

**AFRICAN UNION**

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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**AT THE**

**MEETING OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES AND  
COMMISSION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN OCEAN  
GOVERNANCE STRATEGY FOR THE WESTERN INDIAN  
OCEAN REGION**

**BY VIRTUAL**

**26 APRIL 2021**

**Delivered by Ms. Olushola Olayide, Senior Policy Officer,  
Environment & Water Resources**

## **PROTOCOL**

- **Distinguished Representatives of the Nairobi Convention Secretariat; GIZ-WIOGI, and UN Environment Programme (UNEP)**
  
- **Distinguished Representatives of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Commissions, Regional institutions and Partners**
  
- **Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is a pleasure for me to deliver this remarks on behalf of the African Union Commission at the opening of the Meeting of the Regional Economic Communities and Commissions on the development of an Ocean Governance Strategy for the Western Indian Ocean Region taking place today.

**Distinguished Delegates,** Africa is endowed with massive aquatic and marine resources including oceans, seas, rivers and lakes with potential for blue economy growth. The African ocean territories are of strategic importance to the continent as they provide opportunities for fisheries, aquaculture, shipping, coastal tourisms, offshore oil and gas energy mobilization and other blue economy related activities. There are huge opportunities around Africa's Blue Economy that can change the narrative for the continent as an engine for socio-economic development and industrialization. It can further create jobs and improve livelihoods for the teeming population in the continent and in particular the women and youth.

**Distinguished Delegates,** Despite the benefits and opportunities associated with our vast oceans, Africa's Blue Economy potential is however under serious threats largely due to governance, capacity issues, pollution through dumping of toxic waste, indiscriminate discarding of single use plastics, oil spills, environmental degradation, heavy pollution of oceans; and loss of biodiversity,. Africa is also facing aggravated effects

of climate change and further vulnerable to extreme weather events.

**Distinguished Delegates,** The African Union further recognizes these challenges and thus established a clear vision for the continent as encapsulated in the various pan African instruments and declaration; notably the African Union's 2012 Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050, which recognizes and encourages the importance of African countries paying greater attention to their maritime interests; the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (PFRS), the 2016 Lomé Charter, a continental framework to encourage and coordinate efforts by African States to address maritime security, safety and development. Above all these instruments is the Africa's blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future – the African Union Agenda 2063: 'The Africa we want.'

**Distinguished Delegates,** I am glad to inform you that the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment (ARDWE) held in October 2019, adopted a decision on Blue Economy. The decision endorsed the Blueprint for Africa's Blue Economy Strategy, which was designed to guide and support our Member States and regional institutions to effectively address the critical challenges to blue economy growth. The Strategy

therefore lays out the priority actions for initiating activities and programmes to harness the potential and maximize opportunities in the Blue Economy sector. The strategy focusses on five critical thematic areas as follows:

1. Fisheries, aquaculture and ecosystems conservation
2. Shipping, transportation and trade
3. Sustainable energy, extractive minerals, gas, innovative industries
4. Environmental sustainability, climate change and coastal infrastructure and
5. Governance, Institutions and social actions

**Distinguished Delegates,** The decision of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of STC on ARDWE additionally encouraged the AU Commission to support setting up Blue Governance mechanisms to ensure planning and coordination at continental, regional and national levels. Similarly, the 17<sup>th</sup> session of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) adopted a Decision that welcomed the formulation of the African Union blueprint for Africa's blue economy strategy and to contribute towards its implementation in line with its mandate. It further invited the AMCEN Secretariat in collaboration with the African Union Commission to prepare a report on the matter, in consultation with Member States, taking environmental considerations into account, for consideration at its Eighteenth session.

**Distinguished Delegates,** Permit me, as I conclude to acknowledge that the development of the Ocean Governance Strategy of Western Indian Ocean region will contribute efforts towards the implementation of these key decisions and I therefore thus urge this meeting to come up with effective process for the Ocean Governance framework and action plan that would enhance environmental sustainability in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 14 in realization of Agenda 2063: 'The Africa we want.'

**Distinguished Delegates,** It would be remiss of me to conclude this remarks without conveying our sincere appreciation to the organizers of this meeting for extending invitation to the AU Commission. Lastly, I wish reiterate the unwavering commitment of the AU Commission to continue to support our Member States and Regional Economic Communities and Commissions on the implementation of the African Strategy on Blue Economy, and in particular Ocean Governance.

I wish you all a successful meeting as I look forward to the fruitful outcomes of this Virtual meeting.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

Merci beaucoup!!!