

Regional Ocean Governance –the Road to a Regional Ocean Governance Strategy for the Western Indian Ocean

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Abstract

The Nairobi Convention Secretariat in implementing decision COP 8/5 and COP 9/6 has advanced the process of regional ocean governance through three technical dialogues. **RECs dialogue**, as a first step, in early 2019, the Nairobi Convention Secretariat organized a partnership meeting with the regional economic communities (RECs), the Indian Ocean Commission and other key partners, including stakeholders from ocean science and shipping to develop collaboration on ocean governance and the blue economy. **Analytical dialogue**, a Special Session on Ocean Governance in the Western Indian Ocean Region was hosted by the Nairobi Convention and other partners in July 2019 at WIOMSA's 11th Scientific Symposium. Participants outlined several priorities, challenges, and recommendations for the development of a regional ocean governance strategy. **Broad-based stakeholder dialogue**, a workshop on Ocean Governance for the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region was held in September 2019 in Seychelles which further advanced the discussions and identified possible next steps and options for further cooperation. Three options are fronted for consideration in the process of developing an Ocean Governance Strategy for the WIO: a) Establish a joint REC ocean governance task force, b) Structure an adaptable open dialogue, or ecosystem-based management (EBM) approach, and c) Dialogue clusters. Based on the above options the following immediate way forward could be considered with support from various regional structures, initiatives, and projects:

- a) Request the Nairobi Convention Secretariat to facilitate, together with partners, continued dialogue with the RECs in the WIO and other stakeholders on the establishment of a regional Ocean Governance Taskforce or Coordinating Structure and develop a roadmap towards Strategy development.
- b) Building on previous COP decisions around Ocean Governance, request the Nairobi Convention Secretariat to facilitate a process led by the RECS to develop a regional Ocean Governance Strategy for the WIO by March 2022.

It is recommended that the above processes should:

- Align ocean governance engagement with RECs to their Blue Economy Strategy and Policy development processes and continental processes under the AU.
- Align support for this process among regional structures, initiatives and projects including Regional Fisheries Bodies in the WIO.
- Link discussions around ABNJ/BBNJ connectivity and related area-based management to national EEZs, into the ocean governance dialogues.
- Link discussions around private sector engagement to the ocean governance dialogues.
- Strive to draw the environmental and fisheries sectors within the WIO closer together in an Ecosystems Based Approach to enhance regional ocean governance.

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