

PARTNERSHIP MEETING WITH REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES AND COMMISSIONS IN THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN REGION

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Contributions from the Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa (SRO-EA) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

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1. Brief history of the Organization, mandate and geographical coverage

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was established by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN in 1958 as one of the five UN regional commissions. As reiterated by the UN reform, Regional Economic Commissions have three core functions: 1. Think tank (generate knowledge and applied policy research, organize expert reviews and facilitate implementation of policy recommendations); 2. Convening (provide regional intergovernmental platforms to discuss transboundary regional and sub-regional issues); 3. Operational (provide policy advice to countries, support the implementation of innovative solutions for development, implementing capacity development at regional, sub-regional and country levels in coordination with the Resident Coordinator system).

The mandate of ECA is to promote inclusive and sustainable development in support of accelerating the economic diversification and structural transformation of Africa, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union. Its mission is to deliver ideas and actions for an empowered, inclusive and transformed Africa.

ECA covers the whole African continent. It has five sub-regional offices including the Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa (SRO-EA) based in Kigali (Rwanda) covering Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania. This office is also tasked with providing technical advisory support to Regional Economic Communities (RECs) such as IGAD and EAC and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), PMAESA, the Northern and Central Corridor Facility Authorities (NCTT-CA, CCTT-FA), etc. It specializes on deepening regional integration and the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Blue Economy. The Sub-Regional Office for Southern Africa (SRO-SA) based in Lusaka (Zambia) covers Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It covers RECs such as COMESA and SADC. It specializes on inclusive industrialization and also works on the Blue Economy.

The African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) based in Dakar, Senegal is responsible for the expansion of capacity development, advisory and policy dialogue programmes and activities targeted at mid-career and senior officials of African Governments.

2. Strategic Framework of ECA

The five strategic directions of ECA are the following:

- a. Build ECA analytical capabilities
- b. Formulate macroeconomic and structural policy
- c. Design innovative financing models
- d. Support regional and sub-regional transboundary initiatives
- e. Advocate continental ideas at the global level

The nine programmatic clusters (divisions at Headquarters) are:

- a. Macroeconomics and governance
- b. Private sector development and finance
- c. Data and statistics
- d. Technology, climate change and natural resource management
- e. Poverty, inequality and social policy
- f. Economic development and planning
- g. Sub-regional activities for development (SROs)
- h. Gender equality and the empowerment of women
- i. Regional integration and trade

3. Key interventions on the Blue Economy

ECA has been active in developing policy tools such as “[Africa’s Blue Economy: A Policy Handbook](#)”, which was officially launched in April 2016, in Ethiopia, at the ECA Africa Development Week. This handbook aims to provide policy makers, regional organisations, development practitioners and other stakeholders on the continent and beyond, with an operational framework and a step-by-step methodology to better mainstream the blue economy into their national and sub-regional development plans, strategies, policies and laws. The Policy Handbook advocates a multisectoral approach linking up blue economy priority sectors looking at trade-offs and synergies. It represents a unique entry point for blue economy “regionalization and nationalization” in Africa through targeted and tailor-made policy formulation and development. It builds on the water cycle considering the continuum between continental water, coastal and marine resources. It also promotes strengthening of relationships between landlocked, coastal and island states through maritime and intermodal transport corridors, including inland waterways.

In 2018, SRO-EA has assisted Comoros in developing their first strategic policy framework on the Blue Economy as well as Madagascar in consolidating theirs.

The Seychelles Blue Economy Research Institute together with other African universities have used the Handbook in developing master level curricula. In support to the Handbook, a study on the blue economy in Eastern Africa focusing on key sectors such as fisheries, maritime transport, mining, energy, and tourism was published end of 2016. Geopolitical dimensions as well as natural resource management and climate considerations were included.

The Blue Economy Policy Handbook can be accessed at:

<https://www.uneca.org/publications/africas-blue-economy-policy-handbook>

The Blue Economy study can be accessed at:

<https://www.uneca.org/publications/blue-economy>

The ECA African Minerals Development Centre (located within the Technology, climate change and natural resource management Division) had initiated work on a Blue Economy Atlas as well as on Regional Excellence Centres on the Blue Economy (there is a proposal to start with a pilot centre for the Western Indian Ocean in consultation with the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)).

4. Partnerships including potential collaboration with Nairobi Convention

IGAD and IOC have requested support from SRO-EA towards the development of regional strategies on the Blue Economy. Countries such as Kenya, Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros have also expressed an interest in receiving further assistance from ECA. SRO-SA is planning a high-level policy dialogue on the Blue Economy and climate change to be tentatively held in Seychelles.

Such support could be delivered in collaboration with Nairobi Convention with a view to avoiding duplication and maximizing positive impacts. Ocean governance would be part and parcel of the above-mentioned regional blue economy strategies for IGAD and IOC. The Sub-Regional Coordination Mechanism (SRCM) for Eastern and Southern Africa, which aim is to gather different UN Agencies in providing sound and coherent support to RECs and IGOs (through a joint work plan) could be further used. The next meeting of the SRCM is scheduled to take place on 11-14 June 2019 in Livingstone, Zambia.

5. Challenges, opportunities and way forward

Resource mobilization as well as long-term commitment of stakeholders and partners are recurrent challenges. ECA and Nairobi Convention could join hands alongside other partners (RECs, IGOs, UN Agencies, bilateral, research institutions, etc.) in convening consultations, workshops, as well as undertaking required consultancies, etc.