

OPENING REMARKS ON BEHALF OF UNEP AT THE SECOND PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE PARTNERSHIP PROJECT BETWEEN THE NAIROBI CONVENTION AND THE SWIOFC, 21 MARCH 2023

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Distinguished delegates,

Excellencies and colleagues

Good morning.

It is a great pleasure to be present albeit virtually at this second regional Project Steering Committee meeting of the partnership project between the Nairobi Convention and the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission.

Let me start with a brief history and connect the dots.....

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

The Regional Seas Programme was launched in 1974 by UNEP.

The Regional Seas Programme operates in 18 regions of the world. UNEP provides overall coordination and facilitation and in so doing connects the Programme to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), relevant UNEA Decisions and UNEP's Programme of Work.

Just to mention, the Regional Seas Programme is engaging in the following areas that are important in this meeting:

1. negotiations on the plastics treaty
2. Assessment and providing indicators for Regional Seas Strategic Direction 2022-2025. The Regional Seas Strategic Directions (RSSD 2022-2025) charts an ambitious journey to achieving SDG 14, by tracking progress and fostering integrated response to achieve long term ocean health and the long term health of the people who rely on the oceans for subsistence and livelihood.
3. Contributing to a global integrated programme on emerging and priority issues that connect the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans in addressing the three global planetary crises of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste through accessing the GEF-8 funding opportunity.

4. advancing blue economy at the regional scale and on how to share experiences on blue economy.
5. Supporting development of Post 2020 marine biodiversity frameworks and generate regional outlooks on the implementation of the marine aspects of the Global Biodiversity Framework.
6. Supporting Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans in their development and adoption of projects to support Ocean Science.
7. Promoting stronger collaboration with the global Multilateral Environmental Agreements and the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations/Bodies.

The global dialogue on sustainable oceans merits attention in this meeting

The Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with **Regional Seas Organizations (RSOs)** and **Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs)** was developed, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The initiative facilitates dialogue between regional organizations, to share lessons and experiences in regional collaboration and to identify opportunities to improve cross-sectoral collaboration, in order to address issues related to **fisheries management** and **conservation** and **sustainable use of marine biodiversity**, and to progress on global goals and commitments for the oceans.

At the New York Ocean Conference in June 2017, so many partners came together and made commitments in the following areas for the Western Indian Ocean:

- i. To reduced impacts from land-based sources and activities and sustainably managed critical coastal and marine ecosystems.
- ii. Enhance policy harmonization and management reforms for improved ocean governance.
- iii. Collaborative management of marine and coastal resources in the Northern Mozambique Channel.
- iv. Innovative ocean governance mechanisms for the extended continental shelf management and improved governance of areas beyond national jurisdiction, building on existing regional institutions including the Nairobi Convention and developing area based management tools such as marine spatial planning to promote the blue economy pathways in the Western Indian Ocean Region

How far have we progressed.....?

Let me now turn to the Nairobi Convention

In 1985, the Nairobi Convention was born at a conference of plenipotentiaries held in Nairobi. The Nairobi Convention for the protection, management and development of the coastal and marine environment is a regional mechanism for conservation of the marine and coastal environment in the Western Indian Ocean region.

The Convention is action oriented and implements specific activities as agreed by Contracting Parties at their Conference of Parties, bringing together stakeholders including governments, scientific communities and civil societies.

The Convention provide an inter-governmental framework to address the degradation of the ocean at a regional level, embracing an ecosystems approach to protection, management and development of the coastal and marine environment of the Western Indian Ocean region.

The Secretariat of the Nairobi Convention, hosted by UNEP, is responsible for the coordination, development and implementation of the Nairobi Convention Programme of Work.

Allow me to make some remarks with regard to the Partnership Project between the Nairobi Convention and SWIOFC for marine and coastal governance and fisheries management for sustainable blue growth

In the Western Indian Ocean coastal and marine resources are currently managed by several different national and regional institutions, organizations, agreements and commissions with independent and often overlapping mandates.

A cross-sectoral, holistic approach to managing marine and coastal resources to deliver sustainable benefits for all is the basis for **ocean governance**.

This is where the Nairobi Convention cooperates and collaborates with the SWIOFC to enhance and enable stakeholders to coordinate and cooperate more effectively on issues that have an impact on countries of the Western Indian Ocean. At the regional level, Countries are able to share resources, exchange knowledge, secure financing for common objectives, contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and advance blue economic pathways.

The Partnership project has moved the needle further from the traditional, very thematic approach, focusing on habitat degradation, pollution, overfishing, governance issues and climate change to more strategic and integrated multi sectoral interventions.

The project has very ambitious integrated approaches in the following four areas:

- (i) ecosystem based management (addressing policies in fisheries, shipping and transport, maritime security, energy, coastal agriculture, coastal development, environmental policy, and other-sector policies),
- (ii) marine spatial planning and coastal zone management that is bringing together multiple stakeholders, ensuring that they have a common vision and for connecting marine users effectively,

- (iii) integrating initiatives in conservation, pollution prevention, adapting to climate change through nature -based solutions, and increasing sustainability, livelihoods and poverty reduction.
- (iv) Knowledge management and communication to address common challenges, and for informed decision-making on ocean governance and fisheries management amongst governments, non-governmental organizations, private sector, partners and relevant stakeholders active in the coastal and marine environment.

Today, we look into the progress made in these four areas that are being addressed to some extent by the partnership project so that we may have a comprehensive picture of the current state of our marine environment and solutions proposed.

I wish to sincerely thank the Government of Sweden for the active partnerships in the Western Indian Ocean and for the specific support and funding to the Partnership Project between the Nairobi Convention and SWIOFC for marine and coastal governance and fisheries management.

I wish you all the best in your deliberations on these two very busy days

Thank you.