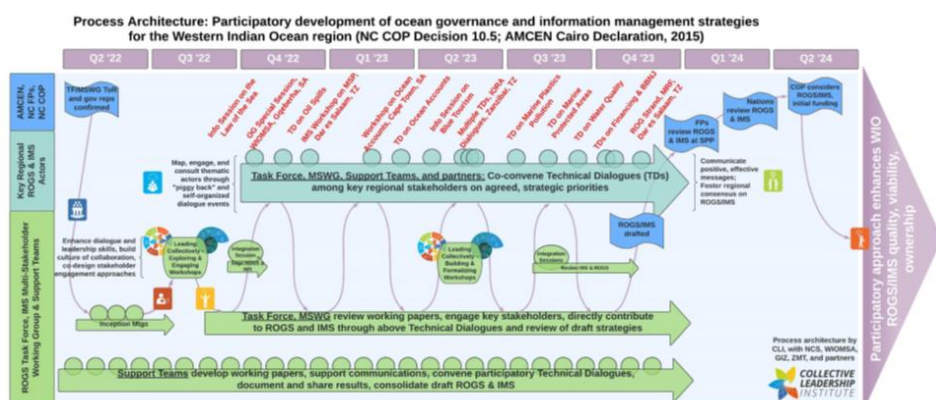


Developing a Regional Ocean Governance Strategy for the Western Indian Ocean

Inspired by and contributing to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) Cairo Declaration of 2015, Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention adopted a Decision at their 10th Conference of Parties (COP10) in November 2021 to develop a Regional Ocean Governance Strategy (ROGS) for the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) through a participatory process. The Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention consist of Comoros, France, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, Seychelles, Somalia, and Tanzania.

Since May 2022, the ROGS Support Team has worked with a 24-member multi-stakeholder Task Force made up of experts from across the WIO region. The Task Force included representatives of the Parties to the Nairobi Convention, the African Union (AU), the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the Indian Ocean Commission, private sector and civil society actors, and selected regional experts. The task force is backed by a Support Team hosted by the Nairobi Convention Secretariat. It comprises of experts from the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA), GIZ, and the Collective Leadership Institute (CLI) and is dedicated to enhancing collective leadership capacity for the participatory development of the ROGS. The Support Team organized the co-development of the Regional Ocean Governance Strategy (ROGS) through a series of participatory Technical Dialogues and information sessions with the ROGS Task Force.

The Task Force has been actively involved in co-creating the strategy, focusing on four clusters: Maritime Security, Blue Economy, Environment and Natural Resources, and Knowledge Management and Capacity Building. The Task Force and Support Team have held a series of technical dialogues and information sessions on a range of topics including on the law of the sea; oil spills; ocean accounts; blue tourism; marine plastics pollution; marine protected areas; water quality; financing the strategy; areas beyond national jurisdiction; ports, shipping and maritime security; knowledge management and capacity building; and fisheries, among others.



By addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges, the ROGS aims to enhance cost-effective maritime security, information sharing, policy alignment, collaborative fisheries management, habitat conservation, and support for a sustainable blue economy. Political leaders in the WIO countries recognize the need for cooperation across sectors and regional organizations, including greater private sector and civil society engagement. The development

of the ROGS is a result of a series of policy processes, including the AU's call for an African Regional Ocean Governance Strategy and the 2017 Declaration of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN).

After a two-year collaborative process, the Regional Ocean Governance Strategy (ROGS) Support Team held a virtual event in April 2024, to wrap up the technical dialogues. The participants included Task Force members, Partners, and Focal Points of the Nairobi Convention. The event emphasized the participatory nature of the process and celebrated the Task Force members for their commitment. Highlights included examining the draft ROGS and outlining the next steps for discussion at the eleventh Nairobi Convention Conference of Parties (COP 11) in August 2024. An important event prior to COP 11 is the meeting co-hosted by the Nairobi Convention and the African Union Commission in Namibia from 26 to 28 June 2024 to discuss how the Draft African Ocean Governance Strategy and the ROGS may be most effectively implemented for maximum impact. This takes the process one step further from the initial aspirations of regional efforts in ocean governance contributing to and supporting continental processes.

Key enabling factors in the development of the Regional Governance Strategy included a high-level political mandate, the selection of Task Force members by countries and regional organizations, adequate financial support, and effective coordination by the Nairobi Convention Secretariat. It has also been a learning experience; the process faced challenges, such as uniting diverse sectors and stakeholders, overcoming institutional fragmentation, and bridging online and in-person interactions.

Lessons learned from this process include the importance of ensuring continuous capacities, long-term planning, framing questions, and providing effective feedback. The Task Force and stakeholders' involvement has been facilitated through in-person workshops, online sessions, and the support of the CLI.

The inclusive and participatory approach fosters ownership and enhances the quality of the ROGS.

Effective regional ocean governance means that WIO institutions, experts, communities, governments, and other diverse stakeholders collaborate effectively to advance a shared vision of a healthy, productive, and sustainable ocean for the benefit of coastal communities and marine and coastal ecosystems, WIO countries, and the region.

Presentation at COP 11

The draft Strategy will be presented to the Conference of Parties to the Nairobi Convention on 22 August 2024 at COP 11 for possible adoption. If adopted, implementation will begin in the 2025-2028 Nairobi Convention Work Programme.

For more information about the Draft Western Indian Ocean Governance Strategy, contact Timothy Andrew – tim.andrew@un.org