainability initiatives by civil society organisations and by responsible business and an expansion of scientific and professional networks. Modest improvement in the enforcement of environmental regulations is also apparent. Mapping of coasts and oceans has enabled identification and monitoring of critical habitats and pollution hotspots and facilitated establishment of MPAs. Metrics have been developed for conservation and monitoring of biodiversity and mapping of blue carbon sinks. Commitments made to global initiatives on ocean health are monitored and reported, and an increasing number of fish stocks are assessed.

40. **Socioeconomic.** Knowledge of the social, economic and technological aspects of the ocean economy and its dependent communities is (arguably) less developed. In many sectors, transfer of technologies, innovation and entrepreneurship is lagging, in particular with regard to offshore industries, the tuna industry and shipping. Many of these sectors remain heavily dependent on external expertise, ownership, or finance. Public awareness of the role and value of healthy oceans has significantly increased, as evidenced by increasing national investment in the health of coasts and oceans. Sustainability roadmaps for blue economy and circular economy initiatives have created the ‘space’ for more informed corporate and consumer behaviour and reforms to create incentives for sustainable practices.

41. **Technology and innovation.** While there are numerous exceptions, in general the WIO region appears lagging in ocean technology and innovation. A high proportion of the inputs to the ocean economy are imported from outside the region: from fishing nets and some of the shell ornaments sold to tourists, to port services and marine IT. Structural and trade issues, a challenging business environment, and poor economies of scale constrain the development of the technical knowledge base and the skills and investment required in the blue economy and associated service industries.

### **2.5.2 Human and institutional capacity**

42. **Fragmentation.** Despite considerable progress in cooperation in science at the regional level, there remains significant fragmentation in ocean science, and in the communication of the science to decision-makers, to the public, and to the business community. The WIO does not have a formal representative scientific body which delivers consensus regional science to governance (for example, such as an IPCC/UNFCCC or ICES/OSPAR equivalent). The NC has established a Science to Policy Platform that already serves a useful function. Its mandate, role and structure could be further strengthened or formalised under the ROGS. In response to a COP Decision, a regional Information Management Strategy (IMS) has been developed for consideration by the NC-COP11. While the IMS addresses important issues, many structural challenges remain.

43. **Human resource development.** The regional supply and demand for scientific, technical, business and technology skills is unclear. Higher level skills are (arguably) more developed in the academic sphere than in marine technology or applied to sustainable ocean business. Regional coordination of human resource development to meet the future needs of sustainable oceans is at an early stage.

44. **Resources.** There is high dependence on project financing and external financing both at regional and national levels. Many of the core data sets and existing knowledge bases remain financially, or institutionally dependent on continued external financing. The means of allocating scarce



finance among thematic and human resource development needs can benefit from greater clarity and consensus.

## **2.6 REGIONAL OCEAN GOVERNANCE**

45. **Fragmentation.** The WIO governance ‘seascape’ is characterised by considerable fragmentation at regional level and to a lesser extent at national level. There are multiple and sometimes competing agendas, institutions, and mandates (African, REC, national, environmental, social, economic, trade). Many initiatives are sector-specific, and there are often weak or informal cooperation arrangements between the multiple regional organisations. Many of the initiatives of the NC, the RECs, the IOC and other regional cooperation institutions have recognised this challenge. In response, some countries have developed ocean plans and strategies, but many policy decisions continue to be made sector-by-sector and may constrain synergies with overlapping agendas. The quality of ocean governance and the level of ‘integration’ or cross-sector decision-making varies widely by sector at national level.

46. There are many pro-active relationships between the various agendas, sectors and regional institutions. The stakeholders agree that strengthened, or more structured arrangements between existing regional institutions would be beneficial. These may include data and staff exchange agreements, memoranda of understanding, joint programmes and observer status at their respective meetings.

47. **National level.** Countries face a common challenge in determining the most effective national arrangements for ocean governance. To avoid conflicts between ministries or national agencies in relation to jurisdiction over ocean affairs, some countries have created a dedicated ‘oceans ministry’ or agency. Others have opted for coordination at the level of the office of the president or vice president. Some use oceans strategies or blue economy plans as the basis for coordination at national level.

## **2.7 FINANCING REGIONAL OCEAN GOVERNANCE**

48. Reflecting the fragmentation in the institutional arrangements, financing of regional cooperation also shows some fragmentation. Programmes, projects and initiatives are generally ‘owned’ by the various regional organisations and understandably used to serve their respective mandates. A similar pattern of financing often exists at the national level. The annual contributions by the Parties to the NC are generally in arrears and the trust funds managed by UNEP on behalf of the NC have limited resources. Some of the core financing of the NC work programme is heavily reliant on time-bound external project financing.

49. In general, national public financing and resources are limited by a weak tax base and high public debt. The private sector often faces high commercial finance costs, poor access to long-term investment finance, and a relatively weak enabling environment, often with high interest rates, inflation and substantial commercial risks.

50. On the other hand, there is a growing awareness of a rapidly changing financial ‘seascape’. This includes the expanding scale of potential financial support for sustainable blue investment, including for responses to climate change. Some of these changes are reflected in the creation of national blue finance intermediaries (such as SeyCATT, PROAZUL, or BIOFUND). These institutions aim to respond to local demand for blue finance and help disadvantaged communities and SMEs to access affordable finance.

51. There are also examples of successful regional projects (for example: SmartFish (EU), SWIOFish (WB/GEF), RECOFI), which can potentially be replicated. In particular, a series of complementary GEF-financed projects (SWOFP, ACLME, WIOLAB, SAPPHIRE) have strengthened the institutional framework for regional cooperation and helped to establish key building blocks for regional ocean governance.

### 3 IDENTIFICATION OF REGIONAL PRIORITIES

52. The regional priorities were identified by the ROGS Task Force (TF). The substantive priorities are grouped under four overlapping and closely inter-related clusters:

- a) **Maritime Security**
- b) **Blue Economy** (the blue economy and maritime security clusters were combined in a single cluster during the Task Force dialogues, but are treated separately in this document)
- c) **Environment and Natural Resources**
- d) **Knowledge Management and Capacity Building.**

53. Cross-cutting issues, such as institutional arrangements and finance, are considered separately under ‘implementing arrangements’. The clusters and priorities overlap on many thematic and substantive issues that require complementary actions. For example, ‘fisheries’ is included in the blue economy cluster, but has links to regional maritime enforcement, to natural resource management and regional cooperation on knowledge and capacity building. Marine plastic pollution - an environmental issue, is also placed in the blue economy cluster, as most of the necessary actions require economic and technical solutions. For example, investment in solid waste management and development of a circular economy for plastics are part of the blue economy. Other actions, such as monitoring of marine litter and raising public awareness on plastic pollution could fall within the knowledge cluster.

54. The ROGS stakeholder consultation process addressed those priorities identified by the Task Force in so far as the resources available for the preparation of the ROGS allowed. Those priorities which are not addressed in detail and the other emerging regional strategic priorities are expected to be addressed during the implementation of the ROGS.

<b>Priorities by cluster as identified by the Task Force</b>	
<b>Maritime Security</b>	<b>Blue Economy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective cooperation on maritime security and enforcement (including on port state measures)</li> <li>• Prevention and preparedness for marine spillages</li> <li>• Alignment of institutions &amp; policies on a ‘regional’ ABNJ and deepsea resources</li> <li>• Raising awareness of strategic maritime issues, including the strategic importance of subsea telecommunication cables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building sustainable tourism</li> <li>• Building sustainable fisheries</li> <li>• Prevention, reduction and control of marine plastic pollution (shared with Environment cluster) and development of a circular blue economy for plastics</li> <li>• Sustainable ports, trade and maritime connectivity</li> <li>• Alignment on the deep seabed minerals negotiations</li> <li>• Managing offshore energy (extractive and renewable)</li> <li>• Other emerging areas (IT, marine biotech)</li> </ul>
<b>Environment and Natural Resources</b>	<b>Knowledge Management and Capacity Building</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water quality: Prevention, reduction, and control of nutrient and chemical pollution</li> <li>• Conservation of critical habitats and endangered species, including rehabilitation of coral reef ecosystems and carbon sinks</li> <li>• Conservation of biodiversity and critical ecosystems including BBNJ</li> <li>• Regional marine spatial planning and transboundary marine protected areas</li> <li>• Adaptation to and mitigation of climate change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific advice in support the above clusters (including on ecosystem-based approaches, on fisheries and on monitoring of climate change)</li> <li>• Regional scientific cooperation and consensus scientific advice on international oceans affairs</li> <li>• Science to governance (institutional arrangements)</li> <li>• Human capacity development and communications, including institutional arrangements</li> <li>• Transfer of technology</li> <li>• Public awareness and access to science (including for private sector applications)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Note:</b> Many cross-cutting themes, such as, finance and institutional issues are addressed in the section on implementation arrangements. Those priorities which are not detailed in the following sections may be addressed during ROGS implementation</p>	

55. A participatory process led by the Task Force and engaging numerous stakeholder organisations developed inputs to the ROGS for each priority. The following sections present the outcomes of the Task Force and stakeholder technical dialogues. The presentation of each of the priorities follows the same general structure as follows:

- a) a regional **consensus** description of the priority
- b) identification of the regional **actions** required
- c) identification of potential **leadership** for the actions, and
- d) indication of potential **resourcing** and financing for implementation.

## **4 MARITIME SECURITY CLUSTER**

56. Maritime security provides the peace and stability required for effective actions on many, if not all, of the other priorities. Partly because of the sensitive nature of the subject the Technical Dialogues on maritime security and on shipping were merged. Several other dialogues and related workshops inform the specific actions set out under this cluster. Some of the actions included in this cluster, such as the prevention and preparedness for oil spillage, might equally be placed under the Environment and Natural Resources cluster. However, the actions are led by coast guards, port authorities and maritime administrations.

57. The current maritime security target areas include prevention of piracy, fisheries enforcement operations, prevention of traffic in drugs, arms and people, prevention and preparedness for shipping incidents, such as oil spillage, monitoring of shipping, search and rescue and safety at sea. Detailed action plans already exist for many of these targets but are not necessarily widely shared or in the public domain. There are several areas where enhanced regionally coordinated actions of benefit:

- a) establishment or strengthening of formal, sustainable regional coordination mechanisms
- b) oil spillage prevention and preparedness directly linked to the Nairobi Convention ‘Emergency Protocol’ Articles 3.1 and 3.2.
- c) monitoring and control of activities in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)
- d) joint regional positions on offshore and deep sea mining exploration and extraction, including contributions and future updates of the AU AIMS with respect to deep seabed mining (considered under the blue economy cluster)
- e) building a shared awareness of geopolitical strategic issues in maritime security, including threats to undersea or subsea cables and building shared the strategic positioning of the WIO countries in so far as possible.

58. **Strategic positioning.** The WIO is a crossroads of geopolitical interests. The strategic interests include the shipping of oil and petrochemicals from the Gulf States, the extraction of oil, gas and minerals from offshore and inland resources, and the development of trade corridors to landlocked countries. Other geopolitical interests include the establishment of security alliances, bases for distant-water fishing fleets and for other maritime security, competing port and transport corridor financing initiatives, and the growing interest in deep sea minerals. Many of these issues may be outside the scope of the ROGS, but ROGS activities will need to take account of the balance of geopolitical interests through ensuring well-informed decision makers.

### **4.1 COOPERATION ON MARITIME SECURITY**

59. **Policy and institutional architecture.** The Djibouti Guidelines and its Jeddah Amendment provides an overarching international framework. The Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security and Safety provides a policy focus, but not all WIO countries may actively participate. The MASE is

an EU-financed partnership programme hosted by the IOC. It supports a Maritime Security Architecture (MSA) for a safe and secure WIO maritime domain. Several formal agreements consolidate the MSA. These include the establishment of a Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (based in Madagascar) and a Regional Coordination of Operations Centre (based in Seychelles). Working in close cooperation these centres raise maritime domain awareness and coordinate operations. Some WIO countries are not ‘part’ of these MASE maritime architecture, but implement the MASE programme’s piracy-related issues on coastal livelihoods (IGAD), legal matters (EAC) and finance (COMESA). Djibouti also participates in the MASE. The Contact Group on Piracy has been ‘reformulated’ as the Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Activities (CG) to provide a forum for continued dialogue among an extended group of stakeholders and a means of technical coordination with external partners, including with the shipping industry and non-WIO naval agencies. The CG has (historically) provided a means of organising joint actions on an incident or threat-response basis, rather than providing a permanent programme of actions requiring a secretariat and institutionalised commitment by partners.

60. **Support.** The various components of the maritime security complex is supported by many different bilateral and multilateral initiatives. In addition to the MASE, the UNODC provides support on combatting drugs and maritime crime. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is focused largely on trade and investment. The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) covers the entire Indian Ocean. IMO, IOC, PMAESA and others are engaged in complementary activities ranging from port security and at-sea training and emergency simulation exercises to customs services and cargo control.

61. In summary, regional cooperation on maritime security relies on several different policy and technical initiatives. All WIO countries acknowledge the need for effective regional cooperation on maritime security. However, the region has struggled to define the scope, institutional structure and the resourcing for more permanent or sustainable arrangements on regional maritime security. In its implementation phase, the ROGS will support actions to develop effective cooperation on maritime security based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority.** To establish effective and sustainable regional cooperation on maritime security.
- b) **Actions.** The actions are to support:
  - (i) reinforced institutional arrangements between stakeholders, including for consensus policy and strategic decisions, for information exchange, ‘domain awareness’ and to facilitate the design and resourcing of long-term arrangements for sustainable cooperation
  - (ii) adoption and implementation of preparedness and response plans for potential maritime security incidents, including spillages of oil or hazardous materials, and arrangements for financing and resourcing for ‘emergency response’ action as may be required
  - (iii) raised awareness of strategic maritime security issues including those related to related to subsea telecommunications cables.
- c) **Leadership.** Establishment of consensus on leadership and process is a key target for the ROGS. In the case of maritime security, the arrangements may be multipolar with specific roles undertaken by different specialised agencies. The NC in close coordination with the Indian Ocean Commission will take a leadership role in convening stakeholders, initiating or updating regional cooperation plans and establishing the means to support ongoing or recurrent requirements and rapid response facilities to emergencies. It is expected that: (i) an expanded Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security and Safety may consider high-level policy decisions; (ii) the two MSA platforms would continue their technical roles; and (iii) the reformed CG would serve as a stakeholder interface and platform for dialogue with external partners on operational matters, on coordination and on deployment of maritime security assets.
- d) **Resources.** The ‘software’, or development of institutional cooperation arrangements will be supported directly by the stakeholders with contributions from regional marine security projects where available. The ‘hardware’ or at-sea operations are likely to require continued external support and will be the subject of extensive dialogues among partners. Contributions from beneficiaries, such as large-scale fishing operators and shipping will be examined.

62. The re-tasked CG has the potential scope to address a wide spectrum of maritime security issues. While the CG initiative involves relatively weak international commitments, it provides a flexible and inclusive platform which can engage both regional and international stakeholders (e.g., enforcement agencies, ship owners, insurance companies, UN agencies). Future ROGS-backed dialogues may direct attention to the advantages and disadvantages of constituting a more formal structure and its role within a comprehensive regional MSA.

#### **4.2 PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS FOR SPILLAGES**

63. **Prevention of spillage.** Existing preparedness plans do not adequately address the prevention of spillages. During its implementation, the ROGS will support actions to prevent spillage of oil and other contaminants (e.g., nurdles, chemicals, Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS, as defined by IMO) from both shipping and offshore platforms. The actions will be guided by the NC Protocol Concerning Co-operation in Combating Marine Pollution in Cases of Emergency in the Eastern African Region (1985) and based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority.** Development of regional plans to prevent spillages of oil and other pollutants, including provisions for their approval and implementation.
- b) **Actions.** The regional plan preparation process will assess the need for and feasibility of:
  - (i) creation of special areas for navigation in ecologically sensitive areas in accordance with IMO rules
  - (ii) designation of ‘places of refuge’ in the event of spillage and establishment of the procedures to trigger the use of places of refuge; and
  - (iii) enhanced tracking of and reporting by tankers and other bulk vessels carrying hazardous materials in accordance with international guidelines on best practices.
- c) **Leadership.**
  - (i) and (ii) : joint leadership by WIOMSA and IMO based on NC guidance and engagement with the IOC including for preparation of scoping papers for consideration by countries, the region and maritime stakeholders
  - (iii) through the Maritime Security Architecture (MSA) ‘domain awareness’ activities and other sources providing timely information on shipping transporting oil and HNS and on any relevant incidents or threats.

64. **Ecologically sensitive areas.** International measures to protect ecologically sensitive areas (Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA)) must be internationally designated through established IMO procedures. The measures may include designation of shipping lanes, Areas to Be Avoided (ATBAs), speed restrictions, communications and tracking measures and other reporting systems. The Northern Mozambique Channel is an example of an areas which could potentially be designated as a PSSA.

65. **Places of refuge.** Designation of places of refuge for ships in distress (e.g., an oil tanker on fire) is a highly sensitive political and ecological challenge. The prior designation of places of refuge (such as a protected anchorage in a remote area) stems from experiences of refusals by port states to allow such damaged vessels into their ports because of the potential environmental or economic costs which may result. The designation of a place of refuge (alternative to a port) implies choosing the ‘lesser of two evils’. The rationale is that the coastal state which provides the place of refuge potentially prevents a major spillage which may also affect adjacent countries. The ROGS activity will initiate a regional dialogue on this complex challenge with a view to building regional understanding and trust and exploring scenarios where the use of places of refuge could be of national and/ or regional benefit.

66. **Preparedness for spillages.** Extensive stakeholder consultations have resulted a regional oil spill contingency plan compliant with IMO guidance. This is currently in draft form and has been submitted to a ministerial conference for approval. The ROGS Task Force considered that the draft regional oil spill preparedness plan should be adopted and implemented through a participatory process determined by the NC-COP and supported by the NC Secretariat. In its implementation phase, the ROGS will act based on the following understanding:



- a) **Priority.** Approve the regional oil spill preparedness plan to enable its implementation while recognising that the regional plan is not a substitute for national plans and actions
- b) **Action.** Organise the approval process and required follow-up work on commitments and resourcing arrangements, including exploring lessons on the preparedness cooperation and financing in other regional seas (for example, to maintain stockpiles of chemicals used to disperse oil spills).
- c) **Leadership.** Nairobi Convention Secretariat or a designated NC working group to initiate approval process and develop solutions to any institutional and resourcing challenges. In this regard, the NC will work in close cooperation with key stakeholders, including the IMO, the Funds, the Djibouti CoC (which is supported by the IMO) the industry organisations and the regional ports' organisations.
- d) **Resources.** The resources required are set out in the draft plan. Financing the preparedness is a major issue which remains to be effectively addressed. The existing international agreements and compensation arrangements (OPRC, CLC and others) do not necessarily finance preparedness. They finance remedial actions following an oil spillage. The tanker traffic is predominantly transiting through the WIO rather than making port calls, so that interaction with the potential polluters is via industry associations, such as P&I Clubs. Further stakeholder dialogues including with the shipping organisations will be required to resource the implementation of the national and regional plans.

### **4.3 MONITORING AND CONTROL OF ACTIVITIES IN THE ABNJ**

67. The coastal (and landlocked) countries have legitimate interests in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. WIO states are obliged to control the activities of their flag vessels in the ABNJ. However, WIO coastal states have no jurisdiction over the activities of non-WIO-flag vessels in the ABNJ. These activities are only subject to the rules of international conventions, which include the decisions of the IMO, the RFMOs (4), the International Seabed Authority and several conservation conventions. ROGS actions will be based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority.** To ensure the consensus voice and collective rights of the region's countries is effectively articulated and implemented in relation to activities in the ABNJ.
- b) **Actions.** The ROGS will convene a regional dialogue with the international organisations that have jurisdiction over activities the ABNJ to collectively indicate: (i) their respective programmes of action in the WIO; (ii) how they plan to cooperate, or develop synergies in areas of overlapping interest in the WIO; and (iii) to consider establishing a permanent WIO cooperation platform and programme of regional coordination backed with WIO-specific MOUs between the conventions or their secretariats. The regional dialogue will also include the formulation of joint positions on deep sea mineral exploration and extraction.
- c) **Leadership.** The NC Secretariat with the possible support of the IOC, UNDOALOS, IMO and the ISA.

68. **Secure subsea telecommunication cables.** Over 95% of all inter-continental IT information and electronic transactions pass through undersea telecommunications cables. This infrastructure is essential for finance, trade and security. The 14 existing WIO cables are mostly owned by private companies, many of which are large global IT companies. The international legal regime governing the cable network is deficient, partly because many cables also run through areas beyond national jurisdiction and because the cable companies may be in competition. Most disruption is caused by accidents (e.g., trawling, anchoring), but the potential for malicious damage is growing and in March 2024, several cables are reported damaged in the Red Sea, including some which service WIO countries. Robust arrangements for repair and avoidance of disruption are lacking, including through cooperation with and between the cable owners and service providers. This makes WIO countries vulnerable to incidents which can have major economic consequences. The Indian Ocean Commission has prepared a framework for action. It is recognised that while the countries and the region have a limited scope for

actions, the threats and importance of regional cooperation needs to be emphasised at higher policy levels. Actions taken under the ROGS will be based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority.** Promote regional awareness and cooperation to help secure the integrity of the regional undersea cables network.
- b) **Actions.**
  - (i) Recognise the cables as critical regional infrastructure and part of evolving geopolitical arrangements
  - (ii) Recognise the risks to the IT cables network by raising awareness among decision makers
  - (iii) Follow up on work done by the Indian Ocean Commission on a framework for assessment of risks; for building resilience; for providing an effective legal framework; and for developing regional cooperative actions.
- c) **Leadership.** The Indian Ocean Commission, given its interest, experience and work to date.
- d) **Resourcing.** Cooperation between cable owners, service providers and other competent national and international entities by raising awareness of the threats and exploring solutions through inclusion of the priority on the agendas of high-level meetings.

## **5 BLUE ECONOMY CLUSTER**

69. **Blue economy.** As previously indicate, the term ‘blue economy’ is used both to refer to all economic activities related to oceans, seas and coasts, and also to sustainable and equitable use of ocean resources. The blue economy has links to many of the SDGs, and to SDG 14 in particular. Numerous economic activities are included in the blue economy. These include tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, ports and shipping, offshore extractive and renewable energy industries, salt production and desalination among others. Development of the sustainable blue economy implies the reduction of GHG emissions, the development of a circular economy, and promoting equity in marine sectors or industries.

70. **Policies.** The regional commitment to developing the blue economy is reflected in policies and strategic plans at AU, REC and at national levels. High-level guidance is provided by the Africa Blue Economy Strategy (2019), the African Integrated Maritime Strategy, the Mining Vision, the Maritime Transport Charter and the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa (PFRS). The RECs (COMESA, EAC (2022), IGAD (2021) and SADC) are all in various stages of development of blue economy strategies, which are aligned with the Africa Blue Economy Strategy. The recent Moroni Declaration by the WIO island states further consolidates the policy seascape. The REC blue economy strategies generally take the form of frameworks, roadmaps or ambitions. They are not instruments which are designed to finance particular blue economy sectors. All WIO countries have, or are the in the process of developing national blue economy strategies or their equivalents. In some cases, these are embedded in other economic development instruments. Many national strategies have a more specific focus on inter-ministerial or inter-agency coordination and on sectors which can generate employment, foreign exchange or social benefits. Given the diversity and scope of the challenges, the ROGS focuses on selected topics and sectors, while recognising that considerable further regional cooperation can be of benefit with respect to those topics which are not addressed in the ROGS at this time.

71. The present iteration of the ROGS focuses on those priorities where the benefits from regional cooperation are most evident in the short to medium-term, while also identifying other areas where challenges remain in identifying a clear roadmap. The focus areas include: (i) tourism; (ii) fisheries; (iii) combatting marine plastic pollution; and (iv) marine extractive industries.

### **5.1 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

72. All WIO countries aim to increase benefits from sustainable tourism and all countries have various form of tourism plans and strategies which include marine or coastal tourism. Developing a regional strategy for tourism faces multiple inter-related challenges: scale and connectivity, multi-sector coordination, diverse financing and investment requirements, and market segmentation. The geographical scale of the WIO and of some WIO countries makes cost-effective connectivity and synergies challenging as a means of linking tourism across frontiers. National airlines have limited capacity to build intra-regional tourism routes, and small/medium scale cruising and transboundary tourism corridors are in a development phase. Consequently, national or sub-regional strategies continue to be the more effective functional units.

73. The public infrastructure required (roads, airports, electricity, ICT facilities, medical) is multipurpose and may not prioritise tourism. Hotels, lodges, resorts, and other tourist amenities depend on private finance and many national investors are decapitalised, or in debt following COVID 19. There may be significant external ‘leakage’ of tourism revenues through external booking and credit-card agencies, which could potentially be captured in the national economies. The tourism market has numerous segments. There is a growing domestic market and market for sustainable blue tourism. Some countries envisage expanding high-end hotel tourism while others favour SMEs and ‘boutique’,



community, or guesthouse models. These diverse visions generally require different approaches to financing and marketing. Recent stakeholder consultations identified priority challenges as: the weak investment climate, particularly for SMEs; coordination in logistics; and poor consumer information on sustainable blue tourism.

74. Due to the diversity of challenges and the complex multi-polar nature of potential ‘solutions’, the ROGS will structure further regional stakeholder consultations to specify actionable regional priorities based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority:** Identify practical, cost-effective regional actions to promote sustainable blue tourism and establish means to implement these actions.
- b) **Actions:**
  - (i) Establish a programme of stakeholder consultations to address the priority
  - (ii) Prepare a set of regional strategic briefs that analyse and prioritise cost-effective regional actions and identifies the possible sources of national, external and industry financing. These briefs may include use of tourism satellite accounts and tourism scenarios and address regional connectivity, leakage of revenues and IT or digital solutions
  - (iii) Building on existing initiatives, consider the establishment of a robust regional working group with strong industry representation, particularly from the SME segment, to focus these efforts and maintain impetus.
- c) **Leadership.** The NC Secretariat in close collaboration with UNECA and the WTO will convene key stakeholders to identify the ongoing leadership and basic resourcing.

75. The actions may include: a review of the experiences and lessons from national and regional tourism projects; stocktakes and initiatives in the WIO and other relevant seascapes; compilation of available scenarios on tourism futures; advice on the application of global guidelines and codes of conduct for blue tourism. The work may also propose measures to ensure that available opportunities for capacity building and development of the digital interface for tourism are made accessible to SMEs, that the links between tourism and climate change are made more explicit and widely communicated, and that the prospects for new regional projects and initiatives (such as sustainable tourism certification) are explored.

## **5.2 BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES**

76. **A focus on benefits.** Sustainable capture fisheries are crucial to the wellbeing of coastal communities and often a major focus of ocean governance. Fisheries have links to multiple SDGs and numerous ROGS priorities. Many coastal fish stocks and at least two of the main tuna resources are considered (biologically) overexploited. Management advice is usually provided with an objective of exploiting the fisheries resources at a (precautionary) maximum sustainable yield level (MSY). However, when fish stocks are exploited at MSY, in general, the net economic and social benefits are substantially below optimum and a fishery may even operate at a net economic loss when fishing effort or capacity is set at a level corresponding to MSY. In the WIO region, the estimated losses from ‘economic overfishing’ are in the order of \$200 million per year (landed value). Shifting from biological to economic management targets can help restore stocks, increase benefits and build resilience to the impacts of climate change.

77. **Pathways.** The pathways to sustainable fisheries are already relatively well understood. The challenges are in their implementation: (i) to implement the reforms required in the coastal fisheries; and (ii) to achieve a balance in the sharing of benefits from the pelagic (tuna) fisheries, which mostly fall under an international management regime. Both challenges take account of the related biodiversity and ecosystem health targets. Both require economic and social trade-offs which may generate significant political pressures.

### **5.2.1 Small scale and coastal fisheries**

78. Sustainable fisheries are often seen as biological problem, rather than an economic, social and political challenge. Where fisheries are overexploited, the challenge is to create sustainable fisher

behaviours, while offsetting the negative social and economic impacts of the reduced fishing activity required to balance fishing effort with resource availability and improved economic returns. While ‘biological’ advice is fundamental, reforms will need to address the economic and social drivers. Experience indicates that biologically-determined targets (such as MSY) are unlikely to achieve social and economic sustainability and cannot easily be applied in small-scale multi-species fisheries.

79. While each fishery is different, key actions will include: (i) use of economic and social rather than biological targets; (ii) improvement in the post-harvest value chain that benefit both the producers (fishers) and distributors/ processors; (iii) support for alternative livelihoods in aquaculture, tourism, or through payments for ecosystem services; (iv) education and technical training; (v) community or stakeholder empowerment and related interventions. Access to social and economic incentives can be linked to effective compliance with actionable fishing rules and community-level controls. Reforms may have a protracted timescale. Continuity of the reform process requires broad stakeholder support across the political spectrum and the national economic planning cycles.

80. Many WIO national and regional projects target sustainable small-scale and coastal community fisheries. However, many target a selected part of the challenge: the science, the ecosystem, poverty, food security, markets, technology, or co-management of the fish resource. The ROGS will support a shared vision and community consensus the short and long-term steps towards sustainability for each fishery and. The ROGS will generate means of securing the support for implementation, based on the following understanding.

- a) **Priority.** Build sustainable small-scale and coastal fisheries through regional support for national actions.
- b) **Actions.**
  - (i) Prioritise economic and social interventions for reforms based on social, economic and biological scientific advice and community-level long-term consensus vision for the fishery and broad political support for actions
  - (ii) Build a portfolio of small-scale fisheries initiatives both at national and regional levels to create synergies, avoid duplication, generate partnerships and provide consensus on objectives, processes, impacts, timescales and continuity of support systems.
- c) **Leadership.** The Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission as a convenor of national stakeholders and external development partners with a strong regional engagement in fisheries, in coastal community and SME development, and in social reform and other relevant areas. Because of its proven experience in managing regional fisheries projects, the IOC may provide the ‘secretariat’ for managing future the coordination of regional projects.

### **5.2.2 Tuna and shared fisheries**

81. The benefits of the tuna and related pelagic fisheries (sharks, billfish) are captured by the WIO coastal states, by foreign fleets, by the regional and international processing industry and along the distribution and retail chains. The distribution of the benefits is strongly influenced by fleet and processing plan ownership, contractual arrangements on supplies of raw and processed tuna and by import tariff regimes, particularly for canned tuna. Many of the productive assets (fleets and processing plants) are owned, financed, or controlled by corporations ‘outside’ the WIO. Tuna which is exported ‘raw’ may ultimately compete with WIO-processed tuna on supermarket shelves in the EU and elsewhere.

82. The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) has the international mandate to set the ‘rules’ for these fisheries. The fisheries include the purse seine fishery (tuna used mainly for canning), the longline fishery (for frozen tuna mainly used for direct consumption) and multiple coastal fleets, which reach ‘industrial scale’ in the Maldives’ pole and line fishery. Several of the stocks managed by the IOTC are subject to overfishing, are overfished or have an uncertain status. Consequently, the capital value and flow of potential benefits to the point of landing are threatened.

83. In order to secure increased benefit from the fishery and exert improved control on fishing vessels, WIO countries have agreed upon a set of minimum terms and conditions of access (MTC). These include technical conditions and levels of licence fee payments applicable largely to distant water,

or non-WIO, foreign-flag fleets. There are ongoing discussions on allocation of tuna ‘quotas’ (for some species) between the parties to the IOTC. The parties include numerous non-WIO countries that have the right to fish these stocks under international law. Discussions are also under way to enhance the consensus built on the MTC, for example, by drawing on the (sub-regional) tuna management experiences of the Nauru group of countries in the Western Central Pacific.

84. Based on the following understanding, the ROGS will support the development and management of a sustainable WIO tuna/ large pelagic fishery and efforts to secure a more equitable share of the benefits from the fishery for WIO countries:

- a) **Priority:** Development and management of a sustainable WIO tuna fishery to secure a more equitable share of sustainable benefits for WIO countries.
- b) **Actions.**
  - (i) support regional initiatives to ensure economically sustainable fisheries for highly migratory species of tuna, including through the SWIOFC, through joint actions in the IOTC and through initiatives by WIO tuna industry stakeholders which are beneficially owned or associated in WIO countries
  - (ii) link the actions required to other ROGS priorities, including on maritime security and compliance, climate change, a circular economy for waste fishing gear, scientific advice, capacity building and ocean accounts
  - (iii) establish joint positions on trade in tuna, including on tariff regimes
  - (iv) consider parallel actions, as appropriate, in relation to the effective management and equitable distribution of benefits from sustainable deep-water fisheries.
- c) **Leadership.** The Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) will coordinate actions, including through the existing memorandum of understanding with the Nairobi Convention and others. Subject to the instructions of the parties to SWIOFC, establish clear institutional arrangements among key regional stakeholders, including the tuna harvesting and processing industries, and provide a platform for implementation of the relevant components of future regional projects or initiatives.
- d) **Resources.** Extension or use of existing or regional fisheries projects currently under consideration and possible charges for services provided through a MTC scheme.

### **5.3 PREVENTION, REDUCTION AND CONTROL OF MARINE PLASTIC POLLUTION**

85. **An economic or environmental challenge?** Arguably, given its linkages to the NC Protocol on Land-based Sources of Pollution, this priority could be placed within the Environment and Natural Resources cluster. However, as previously indicated, many of the required actions are spread across the blue economy and knowledge clusters. They include awareness building, changes in corporate and consumer behaviour, legislative and trade measures, and investments in solid waste management and in a circular plastic economy. Many of these actions rest on an economic foundation and require strong engagement by economic actors, placing the priority in the blue economy cluster.

86. **Current initiatives.** Communities, businesses and countries have benefited from an era of ‘cheap plastics’ – cheap, because the environmental costs of plastics have never been included in the market price of plastic products. Marine plastic pollution (MPP) is part of a more general problem of plastic pollution. Plastic pollution in turn is part of a larger waste management problem and the even larger problem of unsustainable consumer and corporate behaviour. Combatting marine plastic pollution (MPP), and plastic pollution in general, requires that the environmental costs be allocated along a global value chain from producers of plastic raw materials to consumers. A hierarchy of initiatives inform the ROGS:

- a) the global ‘plastics treaty’ draft negotiating text provides a framework. It refers to all actions along the entire value chain, upstream (plastic production), mid-stream (use of plastic products), and downstream (handling of waste plastic, including recycling). The draft text lacks global consensus on many fundamentals, such as constraints on production of raw plastics.

- b) a regional action plan on marine plastic pollution, which has been developed and endorsed by the island states and the IOC, and which addresses MPP in the mid and downstream part of the value chain. The regional MPP action plan has integrated the
- c) regional marine litter action plan developed under the NC (plastics comprise about 80% of marine litter) which focuses on the (downstream) effects (the pollution) rather than the causes of marine plastic pollution.

87. The ROGS will implement a regional marine plastic pollution (MPP) action plan based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority:** To prevent reduce and control marine plastic pollution in the region in close coordination with the AU/Africa position in the global plastics treaty negotiations.
- b) **Actions:** Consider and adopt a regional action plan on MPP which has the following key components.
  - (i) preparation, review and support for implementation of national action plans on MPP
  - (ii) sharing of knowledge and institutional and human capacity building
  - (iii) alignment of policies and measures, including on the responsibilities of industry, on technical definitions, standards and trade classification for plastics, on consensus positions in the global plastics treaty and in the related WTO trade and the environment negotiations
  - (iv) access to affordable finance for implementation of national action plans, for investment in solid waste management and in the development of a regional circular economy and its enabling environment.
- c) **Leadership.** The NC Secretariat in close coordination with the Indian Ocean Commission will establish a dedicated task force to implement the regional action plan. The task force will have broad representation and expertise from stakeholders directly involved in implementation, in particular from industry (including circular economy innovators and the waste management industry), municipal authorities, international trade, waste-picker associations, leading NGOs, consumer groups, the financial partners and the RECs. Regular task force reports will be made publicly available and specifically directed to the relevant AMCEN agenda; to the Africa Group established for the plastics treaty negotiations; and to any related WTO agenda on the trade in plastics.
- d) **Resources.** The resources required are detailed in the proposed MPP regional action plan.

88. **Fishing gear and the circular economy.** The Indian Ocean Commission and other actors have made significant advances in scoping the potential for a regional blue circular economy. This is partly driven by the perception that many smaller or island economies lack the economies of scale required for a viable plastics circular economy, even for the more common plastic wastes (such as PET bottles). Lost or waste fishing gear and end-of-life plastic fishing and recreational vessels comprises a significant proportion of MPP and marine litter in the region. The regional action plan will direct particular attention to introducing extended producer responsibility (EPR) requirements for these products as a focal or ‘flagship’ activity. Collection of some waste fishing nets already occurs in the region (for recycling outside the region) and functional EPR schemes for end-of-life plastic (fibreglass) vessels exist in some (non-WIO) jurisdictions. These may serve as models for the region.

#### **5.4 SUSTAINABLE PORTS AND SHIPPING**

89. **Strategic issues.** Over 90% of Africa’s trade is by sea so the ports need to be seen in relation to the entire road and rail infrastructure associated with the ports. The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) is expected to increase intra-African freight by 28% and demand for maritime freight by 62%. The ports and associated land corridors are also of vital strategic interest to the landlocked countries. WIO countries have a negligible share of global fleet ownership and shipping container freight, so that WIO influence on shipping is largely through port controls, through international maritime agreements (such as those managed by the IMO) and through commercial arrangements with shipping and port management companies.

90. Investment in strategic ports and shipping also lies at the heart of competition between the traditional ‘western’ shipping companies, the emerging ‘Asian’ competitors, and Middle Eastern port developers and managers. These ‘global blocks’ have competing interests in the export of Africa’s raw materials, in the growing African markets for imported manufactured goods or technologies, and in infrastructure and financing opportunities. In addition to the external global competition, WIO ports also compete with each other as regional transshipment hubs or corridors. Changes in the control and ownership of shipping also have strategic implications for maritime security arrangements.

91. Djibouti is the only East African container port to rank in the global ‘top 100’ in terms of performance. Almost all other WIO container ports rank lower than 200. Five major ports rank below 300, suggesting substantial weaknesses in port capacity, the associated infrastructure or management. In addition to the container ports, the region has numerous feeder ports, bulk handling facilities, dedicated fishing ports and cruise and passenger terminals which generate important social and economic benefits. Weakness in cost-effective intra-regional shipping may be a constraint to WIO internal trade.

92. **Policy.** The 2050 Africa’s Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS) and the Revised African Maritime Transport Charter provide the context for NC-COP Decision CP.9/13. This decision supports the development of a green port toolkit to address the environmental impact of ports and shipping, while also improving port performance. Green ports need to fulfil social and economic needs and simultaneously address the environmental impacts of port operations. The latter include: pollution (air, noise, emissions, waste, sewage, spillages), invasive species, the physical disruption of port construction, and the reduction of the port’s carbon footprint, including emissions from shipping.

93. Port operations come at a cost to the environment. Green port initiatives address these environmental costs. A green port may result in increased port costs, affect port revenues, and potentially increase the costs of imports and exports. Green shipping is not addressed in the ROGs given that most of the shipping is undertaken by non-WIO-flag vessels and that the ports are key to emissions controls on shipping. Increased port charges could result in operators moving to alternative lower-cost ports and undermine sustainability efforts. A Green Ports Toolkit has already been prepared under the WIOSAP project.

94. The ROGS will support cooperative regional actions based on the following understanding.

- a) **Priority.** To facilitate regional cooperation and support for the development and management of sustainable and efficient regional ports.
- b) **Actions.** The actions required are technically complex and multipolar. They require cooperation across public and private sectors, between national and international actors. The actions include introduction of new technologies, use of blended finance instruments and changes in the behaviour of numerous corporate actors. They require trade-offs between competing objectives, identification of transition pathways and clarity on long-term planning and investment. While many challenges are common to the region’s ports and shipping, the solutions are likely to be specific to each port. The ROGS actions aim to map the nature and scope of the regional initiatives by establishing a series of dialogues on the following challenges:
  - (i) progressive development of green ports while avoiding undue increases in the costs of port operations. This will include the reduction of emissions attributable to ports, shipping and freight through use of renewable energy at ports, enforcement of IMO rules on emissions and ship’s waste, and minimising the environmental impact of port construction, operation and shipping. It is recognised that improved port performance (vessel turnaround time, freight costs) remains critical as a large part of the national economies are dependent on port efficiency and that green port advances cannot come at the expense of significant increases in freight costs
  - (ii) supporting measures to improve port performance (as determined mainly by standardised logistic and economic metrics). This include identification of the distribution of costs and benefits from ports and shipping and from associated services such as insurance, communications and port management concessions. It will include: improved multimodal freight within the region, including through effective regional implementation of the IMO



- FAL Convention (now mandatory); harmonised digital transaction facilities to handle customs, freight handling, insurance and other requirements; and identification of key actions required to improve intra-regional shipping and maritime connectivity
- (iii) regular reviews of the global and regional strategic issues facing the region's ports, transport corridors and shipping and the associated maritime security issues.
- c) **Leadership.** Port Management Association of Eastern and Southern Africa (PMASEA), through the extension of its activities and in close collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission, UNECA and the IMO as may be instructed by the NC-COP .
- d) **Resources.** The activities will be resourced from a range of partnerships and institutional arrangements with potential support from IMO and UNIDO. Greater transparency on the arrangements with major shipping lines and leading corporations managing ports in the region can underpin stable relationships. Advisory services on capital investment, on negotiation of port management concessions, and on vessel compliance through the IO-MOU may be supported by the IFC and World Bank.

## **5.5 MANAGING OFFSHORE EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES**

### **5.5.1 Offshore oil and gas**

95. Although no Technical Dialogue has been held on offshore extractive industries, guidance for the ROGS is provided by the African Mining Vision (2009), the Natural Resources Charter (2008), the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, SDG 12, Nairobi Convention Decision CP7/8 and many other sources. WIO countries with oil and gas resources face competing choices between securing the benefits from extraction of these products and contributing to resulting increase in global GHG emissions. 'Sustainable mining' may be a contradiction in terms, but assuming that extraction proceeds, a regional approach can help avoid some negative impacts, including by implementing best available environmental, economic and social practices. These practices include: (i) the use of strategic environmental assessments (SEAs) and EIAs; (ii) transformation of the revenues generated by the sales of mineral capital into sustainable growth of communities, businesses and effective governance for peace and prosperity; (iii) measures to avoid the 'resource curse' and 'Dutch disease' (both attributable to weak governance); and (iv) transparent management of revenues, including through sovereign wealth funds, where applicable.

96. ROGS actions will be based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority:** Apply the Africa Mining Vision "*Transparent, equitable and optimal exploitation of mineral resources to underpin broad-based sustainable growth and socio-economic development*" to offshore extractive industries and related shore-based infrastructure in the WIO.
- b) **Actions:**
- (i) Build national and regional capacity for Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) and EIAs, including regional expertise to interpret and assess the studies prepared by the investors; compile and review the available SEAs and EIAs; and support development of environmental, social and economic baselines for the concerned communities, their living natural resources and ecosystem health
  - (ii) Support the establishment of verifiable environmental baselines and indicators prior to oil/gas extraction and support identification of areas of special ecological value
  - (iii) In association with key stakeholders, consider the creation of a facility to provide independent environmental, social and economic assessment of major investments that are likely to impact the coastal and marine environment, including information systems to track and value resource extraction and its impacts and distributional effects
  - (iv) Identify transboundary offshore oil and gas basins or shared oil/gas fields; identify the principles and best practices for equitable allocation and distribution of benefits from such basins; and foster dialogues on resource allocation and extraction in transboundary offshore oil and gas basins

- (v) Support independent monitoring, assessment, and transparent reporting of the environmental, social and economic impacts of extraction and independent assessments of potential economies of scale for shared large-scale shore-based investments, such as LNG terminals, port facilities, or marine pipelines.
- c) **Leadership.** The NC Secretariat will convene key stakeholders to establish a process to support implementation of consensus actions.
- d) **Resources.** The NC Secretariat, in close cooperation with selected development partners will assess the options for user-pays voluntary contributions to address the above activities, including through contributions to a dedicated window of existing trust funds, while recognising that offshore licenses are national concessions.

### **5.5.2 Deep seabed minerals**

97. Three regional policy documents make reference to deep seabed minerals (DSM): the AU AIMS, the AU Blue Economy Strategy and the UNECA Blue Economy Handbook. These minerals are largely located in the ABNJ and, under UNCLOS, such deposits are the common heritage of mankind. Authorisation by the ISA is required both for exploration and exploitation in the ABNJ and the proceeds are to be channelled through 'The Enterprise' which will be owned by all nations. In the Indian Ocean, China, Germany, India and Korea have all expressed interest in deep seabed mineral resources which are mainly located near the mid-ocean ridges, or on the abyssal plain. Several exploration areas and one reserved area have been designated in the Indian Ocean and an initial draft text of the exploitation regulations is under discussion by the ISA (early 2024). Numerous environmental, legal, institutional, economic and financial issues raised the draft text are likely to be subject to further protracted negotiations.

98. Although extraction of DSM in the Indian Ocean region is not expected in the near future, it is of benefit to WIO coastal states to keep informed of developments and build the capacity for effective engagement. The ISA has an obligation to build such capacity for developing states, including ensuring the expansion of opportunities for participation in activities in the Area. An ISA survey of these requirements prioritised regional strategic frameworks for oceans research and for the blue economy. Work on a regional environmental management plan for the mid-ocean ridges and central Indian Ocean basin was already initiated in 2023.

99. The ROGS will support regional actions based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority:** To build regional human and institutional capacity to ensure the WIO region can benefit from DSM and protect WIO ocean ecosystems.
- b) **Actions.** (i) Make full use of the capacity building and advisory support provided by the ISA and other organisations, including to review legal and institutional requirements at national level. (ii) Take measures to ensure policy coherence at AU, REC and national levels, including formulation of a common position in international fora (such as the ISA and IORA). (iii) Consider means of engagement in any exploration activities in the Indian Ocean, including addressing the issues of liability for environmental damage, transfer of technology and shore-side value added.
- c) **Leadership.** Indian Ocean Commission in close collaboration with the Nairobi Convention Secretariat, the ISA and the AU.
- d) **Resources.** The NC Secretariat will request the ISA for the necessary support to initiate the preparation of a regional environmental management plan for priority areas of the WIO.

## 6 ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES CLUSTER

100. The following priorities, which are closely linked to many of the NC Protocols, are detailed under this cluster:

- a) water pollution, including the prevention, reduction and control of nutrient and chemical pollution
- b) conservation and rehabilitation of critical habitats, including coral reef ecosystems
- c) conservation of biodiversity
- d) development of marine spatial planning and sustainable marine protected areas
- e) implementing the BBNJ treaty
- f) adaptation to and mitigation of climate change

101. Marine plastic pollution has been addressed under the blue economy cluster. GHG emissions are addressed under the climate change priority. Other sources of pollution including from agriculture, industry, and ballast water are not specifically addressed in this iteration of the ROGS, but are expected to be addressed in due course under the relevant Nairobi Convention protocols.

### 6.1 CLEAN AND HEALTHY MARINE AND COASTAL WATERS

102. Coastal waters around many WIO cities, river outflows, areas of intensive agriculture and industrial complexes are subject to significant chemical or nutrient pollution from land-based sources. The SDG 14.1 target ‘prevention, reduction and control of chemical pollution’, states that: “By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution”. The Nairobi Convention has a protocol on land-based-sources of pollution (the LBS Protocol) and a related strategic framework for its implementation. The framework draws on accepted international principles, including pollution prevention, waste minimisation, the polluter pays principle, and the participatory, precautionary, and adaptive assessment approaches. COP Decision CP9/3.3. encourages “Parties to implement action programmes on [untreated] municipal wastewater and [...] public awareness [...] of its impacts”. Regional guidelines and targets for the environmental quality of coastal and marine waters and sediments have already been prepared.

103. The ROGS will take action to prevent, reduce and control marine, estuarine, coastal and ocean water pollution based on the following understanding and potential strengthening of the LBS Protocol.

- a) **Priority:** Water quality (WQ) in the WIO region meets accepted international standards by year 2035.
- b) **Actions:**
  - (i) Adopt the Strategic Framework for Coastal & Marine Water Quality Management in the WIO Region and the Guidelines for Setting Water and Sediment Quality Targets for Coastal and Marine areas.
  - (ii) Elevate the WIOSAP Regional Task Force for Water, Sediment and Biota Quality to the level of a NC Regional Task Force on Water Quality (WQTF)
  - (iii) Mandate the WQTF to coordinate regional WQ activities; facilitate national actions; collect and compile standardised regional information on WQ; systematically identify and characterise regional pollution hotspots and constraints to achieving WQ targets
  - (iv) Contribute to the formulation of regional projects, initiatives and financing to reduce water pollution, including for urban waste water treatment and from agriculture
  - (v) Consider the progressive introduction of obligatory national WQ reporting under the NC LBS Protocol with respect to major pollution hotspots and the means to support national implementation of such an obligation



- (vi) Consider means of reporting on transboundary pollution, including from landlocked countries.
- c) **Leadership.** NC Secretariat upon direction of the COP and with the support of the existing WQ Task Force and partners.
- d) **Resources.** (i) Build on successes of the WIOSAP project to attract additional resources to ensure continuation of regional coordination. (ii) National, municipal authorities in partnership with international financial institutions for investments in infrastructure, such as for waste water treatment and for water quality laboratories. (iii) Assessment of the potential roles and responsibilities of manufacturers and importers of agricultural chemicals in reducing water pollution from agriculture with due recognition to the need to make essential chemicals affordable to farmers.

## **6.2 CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY AND CRITICAL ECOSYSTEMS**

104. **Global and regional commitments.** All WIO countries have commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity, such as those specified under the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The GBF has four global goals and 23 targets and calls for: (i) effective conservation and management of at least 30% of the world's coastal areas and oceans; (ii) protection of endangered species and critical ecosystems; and (iii) reduction of pollution and other stressors. The Draft African Union Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan is consistent with these frameworks and commitments.

105. The ROGS actions to implement the GBF fall into three broad categories:

- a) conservation of endangered species and habitats
- b) conservation and sustainable use of critical ecosystems
- c) effective use of area-based management approaches (considered as a separate priority).

### **6.2.1 Endangered species and habitats**

106. The endangered and threatened species are those listed in the IUCN Appendices, and such other species or species groups as formally designated by the parties to the Nairobi Convention. These include species listed in the annexes to the Protocol Concerning Protected Areas and Wild Fauna and Flora (Biological Diversity) in the Eastern Africa (Western Indian Ocean) Region. Of a recorded 4,000 WIO marine species, IUCN reports that 473 are endangered to varying degrees. The target habitats are those areas occupied by the species identified in the protocol and which need to be protected for their survival and wellbeing. A revision of this protocol has recently been undertaken.

107. The ROGS will support actions to conserve endangered species and habitats based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority:** The priority is to effectively implement the NC Fauna and Flora Protocol and support implementation of national commitments to marine biodiversity conservation and management.
- b) **Actions:**
  - (i) review, consolidate and compile the range of existing and planned actions in order to assess best practices, identify gaps and the actions which can most effectively be undertaken at the regional level, including facilitating support for national initiatives
  - (ii) compile regular regional biodiversity status reviews, including assessments of progress towards regional and global goals and targets, and compliance with CBD and CITES requirements
  - (iii) in close coordination with key stakeholders, consider the establishment of a regional biodiversity task force, consortium, or equivalent, to support regional and national actions, including promotion of transboundary measures on biodiversity and habitat conservation.
- c) **Leadership and resources.** Selected conservation NGOs under a formal partnership with the NC and the competent national agencies and drawing on the work of existing NC working groups, task forces or networks.

- d) **Resources.** The resource base includes those resources available to the national authorities charged with protecting biodiversity, the contributions from NGOs implementing a biodiversity mandate and from a wide range of international agencies established to protect or conserve natural resources.

### **6.2.2 Conservation and rehabilitation of critical ecosystems**

108. The conservation and rehabilitation of critical ecosystems is addressed as several separate items:

- a) coral reef ecosystems, because of the high loss of coral cover and high level of threats and their ecosystem linkages to other critical habitats such as seagrass beds and mangroves, including through the application guidelines which have already been prepared by the NC
- b) biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), because of emerging national commitments under the treaty, and
- c) area-based management approaches, which are an essential tool for conservation of biodiversity and critical ecosystems and for sustainable use of resources in the blue economy.

### **6.2.3 Conservation and rehabilitation of coral reefs**

109. As previously indicated, the asset value of WIO coral reefs is estimated at \$18 billion (2021) with a flow of benefits of over \$8 billion per year. Models project a decline of 20-80% in WIO shallow-water coral cover due to ocean warming, acidification and other stressors, or losses of \$4.8 billion per year assuming a 60% loss of coral reefs. The scale of the likely economic losses to fisheries, to tourism, and through coastal erosion may not yet be effectively communicated to decision-makers.

110. Coral bleaching is the major cause of loss of coral cover. Even if global emissions are reduced, ocean temperatures and ocean acidification will continue to increase for decades. This means that attention must be directed to reducing local stressors: mainly from fishing, pollution and tourism. While significant areas of coral reefs are located in MPAs, only 2% of WIO coral reefs are located in 'fully protected' MPAs.

111. Priority actions fall under two distinct categories:

- a) mitigation of climate change, a long-term action in line with commitments under UNFCCC. These actions, including actions related to blue carbon sinks, are addressed under the 'climate change' priority (see section 6.4); and
- b) measures to conserve, protect and rehabilitate coral reefs, by reducing or eliminating the other stressors (pollution, destructive fishing, irresponsible tourism). These actions are expected to be receive substantial support from climate funds targeting adaptation.

112. The ROGS will support actions based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority:** To conserve, protect and rehabilitate coral reefs by reducing the principal local stressors. Although the main focus is on the coral reefs, the actions apply to the related and interdependent habitats, such as mangroves, seagrass beds and coastal wetlands.
- b) **Actions:** The priority regional (or common national) actions include:
  - (i) creation of additional or extended no-take, or fully-protected MPAs, including consideration of designating all significant coral reef areas as fully protected by default
  - (ii) reduction of direct threats by promotion of responsible fisheries and responsible tourism with due consideration for equity and potential loss of some coastal livelihoods
  - (iii) reduction of 'remote' stressors, including nutrient runoff, sedimentation, and chemical pollution by identifying and managing hotspots, recognising that these actions will require significant capital investment, behavioural change and community engagement
  - (iv) regular monitoring the state of coral reefs and coastal water quality
  - (v) consideration of the role of artificial reefs, coral gardens and similar reef rehabilitation initiatives
  - (vi) increased investment in communication and public awareness to support the above actions.

- c) **Leadership.** NC Secretariat upon direction of the COP. A Coral Reef Task Force already exists with national chapters. This Task Force can be strengthened, including by addition of capacity to generate the required resources and financing.
- d) **Resources.** Use of climate adaptation finance and the structured engagement with a wide range of organisations already committed to support the conservation of coral reefs and links to the UN Decade of Restoration (2020 to 2030).

#### **6.2.4 Implementation of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction treaty**

113. The Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) treaty is a legally binding instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Only three WIO countries have signed the agreement as of December 2023. This may be attributable to low levels of awareness of the potential benefits of the treaty and uncertainty regarding national legal obligations or requirements.

114. The ROGS will take action to support ratification and implementation of the BBNJ treaty based on the outcomes of several stakeholder consultations and capacity building initiatives:

- a) **Priority.** The priority involves two steps: (i) WIO countries to sign and ratify the treaty based on clear understanding of the national, regional and global benefits accruing from the treaty and of the national obligations and requirements resulting from ratification of the treaty; (ii) develop a draft plan for regional cooperation on implementation.
- b) **Actions.** The following priority actions will be supported:
  - (i) regional and national workshops to build understanding of the treaty and its requirements at national level
  - (ii) advisory support for drafting of any national legislation which may be required
  - (iii) preparation of a draft plan for regional cooperation on implementation of the treaty, including on: cataloguing biodiversity and marine genetic resources; access to relevant technologies; effective engagement in research cruises and activities; and establishment of regional consensus on the management of any benefits which may accrue.
- c) **Leadership.** The NC Secretariat will engage with the UNDOALOS and other competent entities to provide support and organise additional national or regional workshops to address the above priorities.
- d) **Resources.** UNDOALOS, FAO, ocean philanthropies and NGOs.

### **6.3 AREA-BASED MANAGEMENT**

#### **6.3.1 Marine Spatial Planning**

115. Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and other area-based management approaches are important tools or frameworks which facilitates management of competing uses of ocean space and guides investment, conservation initiatives, and sustainable use of oceans and coasts. While the approach is fundamentally spatial, the MSP exercise requires stakeholders to balance competing interests, to consider how benefits are allocated, and to address jurisdictional and regulatory issues arising from overlapping jurisdiction by local or national authorities. In some WIO countries, the overlapping mandates of ministries has required inter-ministerial oceans committees to be placed under the office of the president, or vice-president, in order to balance the economic, social and environmental issues arising from MSP and ocean governance in general. NC-COP decisions CP.10/8 and CP.9/10 make specific reference to the development of MSP in the region.

116. Consistent with NC-COP decisions, the ROGS will support national and regional actions to make effective use of MSP, particularly when coupled with strategic environmental analysis, guided by national ocean policies and plans, and taking account of the risks from climate change. Support will be based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority.** MSP effectively used at national and regional levels as a framework for cooperation between sectors, countries, regional entities, and ‘blue businesses’ to achieve balanced economic, social and environmental outcomes.
- b) **Actions.** The following actions will be promoted and supported subject to the availability of resources and further technical discussions on each action:
  - (i) all WIO countries to progressively develop marine spatial plans in a participatory and transparent manner, based on global best practices and guidelines and regional experiences, and in line with the Strategic Framework for MSP in the WIO which has already been developed under the auspices of the NC.
  - (ii) support for regional cooperation to establish transboundary marine spatial plans, as may be decided. These may include initiatives between Kenya/Tanzania; Mozambique/South Africa; in the Northern Mozambique Channel area (Mozambique/ Tanzania/ Comoros/ Madagascar); and in the JMA (Mauritius/ Seychelles).
  - (iii) consideration of the Northern Mozambique Channel as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area for shipping by the International Maritime Organisation through the preparation of a draft submission to the IMO which will be subject to further consideration by the NC Bureau (see NC-COP decision CP.9/13)
  - (iv) consideration of designation of ‘places of refuge’ in the case of spillage by shipping through a dedicated ad-hoc working group report to the NC Bureau.
- c) **Leadership.** The NC Secretariat, including through partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, through review of the roles of existing task forces or working groups, and inclusion of relevant actions in the NC work programme
- d) **Resources.** To be determined. MSP is a structural and cross-cutting challenge requiring high-level national engagement and an appropriate time frame. The engagement of international financial institutions is envisaged, including the GEF and the World Bank. Technical advice may also be available through NGOs, such as TNC.

### **6.3.2 Marine Protected Areas**

117. All WIO countries have an active programme of marine protected area (MPA) development and management. There are at least 143 MPAs (or equivalents) in the WIO region, covering about 7% of the EEZs. Most are coastal, but several large large-scale oceanic MPAs, which include deep-sea habitats, account for over 6% of the total MPA area. These large-scale MPAs are mainly in the EEZs of France, Seychelles and South Africa and include their Southern Ocean MPAs. As noted in a previous section, several initiatives with the aim to establish transboundary MPAs exist and a few relatively small ‘private’ MPAs exist. There is a wide variety of MPAs. Some were created to protect fisheries resources or biodiversity hotspots, others to support marine tourism, or to protect coastal livelihoods. The MPAs range from marine parks backed by national legislation, to locally-managed marine areas (LMMAs or equivalents), established through community initiatives and applying local by-laws for fisheries, aquaculture, or recreational use.

118. Most WIO national oceans plans, or the national commitments on sustainable oceans, include specific MPA targets (in terms of numbers or area). However, the capacity or political will to effectively meet these commitments is often relatively weak. Key challenges faced by MPAs throughout the region include: sustainable financing, effective design of the legal and institutional framework, insufficient management capacity, equitable sharing of costs and benefits between stakeholders, development of a science-based management regime, and compliance with MPA rules. Climate change is seen as a major underlying risk. The relative poverty in many communities adjacent to an MPA often causes unsustainable extractive use of resources. The financial resources required for effective management and maintenance of the MPAs cannot usually be generated by user fees, so that many MPAs struggle to maintain the value of the natural capital and infrastructure.

119. MPAs can be regarded as an important ‘line of defence’ against climate change. Many MPAs protect important coastal carbon sinks. Healthy ecosystems contribute to more energy efficient fisheries and help reduce coastal erosion and the impact of extreme weather events. MPAs are a means of attracting carbon credits, payments for ecosystem services and climate finance. The ROGS will support

the national and regional requirements for a network of effective MPAs based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority.** Maintain and extend the regional network of MPAs and its effectiveness to meet established social, economic and environmental goals.
- b) **Actions.** The following actions will be promoted and supported subject to the availability of resources and further technical discussions on each:
  - (i) quantify the regional requirements to meet the national and regional goals for establishment and management of robust and effective MPA networks, including an assessment of the extent and effectiveness of LMMAs and Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs)
  - (ii) regularly review the existing national and regional mechanisms for achieving these goals, including their financing and arrangements for development, management, and sustainability of MPAs. This has largely been captured in the MPA Outlook produced in 2020, but the recommendations from the Outlook need to be implemented, and the information in the Outlook updated on a regular basis
  - (iii) consider the development of a dedicated MPA financing window at regional scale to facilitate transition of the region's MPAs to long-term sustainability
  - (iv) support the establishment of transboundary MPAs as may be requested by the parties
  - (v) consider the integration of key ongoing MPA initiatives into the NC work programme, including the North Mozambique Channel and Great Blue Wall initiatives
  - (vi) examine the practical requirements for establishment and management of possible high seas MPAs in close collaboration with the RFMOs, the ISA, IMO and other competent international organisations, in order to protect deep sea habitats, migratory routes, nursery grounds and other natural assets
  - (vii) monitor the effectiveness of MPAs in relation to their goals to identify and share lessons learned.
- c) **Leadership.** The NC Secretariat in close association with WIOMPAN and through: (i) partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, including fisheries associations and conservation NGOs and international networks or platforms; (ii) review of the roles of existing regional task forces, working groups and MPA financing arrangements; and (iii) inclusion of relevant actions in the NC work programme.
- d) **Resources.** Climate and biodiversity funds. Engagement of international financial institutions, including the GEF (IW and biodiversity), the World Bank, and ocean philanthropies, including through assessment of innovative financing models to capture payments for the 'global ecosystem services' generated by MPAs.

## **6.4 CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION**

120. **Commitments.** WIO countries have international commitments under the various UNFCCC agreements, notably to take measures to reduce or mitigate GHG emissions in accordance with their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and to report progress. The 'global north' has commitments to support mitigation and adaptation efforts, and also to help address the projected damage caused to WIO countries as a result of climate change.

### **6.4.1 Climate change impacts and threats**

121. Analyses emphasise the accelerating threats and the increasing and compounding effects of climate change. Many of the projected impacts are already occurring, blurring distinction between climate change adaptation and disaster risk management. WIO's coastal ecosystems, the beaches, coral reefs, marine biodiversity, fisheries and coastal tourism sectors are at risk. Ports and some coastal cities are threatened by sea-level rise, flooding and tidal surges. Several WIO counties have low scores on the social readiness component of the index of vulnerability to climate change and vulnerable coastal communities are disproportionately affected. Some communities may already be unable to adapt, if households have lost their productive assets or livelihoods through extreme events. The changes are likely to erode the fabric of communities, increase internal migration, and stress the more robust parts



of the economy. The projections imply that the WIO may need to prepare for global temperature rise of 2.5°C, or more, and that more rapid adaptation is required to offset the increasingly negative impacts.

#### **6.4.2 Policies and plans**

122. The African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032) sets out the policies and plans at continental level. The African Strategy builds on numerous global declarations, strategies and international agreements, notably those achieved through the UNFCCC. Several resolutions make specific reference to oceans and climate change and acknowledge the vulnerability of coastal and island communities to the impacts and damage likely to be caused. The Climate Change Strategy for the Nairobi Convention (2016) focuses largely on raising awareness of the projected impacts of climate change and the need to mainstream adaptation into coastal and ocean policies, plans and budget allocations. It does not address mitigation.

123. The various global and regional statements emphasise several key messages:

- a) the urgent need to reduce GHG emissions, move toward net zero. and support efforts to generate and provide access to renewable energy
- b) the special circumstances facing island nations, low-lying and vulnerable coastal communities and communities exposed to risks of cyclones
- c) the need to urgently increase access to climate finance and its effective and timely use of for both mitigation and adaptation.

124. The African Leaders Nairobi Declaration and Climate Change and Call to Action requires the African Union Commission to develop an implementation framework and roadmap for the Declaration and to make climate change an AU theme for 2025 - 2026. Most of the RECs and WIO countries have prepared climate action plans or strategies. Actions in relation to oceans may often be generic and weak on detail and resourcing. Implementation of the agreed actions is the challenge at all levels.

125. The ROGS considers climate change through a sustainable oceans lens. The actions required to secure sustainable oceans and address climate change are essentially the same. They differ only with respect to emphasis, approach, or financing. The focus of the ROGS is on the following key areas, including their social, economic and environmental dimensions:

- a) **policy.** effective presentation of consensus regional positions on oceans and climate change in national and regional policy statements to global fora, including the UNFCCC COP
- b) **mitigation.** reduction of GHG emissions from shipping (including ports), from fisheries and from marine tourism, supporting investment in renewable energy from marine sources and maintenance and rehabilitation of blue carbon sinks
- c) **adaptation** as determined under national climate action plans
- d) **finance** - facilitating access to climate finance for adaptation and mitigation.

126. **Priority.** To support: (i) cooperation on oceans and climate change activities, policies and plans of WIO countries; (ii) support national implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation; (iii) facilitate access to climate finance.

127. **Actions.** The ROGS will undertake the following actions:

- a) **Mitigation.** Based on the activities highlighted in the national and REC strategic plans, the priority mitigation actions will include:
  - (i) reduction of GHG emissions from shipping, including by providing renewable power sources at ports and enforcing IMO requirements on ships emissions and fuel quality standards
  - (ii) reduction in the carbon footprint of waste management (e.g. waste burning on coastal landfills), of tourism, of fisheries and mariculture, including by reducing fishing effort to maximum economic yield targets (rather than MSY), where feasible, and by improving the energy efficiency of post-harvest processing and distribution
  - (iii) supporting innovation and investment in renewable energy from marine sources , such as from wind, wave, tidal and ocean thermal sources

- (iv) maintenance and rehabilitation of blue carbon sinks and monitoring the growing scientific understanding of the role of healthy coastal and offshore ecosystems in open ocean carbon sequestration
  - (v) establishment of baselines and metrics for assessment of blue carbon with a view to accessing carbon credits
  - (vi) timely reporting of the contributions of coastal and ocean emissions and sinks to nationally determined contributions (NDCs), including reporting of dead zones or other potential sources of emissions.
- b) **Adaptation.** Support the implementation of national adaptation priorities, in particular:
- (i) ‘no regrets activities’, which contribute to both mitigation and adaptation and also generate sustainable social, economic, and environmental benefits from oceans
  - (ii) activities which are common to several WIO countries and can provide targets for regional financing of national initiatives
  - (iii) regional assessments or projections of climate change threats and impacts and of the resources required for adaptation.
- c) **Climate finance.** Improved access to climate finance is fundamental to implementation (see section 8.2.1). The actions will facilitate access to climate finance to implement national climate change plans, specifically:
- (i) identify and estimate the climate finance requirements for major types of investments which are common to WIO countries, or groups of countries. These may include (for example): investments to reduce the vulnerability of urban areas to sea-level rise; improved forecasting of cyclones, or coral bleaching events; protection of blue carbon stocks; or grants to vulnerable or disadvantaged communities to diversify coastal livelihoods.
  - (ii) assess the feasibility of a multi-country blended finance mechanism to facilitate access to climate finance for common requirements, and assess the major gaps in human and institutional capacity
  - (iii) establish a dedicated task force to facilitate access to climate finance for sustainable oceans. This task force will link directly to the ‘blue finance platform’ described in section 8.2.1.
- d) **Leadership.** The activity will be initiated by the NC Secretariat through requesting the support of competent national, regional and international agencies. The NC will establish a dedicated task force to focus on climate finance and to manage dialogues with international partners. The dialogues will drive coherence and coordination among WIO countries and among international climate finance partners.
- e) **Resources.** Climate finance is expected to be the main resource.

## 7 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING CLUSTER

128. **Challenges.** The Cluster addresses three closely related challenges to regional cooperation:

- a) the effective **management of ocean science**, including its environmental, social and economic dimensions and the generation of consensus scientific and technical advice for regional policy formation
- b) the effective organisation of **human and institutional capacity building** including technology transfer
- c) the **communication** of consensus ocean science to inform decisions and actions at all levels (national, municipal, business, community and household) as a basis for moving to more sustainable public and corporate behaviours.

129. The ROGS focuses on the regional institutional arrangements for science, technology and capacity building rather than on the substance of the knowledge (e.g. oceanography, fisheries, environmental assessment or blue carbon). Regional activities initiated in relation to the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science provide direction and guidance. A background paper prepared for the Technical Dialogue (TD) on Knowledge Management and Capacity Building provides an overview of the opportunities for regional marine science (see ROGS Background Document). Recent overviews of technology transfer and capacity building are required. The report of the TD highlighted more specific challenges at both national and regional levels which could be progressively addressed through the ROGS:

- a) **Less advanced countries.** Special needs of less advanced countries in terms developing scientific knowledge, science to policy processes and accelerated support for human and institutional capacity development
- b) **Language and communications.** Improved transfer or translation of scientific knowledge across the region including for use by local or indigenous language groups and disadvantaged communities
- c) **Regional ‘science agenda’.** Progressive alignment of regional scientific programmes with the policy and scientific questions raised by the ROGS, including monitoring of policy implementation and regular ‘state and trends of the WIO’ reporting
- d) **Technology transfer.** Mapping of the regional centres of excellence and identification of opportunities for collaboration and sharing of scarce resources
- e) **Prioritisation.** Providing regional guidance on means to prioritise and address common scientific or technical challenges, including their funding and resourcing
- f) **Leadership.** Ensuring efficient and streamlined regional scientific collaboration and leadership

### 7.1 MANAGEMENT OF OCEAN SCIENCE

#### 7.1.1 Science for governance

130. There is broad consensus that science must inform regional and national policies. There is also consensus that regional advice must be representative, engage relevant expertise and be supportive of core harmonised and shared regional scientific information and data sets. The WIO’s institutional arrangements for generating regional ocean science have expanded and performed well in recent decades. These include the establishment of the Science to Policy Platform and use of networks, partnerships and professional associations, such as WIOMSA, FARI, WIO-C and others linked to a backbone of national marine science institutions and external partnerships. Some of these arrangements have been underpinned by project finance, some are designed to respond to immediate needs and may be backed by working groups which may have had a limited mandate, timescale or resourcing. The existing arrangements have proved flexible and relatively effective, but it is unclear if the existing



regional processes will meet the growing needs of actionable scientific advice for effective ocean governance over the next decades.

131. The ROGS will initiate actions to progressively develop an effective science to governance mechanism based on the following understanding.

132. **Priority.** To ensure effective regional oceans and coastal science to governance arrangements to meet the requirements of the ROGS, including arrangements on sustainable resourcing.

133. **Actions.** The ROGS will initiate a participatory process to examine the effectiveness of the existing arrangements, such as the Science to Policy Platform and the existing working groups or technical committees to manage the science to governance needs of the 'next generation'. The review process and proposals for enhanced and sustainable future arrangements will include:

- a) clarity established on the formal representation of states and competent entities in the arrangements for generation of consensus regional scientific and technical advice as may be defined and requested by the countries
- b) consideration of the modalities and criteria for selection or appointment of experts on working groups and advisory committees, including the appointment of chairs and rapporteurs, the representation of civil society, and the reflection of alternative policy interpretations, contrarian views or recommendations which are also based on the consensus science
- c) consideration of formal, efficient and timely means for regional review and endorsement of assessments, guidelines, reports, scientific work plans, regional ocean science policies and other key outcomes, including (where relevant) external, or independent review of these products or processes which could involve regional sensitivities, such as country compliance with NC decisions or protocols
- d) consideration of the linkages between the institutional arrangements for regional ocean science and those of African and global oceans science processes, including the reporting requirements of WIO countries under international agreements and the national and regional resourcing for the required monitoring and reporting
- e) reference to the scope of the science to policy 'universe' with particular regard to the social and economic sciences, the transfer of technology and development of scientific services for the blue economy and other perceived 'gaps'
- f) consideration of the formal channels of communication of outcomes to states and other concerned agencies and to the public, including transparency in the processes, access to underlying scientific information and data, and clarity on data ownership and data sharing
- g) reference to the means of prioritisation of activities under any regional science to governance work programme and the allocation of available resources by thematic area, by country, ecosystem, or by other relevant target or activity
- h) attention to the resourcing and financing arrangements for science at a regional level and support for: (i) the core secretarial and coordination functions; (ii) thematic work; (iii) review and monitoring; (iv) management of shared regional scientific information and databases; and (iv) human and institutional capacity building at both national and regional levels, with due consideration for the roles of national centres of excellence, youth, women and 'community science' networks and organisations.

134. **Leadership.** The participatory process will be led by the NC secretariat with the technical support of WIOMSA. The NC may engage other entities, such as WIO-C, FARI and the IOC and independent regional or external expertise as appropriate. The leadership will ensure a balance between technology and science and between the social, economic and environmental and make use of existing institutions and mechanisms wherever possible.

135. **Resourcing.** The NC Secretariat, in close association with WIOMSA will initiate a dialogue with the main regional and international partners supporting ocean science and technology transfer for the purposes of:

- a) engagement in the design and long-term support for the consensus regional arrangements for science to governance

- b) progressively consolidating, redirecting and enhancing available regional resources in relation to an agreed regional scientific programme as may be determined
- c) ensuring coherence and synergies between the programmes of the partners, including accommodating the special needs of less advanced countries and the need for long-term financial security for the region's existing institutional networks and assets.

136. **Information management strategy.** NC-COP Decision CP.10/5 required the preparation of a regional Information Management Strategy (IMS). The IMS will be presented as a separate item on the NC-COP 11 agenda. The IMS is consistent with the ROGS and will support the information requirements of the ROGS.

137. **Monitoring the State of the WIO.** Formal means of monitoring will be developed as part of the ROGS institutional arrangements (see section on ROGS institutional arrangements). The activity will aim to include:

- a) establishment of agreed ROGS social, economic and environmental baselines and indicators at national level and their progressive consolidation in regional ocean accounts
- b) establishment of the means of monitoring the impact of the ROGS, or its key components
- c) regular reporting on the status and trends of the WIO, by building upon existing reporting such as the 'state of the coasts', the fish stock assessments and the advances in national and regional ocean accounts

138. The arrangements will aim to establish a long-term mechanism for regular preparation of these critical assessments. The arrangements will aim to develop and link the existing information systems, such as the Clearing House Mechanism of the NC, existing GIS tools, the IMS and the emerging environmental accounts. Two basic frameworks are envisaged:

- a) national and regional ocean accounts to reflect the state of ocean capital and the flow of benefits, and
- b) spatial information management tools (such as Symphony) to harmonise and coordinate information and data at national, ecosystem and regional levels and link regional information to global information (for example on climate change). These frameworks may be supported by the progressive development and use of AI tools and emerging technologies to project regional and national trends in the ocean environment and economy.

## **7.2 TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFER**

139. Science can effectively inform ocean policy and technical advice. However, in order to generate the sustainable social and economic benefits, business and industry generally needs to adopt the new or 'green' technologies and innovations to remain competitive and to meet environmental or circular economy targets. Many WIO countries import the required technologies at considerable cost. Opportunities to develop or to own many key technologies at the regional level are limited and require public and private support. Technology transfer (TT) can benefit from regional synergies in the application of scientific and technological developments to new ocean products, processes, materials, or services in the WIO region. It can help build a regional common pool of intellectual property, skilled human resources, and the manufacturing or management capacity required by the region's blue businesses, and science, technology and innovation (STI) institutions. There are numerous legal, financial, technical and human resource challenges to 'domesticating' the key 'blue, green, sustainable and circular economy technologies' within the WIO region. The challenge for the ROGS is to identify the role of regional cooperation in addressing those challenges in the ocean space.

140. **Policy framework.** The AU Agenda 2063 recognizes science, technology and innovation (STI) as key enablers for achieving regional sustainability, competitiveness and economic transitions, and that sustained investment in STI is required. The Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024) sets out the framework for action. The pillars include development of: (i) STI institutional architecture; (ii) enhanced human capital; (iii) a more favourable enabling environment; and (iv) regional cooperation and sharing of technologies. Studies also emphasise the need for a

promoting a culture of ‘science to innovation and technology’. At the WIO level the RECs have developed STI instruments (such as the SADC STI Protocol) and the IORA, the IOC and others have fostered regional initiatives. In 2023, the islands states have committed to the development of a circular economy. At national level, in 2019, South Africa has revised its white paper on STI. However, only two WIO countries are ranked above 100 on the WIPO Global Innovation Ranking.

141. **Blue TT.** The STISA has already identified flagship TT areas which include renewable energy and pharmaceuticals. The ROGS sets out the case for a targeted regional dialogue on blue TT and an ocean TT flagship.

142. **Priority.** To develop a framework for technology transfer and innovation to meet the requirements of the ROGS.

143. **Actions.**

- a) undertake preparatory studies on key TT challenges. The studies will:
  - (i) identify the most important TT requirements for sustainable coasts and oceans by sector and by technology; suggest priority areas for TT; and where possible identify the recurrent costs of the major imported technologies of relevance to the ROGS
  - (ii) prepare a synthesis of the existing policies, including on support for innovation and TT; on intellectual property; and on TT in the circular blue economy. The synthesis will review the TT obligations in relation to the import of blue technologies and services, and the TT policies, practices and obligations of major foreign investors in the ocean economy (e.g., offshore oil and gas, port development and management)
  - (iii) catalogue existing institutions, networks and schemes which can support blue TT, including the identification of regional centres of excellence or competence and financing opportunities
  - (iv) identify potential targets for flagship actions where priorities for TT may be aligned with available regional institutional capacity
- b) convene a series of regional dialogues to set out a roadmap of critical actions for further high-level consideration
- c) establish an interim network of regional TT institutions and partnerships.

144. **Leadership and resourcing.** The NC in close coordination with the AU/African Scientific Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC), UNIDO, UNECA and other collaborating institutions, including business associations, the REC STI nodes, IORA and the Indian Ocean Commission.

### **7.3 DEVELOPING REGIONAL HUMAN AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY**

145. Significant requirements for human and institutional development have been identified across the region, across sectors, and at community and local levels, and in particular among disadvantaged or marginalised groups and isolated or vulnerable communities. The scope, coverage and quality of available human resource development opportunities in relation to the requirements of the ROGS is currently unclear. The role of the ROGS in addressing human capacity development needs and related institutional strengthening requires further identification. The ROGS will address the requirements based on the following understanding of the required steps.

146. **Priority.** To identify the human development requirements for implementation of the ROGS and the means of developing the required human and institutional capacity.

147. **Actions.** The ROGS will undertake the following actions:

- a) identify major gaps in human and institutional capacity, including in technology transfer, innovation, development of the blue economy, coastal community organisation and resilience, youth employment, gender issues, public awareness on oceans and related priority areas
- b) identify or outline in terms of scope and scale: (i) the existing institutional, financial, and structural capacity of the region to address the develop or build the required human capacity;

and (ii) the human resources needs of the region in relation to the blue economy, sustainable oceans and coastal communities

- c) outline the case for investment in human capacity and institutional development in relation to the ROGS implementation in terms of the scale and type of capacity building
- d) propose means of bridging key gaps, including possible redirection of existing or pipeline resources which may be available at national or regional level, improved coordination among existing institutions, including provision for staff exchanges, targeted research and innovation, support for existing networks of community, professional, women and youth associations and associated initiatives.

148. **Leadership.** The activity will be initiated by the NC Secretariat with support from WIOMSA through requesting the support of competent national, regional and international agencies, including leading UN agencies with a mandate to support the development of human resources.

149. **Resources.** In addition to the inclusion of targeted human development in sector or thematic activities, a segment of the NC work programme will be directed at securing resources to support capacity building and TT in relation to all ROGS priorities. Specifically, a series of technical dialogues will be organised with key actors to address the above action points, to initiate priority steps, and prepare a long-term programme of investments in human and institutional capital to meet the needs of the region's ocean governance and a sustainable ocean and coastal economy. The proposed actions are also closely linked to the role of business in the transfer of skills and technology.

#### **7.4 STAKEHOLDER AWARENESS, COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

150. **Priority.** This priority is understood to be the development of informed national and regional consensus on a common vision for sustainable oceans. It is an essential supporting activity for effective implementation of the ROGS. It has two main purposes:

- a) to generate public awareness and support for the policies and investments required to secure sustainable benefits from the WIO
- b) to ensure ROGS activities and their implementation meets the requirements of stakeholders and can adapt to meet the changing requirements of well-informed stakeholders.

151. **Actions.** The following actions will be developed:

- a) further development and alignment of the existing communications infrastructure, including that of the NC, WIOMSA and the regional oceans networks, databases and portals
- b) improved public transparency, including through establishment of an online publicly-accessible ROGS portal
- c) regular independent reviews of the ROGS that include stakeholder and civil society inputs
- d) the effective engagement of 'core ocean communities' through regular regional Stakeholder Forums that include: Coastal Communities, Women and Youth Associations, and the Business Community, with particular attention to SMEs, community enterprises and their representative organisations. Actionable outcomes of the Forums will be considered through the appropriate policy processes, including through the NC-COP agendas (see section 8.1)
- e) consideration of the preparation of a 'white paper' on the advantages and/ or disadvantages of national adhesion to the Aarhus Convention by WIO countries in order to strengthen the role of citizens in environmental decision-making

152. **Leadership and resourcing.** The activity will be initiated by the NC Secretariat through requesting the support of competent national, regional and international agencies.

## 8 IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

### 8.1 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

153. The scope of the ROGS and ocean governance extends beyond the essentially ‘environmental’ mandate of the NC, and also (arguably) that of the AMCEN. The NC has been charged with the preparation of the ROGS but this does not imply that the NC has responsibility for implementation. In order to effectively implement the ROGS, strengthened institutional arrangements are required that extend beyond the normative boundaries of the NC. Mechanisms are required to facilitate coordination and synergies across the diverse clusters, sectors and themes, including for financing the priorities. The ROGS will address institutional arrangements for the implementation of the ROGS based on the following understanding.

- a) **Priority.** To rapidly establish cost-effective interim institutional arrangements: (i) for initial implementation of the ROGS; and (ii) to test and evaluate practical alternative longer-term regional ocean governance institutional arrangements in the WIO.
- b) **Actions.** Building on and adapting the existing institutional arrangements, the following platforms will be established. These arrangements are set out in more detail below.
  - (i) **Ocean Policy Platform.** A high-level Ocean Policy Platform will be established. This platform will be supported by several other advisory platforms
  - (ii) **Blue Finance Platform.** The Blue Finance Platform will facilitate financing the implementation of the ROGS and report to the Ocean Policy Platform
  - (iii) **Technical Platform.** The Technical Platform will provide consolidated technical advice to the Ocean Policy Platform. The Technical Platform will be supported by
  - (iv) **Cluster Platforms.** Four Cluster Platforms will be established to provide advice to the Technical and Finance Platforms
  - (v) **Community Forums.** Community Forums will be conducted at regular intervals to ensure stakeholder participation and to develop consensus as may be required.
- c) **Leadership.** The NC will: (i) progressively establish interim or provisional arrangements as set out below, by adapting the existing institutional arrangements, including the existing working groups, task forces and networks; and (ii) backstop high-level stakeholder dialogues to progressively establish longer-term cooperative regional ocean governance arrangements.
- d) **Resources.**
  - (i) in close consultation with partners, the NC will redeploy existing resources and, in consultation with partners, adapt existing project activities to meet the institutional requirements for ROGS implementation
  - (ii) contributions to ROGS implementation, including support for the ROGS institutional arrangements will be mainstreamed into new projects or initiatives, including through use of a dedicated line item in the budgets of relevant regional projects
  - (iii) in close consultation with partners, a specific ROGS institutional support project will be prepared for submission to interested partners. As part of these arrangements, the AU and the RECs will be provided with specific technical support as required.

154. The platforms will be progressively established by drawing on, adapting, or strengthening the existing regional working groups, task forces, networks and other established institutional arrangements, such as MOUs between regional organisations. The composition, structure and function of the platforms outlined below will be subject to further extended discussions convened to implement the ROGS. Collectively, the platforms will be established to:

- a) support effective regional ocean cooperation and implementation of the ROGS



- b) establish technical consensus and shared policy positions and joint decisions
- c) develop a long-term vision on regional ocean governance institutional arrangements
- d) facilitate financing at national and regional levels
- e) monitor ROGS progress and impacts, and adjust the ROGS to an evolving WIO.

155. **Ocean Policy Platform**

- a) **Composition.** The Ocean Policy Platform will comprise high-level country representatives, representatives of the RECs, the IOC/COI and the AU.
- b) **Role.** Its role is advisory. Its role is to consider and endorse key ROGS policies and programmes by balancing social, economic and environmental priorities. It will review the progress of the ROGS and adjust the ROGS activities to meet any changes in national or regional priorities, or to address emerging constraints and challenges.
- c) **Consensus outcomes.** The ‘consensus outcomes’ of the Ocean Policy Platform will take the form of high-level regional recommendations which reflect both technical and political consensus. The ‘consensus outcomes’ will be formally transmitted to the WIO countries, to the RECs and the IOC/COI, to the AU, the Bureau of the Nairobi Convention and to other regional intergovernmental organisations in accordance with their mandates. The established intergovernmental bodies will consider and decide upon the consensus outcomes as may be required. It is expected the various decision making bodies will already have contributed to the consensus outcomes through the various platforms.
- d) **Hosting.** An Interim Ocean Policy Platform will be established and hosted by the NC. Subject to the recommendations of the Interim Platform and associated financing arrangements, the Ocean Policy Platform will be hosted by UNECA, or by the AU Secretariat, with a chair revolving among the WIO coastal members of the RECs.
- e) **Subsidiary bodies.** The Policy Platform is advised by the Blue Finance and Technical platforms.

156. **Blue Finance Platform.** The Blue Finance Platform is described in detail in the section on ‘financing the ROGS’ (section 8.2.1). The role of the platform is to advise the Ocean Policy Platform and to pro-actively facilitate access to finance for ROGS implementation. This Platform will include both WIO and external participants and bilateral and multilateral partners.

157. **Technical Platform**

- a) **Composition.** The Technical Platform will aim to have a balanced composition reflecting the social, economic and environmental scope of the ROGS:
  - (i) regional oceans experts (and their alternates) representing and nominated by WIO countries, including the chair from the country which will be the current chair of the NC Bureau
  - (ii) expert representatives appointed by the RECs and the IOC/COI
  - (iii) oceans experts nominated by partners and as approved by the country representatives
  - (iv) chairs of the four Cluster Platforms
- b) **Role.** The Technical Platform will:
  - (i) consolidate and align the work of the four Cluster Platforms and will provide consensus technical advice to both the Policy Platform and to the Blue Finance Platform as required
  - (ii) provide a formal ‘science to governance’ interface and potentially be the institutional base for a formally mandated ‘scientific council’ as may be decided
  - (iii) include provisions for adequate private sector and civil society voice, both directly and through the Cluster Platforms.
- c) **Hosting.** The Technical Platform will be co-hosted by: (i) the NC for environment and natural resource matters; and (ii) the UNECA for social and blue economy matters.
- d) **Subsidiary bodies.** The subsidiary bodies of the Technical Platform are the four Cluster Platforms, the Community Engagement Forums and such *ad hoc* working groups as may be established with the approval of the Technical Platform.

158. **Cluster Platforms.** The four Cluster Platforms will consolidate and integrate the existing Nairobi Convention Working Groups, Task Forces, network and other advisory bodies as determined.



a) **Four Cluster Platforms**

- (i) Maritime Security Platform hosted under the WIO Maritime Security Architecture (MSA), and through the Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security and Safety in the WIO with close engagement of the Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Activities (CG) or other appropriate institution as may be determined by the WIO countries
- (ii) Blue Economy Platform hosted by the IOC/COI possibly with sector-level breakout groups
- (iii) Environment and Natural Resources hosted by the NC Secretariat
- (iv) Knowledge Management and Capacity Building hosted by WIOMSA

b) **Composition.** Each Cluster Platform will aim to have a balanced composition reflecting the social, economic and environmental scope of each Cluster. Interim Cluster Platforms will be established by the respective host organisations, based on terms of reference agreed by the Technical Platform and prepared by the host agencies in consultation with cluster stakeholders, as identified by the host organisation.

c) **Role.** Each Cluster Platform will:

- (i) manage cluster stakeholder consultations to develop and provide consensus advice to the Technical and Blue Finance Platforms
- (ii) establish and manage regional working groups and task forces as may be established
- (iii) review reports and assessments of the state of the WIO and the implementation of the ROGS
- (iv) liaise and coordinate with other cluster platforms.

d) **Subsidiary bodies.** The subsidiary bodies are the Community Engagement Forums and such working groups or task forces as may be required.

159. **Community Engagement Forums.** The Forums are a flexible mechanism to enhance ‘grass-roots’ engagement in the implementation of the ROGS. Subject to resource availability and higher-level decisions, the Ocean Policy Platform may establish such Community Engagement Forums as may be required.

a) **Composition**

- (i) the following Community Engagement Forums are envisaged: Coastal Communities; the Blue Business Community with particular attention to SMEs; and for Youth and Women
- (ii) each forum will be held at least once every four years and have up to 100 representatives of community associations with provisions to ensure inclusivity and voice for disadvantaged groups (e.g., waste pickers, remote islands, fisher crews).

b) **Role.** The role of each forum is to:

- (i) review and comment on the ROGS implementation and its effectiveness at community level
- (ii) suggest any changes or improvements required
- (iii) ensure the voice of the forums is effectively heard at the level of the Ocean Policy Platform.

c) **Hosting.** The Cluster Platforms will guide and report on the Forums which will be structured and managed by the relevant communities through their associations.

## 8.2 FINANCING THE ROGS

160. Access to affordable public and private finance is essential for financing the priorities set out in the ROGS. The scale of the finance required to implement the priorities and to meet SDG14 and related targets is considered to be an order of magnitude higher than the investment currently being financed, or budgeted in the national and regional investment pipelines. Despite considerable progress, the capacity of the current national and regional financing mechanisms is considered insufficient to meet the financing challenge envisaged. A detailed ROGS background paper sets out how the regional approach can facilitate national access to the required blue finance and is summarised below.

161. **Financing gap.** Affordable blue finance is a constraint to both public and private sectors. Finance is required not only for capital investment, but also to support the recurrent costs of conserving and maintaining global public goods, such as coral reef biodiversity or blue carbon sinks. There is a

disconnect between the high regional demand for blue finance for the ROGS priorities, and the supply of affordable finance. Globally, there is a surplus of investment capital seeking verifiable, sustainable green/blue investments. There are large numbers of unfunded blue projects, investment proposals and ocean initiatives seeking affordable finance. Given the estimated financing required by the global south for climate change related investments alone (about \$2 trillion/ year), the business-as-usual, project-by-project approach cannot deliver the required investments.

162. **Business as usual.** Under the current ‘business as usual’ approach projects are individually financed and assessed. Each project may require separate baselines, individual assessment of risks and economic viability and inclusion of differing social and environmental safeguards. Project-specific indicators and monitoring may be needed and ‘separate’ budgets and project management units are often a requirement. The result is high transaction costs, overburdened human resources, un-necessary duplication of many similar activities simply to meet project-specific disbursement requirements. There is a growing gap between the increasing supply of finance and the capacity to effectively use the available finance.

163. **Blue Finance Architecture.** The ROGS will help bridge the financing gap through a Blue Finance Architecture, as set out in detail in the background brief. The Architecture will structure a financing dialogue with development partners; compile national blue investments to provide a regional ‘portfolio’, which demonstrates the regional scale and opportunities for blue investment. It will align targets and investment criteria at a regional level to generate efficiency, use common metrics and indicators for investments, and maximise the use of existing institutions for greater efficiency. The Blue Finance Architecture will have the following core elements:

- a) the **regional Blue Finance Platform** will be the convener of a permanent dialogue with financial partners on coordination of access to WIO blue finance
- b) the **Regional Blue Portfolio** will compile a pipeline of investments which reflects the aggregate financing requirements of the region’s projects. It will provide the scale and vision required to attract major funding, to leverage and blend different sources of finance, to create synergies, reduce transaction costs, and to spread risk for the financial partners. It is not a ‘fund’.
- c) the **blue taxonomy** will link the blue investment portfolio to the SDG targets and indicators, to net zero targets and other high-level regional targets. It will reduce transaction costs by applying a common set of investment criteria, indicators and safeguards across investment categories. The blue taxonomy will progressively develop and apply the Sustainable Blue Finance Principles and lessons from green taxonomy experiences in other regions
- d) the **regional ocean accounts** will be used to monitor and evaluate performance of the regional blue portfolio, to provide common metrics to track investment performance and to avoid unnecessary duplication of project-by project monitoring and evaluation requirements.

### **8.2.1 Blue Finance Platform**

164. The Blue Finance Platform is envisaged as a regional coordinating dialogue and facility on blue finance. It will be an ‘open-ended’ financing partnership with the following characteristics:

- a) **Composition**
  - (i) the WIO countries (including the private sector), in particular the national agencies responsible for development of and investment in the blue economy
  - (ii) the RECs, with particular attention to common financing modalities and standards
  - (iii) sources of national finance for sustainable oceans and the blue economy, including the national blue funds, national commercial and development banks and sources of private equity
  - (iv) sources of external finance for sustainable oceans and the blue economy, including the existing bilateral development partners and the international finance institutions. It will include the climate funds and institutions managing grant, loan and debt finance, impact funds, and philanthropic funds targeting sustainable oceans.

- b) **Role.** The role of the Blue Finance Platform is to:
- (i) manage dialogues to bridge the financing gap by: aligning financial partners around common criteria; by highlighting opportunities for blended finance; by fostering joint investments by financial partners; and by matching supply of affordable finance with blue investment opportunities
  - (ii) support improvements in an improved national blue investment climate and in risk reduction to meet the essential common requirements of the financial partners
  - (iii) compile, host and present the regional blue investment portfolio (see below), both as a synthesis of actual investments and as a virtual pipeline of investment opportunities
  - (iv) organise the blue investment portfolio under a blue taxonomy framework (see below) to align prospective investments with sustainability and with the associated concessional finance opportunities and global goods benefits, where generated
  - (v) backstop dialogues on specific financing instruments and modalities for major public and private categories of investments common to WIO countries (for example, urban solid waste and waste water management, green ports, marine renewable energy)
  - (vi) host the compilation of regional ocean accounts and develop their utility as a shared means of monitoring investment
  - (vii) generate finance to support the ROGS institutional framework, including through existing or new trust funds as may be determined and agreed with partners
- c) **Hosting and initial resourcing.** The NC Secretariat will convene the initial series of dialogues under which further arrangements will be explored. The initial dialogues will draw on the support of the blue finance and GEF-IW units of the UNEP, the existing bilateral partners, the World Bank PROBLUE and the UNECA as may be agreed.

### **8.2.2 Blue Portfolio**

165. The demand for blue investments will be 'bundled', or aggregated across the WIO countries (particularly for the smaller economies), or across sub-national entities/ municipalities in larger economies (e.g. for investments in municipal solid waste management for coastal cities). The blue portfolio will create a virtual pipeline of investment that reflects the aggregate financing requirements of the national blue investment plans. The pipeline will be structured as a 'portfolio' of prospective investments in sustainability and organised by sector (e.g. green ports) or by theme (SDG 14 indicators, Net Zero). The blue portfolio will provide a number of benefits:

- a) **Scale.** It will create the scale of prospective investment which is more attractive to major institutional investors
- b) **Link to commitments.** Through the blue taxonomy, it will link the investments to global objectives (SDGs, Paris commitments) for which there is already funding available
- c) **Leverage and blending.** The scale enables the different providers (grant, loan, equity) to design leveraging instruments to blend different sources of finance, to co-finance projects, or to support an entire portfolio segment
- d) **Transaction costs.** It creates synergies and reduces transaction costs, while the diversity of projects in the portfolio offsets risks
- e) **Planning.** It enables planning of a medium/long-term series of investments within a common framework which can further reduce transaction costs
- f) **Common metrics.** Common metrics can be used to assess investment viability, to track performance, to share reporting, to reduce transaction costs, to learn lessons and collectively establish a range of solutions, experiences and approaches
- g) **Continuity.** It facilitates the continuity and sustainability of national and regional initiatives which may be undermined by stop/ start project finance. The lessons learned can inform subsequent investment.

### **8.2.3 Blue Taxonomy**

The Blue Taxonomy is the application of the better-known green taxonomy approach to ocean investments. The application framework is still undergoing development, but is sufficiently robust to be used by the ROGS. The blue taxonomy:

- a) provides a framework to structure, prioritise and guide sustainable blue investments, ‘discourage’ less sustainable investments and underpin transition pathways to sustainability
- b) provides common criteria and metrics for sustainable investment by different sources of finance
- c) reduces fragmentation through shared investment principles and criteria
- d) facilitates blending of financing instruments and can underpin coordination among sources of finance
- e) links investment with measurable impacts rather than separate project outcomes
- f) enables harmonized monitoring and evaluation and linkage to ocean accounts.

166. Application of the blue taxonomy has several implications. Funding agencies may be expected to align their criteria, processes, guidelines and monitoring and evaluation requirements within a common set of indicators and metrics. Many financing agencies have already committed to reducing fragmentation, but with limited progress. National agencies charged with tracking key indicators may need to provide more timely and verifiable information in a more transparent manner. The blue taxonomy is a bridge between the ocean accounts and the investment portfolio. The taxonomy provides for a generic, systematic appraisal and orientation of blue investments in relation to the SDG14 indicators and other indicators. The ocean accounts provide a framework for tracking these indicators at national and at an aggregated regional level. Actions are already under way to develop national ocean accounts and related knowledge products.

#### **8.2.4 Ocean accounts**

155. The ocean accounting framework will be used as primary framework to monitor and evaluate the ROGS and the Blue Investment Portfolio. Ocean accounts include key environmental, economic and social elements. A number of WIO countries are already preparing ocean accounts and the system will progressively be extended at national and regional levels with the assistance of the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP). The ocean accounts framework will provide:

- a) standardised reporting on the state and trends in the WIO
- b) a quantitative and qualitative assessment approach with a globally agreed methodology
- c) the capture and reporting of environmental, social and economic information
- d) an assessment of changes in ocean wealth, or capital, estimates of the costs and returns from the production of ocean goods and services
- e) a transparent means of tracking the impact of investments
- f) reports of aggregate impacts rather than project-by-project attribution of impacts.

167. **Climate Finance.** Special attention will be directed to climate finance for ocean-related investments for several reasons: (i) the scale of financing required for adaptation to the impacts of climate change, and for the reduction of mitigation of GHG emissions (sources, sinks and renewable energy) may be an order of magnitude higher than previously envisaged. (ii) The supply of climate finance (including grant and concessional finance) is substantially greater than the capacity to effectively use the available finance and this creates important financing opportunities; and (iii) there are major opportunities for regional synergies and cooperation.

### **8.3 MONITORING, REVIEW AND ADJUSTMENT OF THE STRATEGY**

168. As noted above, the ocean accounting framework will be used as the primary framework to monitor the ROGS, as it includes key environmental, economic and social elements. The ocean accounts framework captures both the state of WIO capital and the flow of benefits from ocean activities. Specific metrics on the quality of governance can be included. The monitoring and reporting scheme will forge strong links to the UN Regular Process, for which regional capacity will be built. The SDG indicators (in particular the SDG 14 indicators) will be among those tracked. The design of the system will draw on experiences in other ocean regions, including approaches in the Pacific Islands and Caribbean regions, in the Mediterranean and the monitoring of the EU Marine Strategy Framework.

#### **8.4 THE ROGS AND THE NAIROBI CONVENTION WORK PROGRAMME**

169. A number of the ROGS priorities and proposed activities are not within the ‘regular’ NC Work Programme which has an essentially environmental focus. The ROGS has been prepared in response to an AU decision, but this does not imply that the NC has responsibility for the implementation of all the proposed ROGS activities. The arrangements for implementing the ROGS fall into two broad categories:

- a) Activities which may be undertaken or initiated by the NC Secretariat. These in turn fall into a further two categories: (i) activities which are already include in the work program and draft financial plans or budgets; and (ii) new or additional activities. Many of these ‘new’ activities involve actions to implement activities which have already been proposed with in the NC framework, but are brought under the umbrella of the ROGS. For example, this category may include activities which implement decisions on marine plastic pollution, on critical habitats or prevention and preparedness for oil spillages. Some of these actions may require the preparation of new projects.
- b) Activities which may be undertaken, initiated, or led by other regional organisations. These include (to be confirmed) SWIOFC (fisheries), IOC-MSA (maritime security), greenports and shipping (PMAESA). The NC Secretariat may have a role in financing, reporting or supporting some of these activities under MoUs or other agreements (e.g., NC-SWIOFC project) but would not have a leading role. In such cases, the activity could be included in the NC work programme but with only a nominal commitment in terms of financing or technical support.

170. **Alignment of the ROGS with the NC work programme.** Assuming that the ROGS implementation plan and NC work programme are separately approved by the COP, a further exercise to align these processes can be initiated. This process will distinguish those activities which can be included in the NC Work Programme from those which require alternative arrangement or the leadership and the support of other regional entities. The COP decision on the NC work programme can make provisions for such an alignment exercise and the subsequent approval of a revised and consolidated work programme by the NC Bureau. Additional materials setting out the correspondence between the ROGS activities, the COP decisions and the NC work programme can be prepared to support such an exercise.

171. **ROGS management costs.** ROGS implementation will incur both recurrent management costs and investment or capital costs. The administrative or management costs associated with implementing the ROGS have not been estimated. The ROGS provides the strategic framework for preparing the necessary financing plan. These management costs will be incurred by the NC Secretariat and shared by numerous other regional organisations and by national public and private sectors. Where there is overlap with the core functions and work programmes of these organisations, some of these costs may be absorbed by the normative budgets of these organisations. There is also substantial overlap with some NC work programme activities which are already financed through part or some of the next COP cycle. However, there are likely to be significant additional costs. Financing of these additional or expanded activities is expected to be the subject of extended partnership dialogues with current partners and other prospective partners (see section on ‘financing the ROGS’, section 8.2 above).

172. The investment costs associated with the ROGS will be the subject of a separate but closely-related process described under the ‘blue finance architecture’ (section 8.2 above) and focused essentially on collective or common national financing requirements rather than financing of regional actions.

173. The NC work programme generally refers to a 4-year period. The ROGS, however may have considerably longer time horizon of 10 or more years. The proposed ROGS financing arrangements can be used to project or outline the longer-term regional financing requirements for both the regional secretariat functions and the pipeline of national investments which are envisaged.