

The Nairobi Convention Bureau - Experts Meeting

Date: 12 – 14 March 2024

Mombasa, Kenya

Concept Note

Background and Introduction

The Western Indian Ocean region contains diverse coastal and marine ecosystems that support local and national economies. The critical coastal and marine ecosystems also provide valuable ecosystem services including sequestration of carbon. They also provide habitat for marine biodiversity and are considered to be one of the most valuable ecosystems in the world. These ecosystems have been of great benefit to coastal communities, particularly as sources of livelihood, food and energy. Despite the benefits associated with coastal and marine ecosystems, the anthropogenic stresses on these ecosystems, particularly from land-based sources and activities are increasing and causing damage to the integrity of these ecological systems. The increasing threats arising from land-based sources and activities mean that the ecosystems in the region will continue to be degraded to the point where they will cease to be able to provide essential goods and services, with severe consequences at local, regional and global levels.

Economic development and poverty alleviation are the main targets within the policies of most Western Indian Ocean governments and that realization is directly and indirectly linked to the health of the coastal and the marine environment. Joint efforts and partnerships are required to procure a healthy Western Indian Ocean and to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of management and conservation initiatives. Global and regional governance frameworks continue to bring marine conservation to the forefront of global policy arenas such as the UN's Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), the CBD's strategy and post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), Paris Agreement on Climate change, the ongoing Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), in particular Goal 14 on Oceans and African Union Agenda 2063. Focus has been on ecosystems-based management, nature-based solutions, marine protected areas, marine pollution, climate change and impacts of ocean acidification, development of green ports and harbours, and protection of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, including the application of area-based management tools in exclusive economic zones and adjacent areas. Leveraging

regional partnerships and collaborations provides a pathway for strengthening the implementation of actions for sustainable management, development, and conservation of the Western Indian Ocean.

The Nairobi Convention and its protocols offer a legal framework and coordinates the efforts of the 10 contracting parties in their capacity to protect, manage and develop their coastal and marine environment. It provides a forum to facilitate intergovernmental discussions on the region's environmental problems and how to address them. The Convention is keen on promoting ecosystem-based approaches such as marine spatial planning to promote ocean governance for the blue economy through cooperation, collaboration, and partnerships with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Commissions, regional fisheries management organizations, related intergovernmental organizations and between Contracting Parties.

Nairobi Convention Programme of Work for 2022-2024

The Nairobi Convention is implementing in a partnership approach, 2022-2024 work programme addressing new and emerging issues prioritized by Contracting Parties during its 10th COP in 2021, such as marine litter and microplastics, ocean acidification, marine protected areas, coastal and marine water quality assessment, a regional ecosystems indicator monitoring frameworks and gender mainstreaming. The work programme serves as a tool for the Secretariat and the collaborating partners to catalyse change in the management of the marine and coastal environment within the Convention area, thereby contributing to the achievement of agreed goals and targets as they relate to the sustainable development of coasts and oceans.

All activities supported by the Nairobi Convention over 2022–2024 are designed to achieve the overall objective of strengthening the role of the Nairobi Convention as a platform for promoting synergies and coordinating the implementation of regional initiatives for the protection of the marine and coastal environment. The work programme is built on four priority areas, namely, management and operational support which focuses on backstopping parties in implementing Conference of Parties (COP) decisions, development of approaches to ocean financing and ocean governance designed to sustain and enhance the convention's contribution to comprehensive marine and coastal ecosystem-based management approaches; assessment and conservation of critical habitats and endangered species, which focuses on partner collaboration for the assessment and conservation of critical habitats such

as mangroves, coral reefs, seagrasses and endangered species such as shark and rays; coordination and legal aspects, which focuses on implementing and updating the existing Nairobi Convention and its protocols, developing and ratifying new protocols, and improving the coordination of activities.

Rationale of the Meeting

In line with the tenth Conference of Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention Decision CP.10/1 on approval of the Programme of Work for 2022 – 2024, where the Secretariat was requested to report on the progress of implementation of the Programme of Work 2022-2024 at the regular meetings of national focal points and at the eleventh meeting of the Contracting Parties. The meeting will seek to take stock of all activities and initiatives implemented by the Secretariat through its projects and its partners.

As the implementation period for the Programme of Work for 2022 – 2024 draws to a close and in preparation for COP11, the planned meeting will draft a new work programme for 2025 – 2028 and draft Decisions and their justification drawing from regional priorities as proposed by the Nairobi Convention Contracting Parties, implementation modalities for products developed under the Nairobi Convention Secretariat projects as well as recommendations from the 2023 Western Indian Ocean Science - Policy Platform convened under the theme: Addressing Global Targets in the WIO in Support of a Sustainable Blue Economy. The WIO Plastics and Associated Chemicals hosted by the government of Seychelles in December 2023 and co-convened by the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the Nairobi Convention theme: Towards Effective Management of Plastics and their Chemicals in the WIO Region: Preparing countries for implementation of the legally binding instrument on plastics will also inform important areas of decisions on actions towards combating plastic pollution.

Additionally, the meeting will also consider global and regional ocean-related initiatives including the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (Ocean Decade), the recently adopted Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty, and global and regional agreements related to plastics in the marine environment. Importantly, the new work programme will also draw on the concept developed by regional experts during 2023 for a broad programme to address the elements of a combined Strategic Action Programme for the WIO encompassing issues ranging

from source to the deep sea, an action informed by a decision from the 9th COP of the Convention. This concept has already formed the basis of several proposals for funding support into the future.

Specific objectives

- To review progress in the implementation of the 2022 - 2024 work programme and COP 10 Decisions as part of the preparatory processes for the 11th COP of the Convention to be held in the 2nd quarter of 2024.
- Recommend thematic areas of focus towards a new draft work programme 2025 – 2028 and Decisions for consideration and subsequent approval by the Contracting Parties during the 11th COP.

Expected Outcomes

- Draft Executive Director's Report highlighting progress in the implementation of the COP Decisions and the 2021 – 2024 work programme
- Draft COP11 decisions and justification for each decision
- A draft work programme 2025 – 2028

Expected Participants

Members of the Nairobi Convention Bureau; Selected Experts in key thematic areas; Key Secretariat Staff