ZANZIBAR HOSTS WRITESHOP ON REGIONAL OCEAN GOVERNANCE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES | *By Melisa Wandia and Yvonne Waweru*

Participants at the IORA Technical dialogue

As we come to grips with the challenges facing the marine and coastal ecosystems of the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) such as over-exploitation of resources, pollution, overfishing and climate change, it has become increasingly evident that concerted action is a pre-requisite to address them through effective cooperation and collaboration at the regional level.

In this regard, the Nairobi Convention's Tenth Conference of Parties (COP 10) **Decision COP10/5** called for the development, of an ocean governance strategy for the Western Indian Ocean region, contributing to the African ocean governance strategy (**COP10/5(1**), and a related regional information management strategy. The development of these strategies is being supported by Nairobi Convention's **SAPPHIRE** project, **ACP MEAs 3** Programme and the **WIOGI** partnership project and is being led by the Regional Ocean Governance (ROGS) task force (TF) and an Information Management Strategy Multi-Stakeholder Working Group (IMS MSWG). Both ROGS TF and IMS MSWG have participated in highly participatory processes through collaborative technical dialogues to engage key stakeholders to

provide input into the strategies. The two groups have been supported by the Collective Leadership Institute (CLI) and the Leibniz Centre for Tropical Marine Research (ZMT) and a support team from the Nairobi Convention Secretariat, GIZ and WIOMSA.

On 22-25 May 2023, the ROGS TF and IMS MSWG held a joint workshop on Collective Leadership, Technical Dialogues and a writeshop in Zanzibar to further develop the ROGS and IMS. The meeting took place at the same time as the Ninth Indian Ocean Dialogue on Innovation and Blue Economy hosted by the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). The ROGS TF and IMS MSWG had been invited to participate to engage in technical dialogues on key topics that have been identified as priorities for the ROGS and IMS as well as the IORA Workplan.

In his opening remarks , Mr. Dixon Waruinge, the Head of the Nairobi Convention Secretariat, mentioned that "ocean governance is a necessary process to sustain the structure and functions of the ocean ecosystem." Additionally, he said that the Nairobi Convention was delighted to partner with IORA and the Government of Zanzibar in the exercise, "to share experience from the entire Indian Ocean rim and to discuss how better to advance the development of the ocean governance strategy as the foundation of a sustainable blue economy in the WIO."

Representing the IORA secretariat, Ms. Rina Setyawati, Director, Blue Economy and Fisheries Management, IORA Secretariat mentioned that the purpose of the meeting was to articulate and discuss challenges for effective implementation of blue economy projects. Ms. Setyawati acknowledged that advancing the blue economy agenda in the region remains "challenging and needs the collaboration of regional and international partners."

The opening session was also attended by H.E. the Hon. First Vice President of Zanzibar Masoud Othman Masoud. H.E Masoud, whose remarks echoed those of Mr. Waruinge and Ms. Setyawati, stressed the need to forge concrete blue economy partnerships and the political will to support their development. He also mentioned that there is a need to leverage community empowerment, capacity building, and sustainable blue economy financing for addressing topics such as pollution, conservation, and environmental security in the region.

Through the joint technical dialogues with IORA, both the ROGS TF and the IMS MSWG were able to include key actions in their respective strategies at the write-shop session of the workshop. The writing process involved several group work sessions, 'World Café' sessions for interactive exchanges and commenting on other groups' discussion points, and consolidation of key points once general consensus was achieved. The collective leadership sessions were focused on stakeholder mapping while the joint sessions between the ROGS-TF and IMS MSWG enabled them to discuss possible linkages between the strategies and create an action plan and roadmap for onward development.
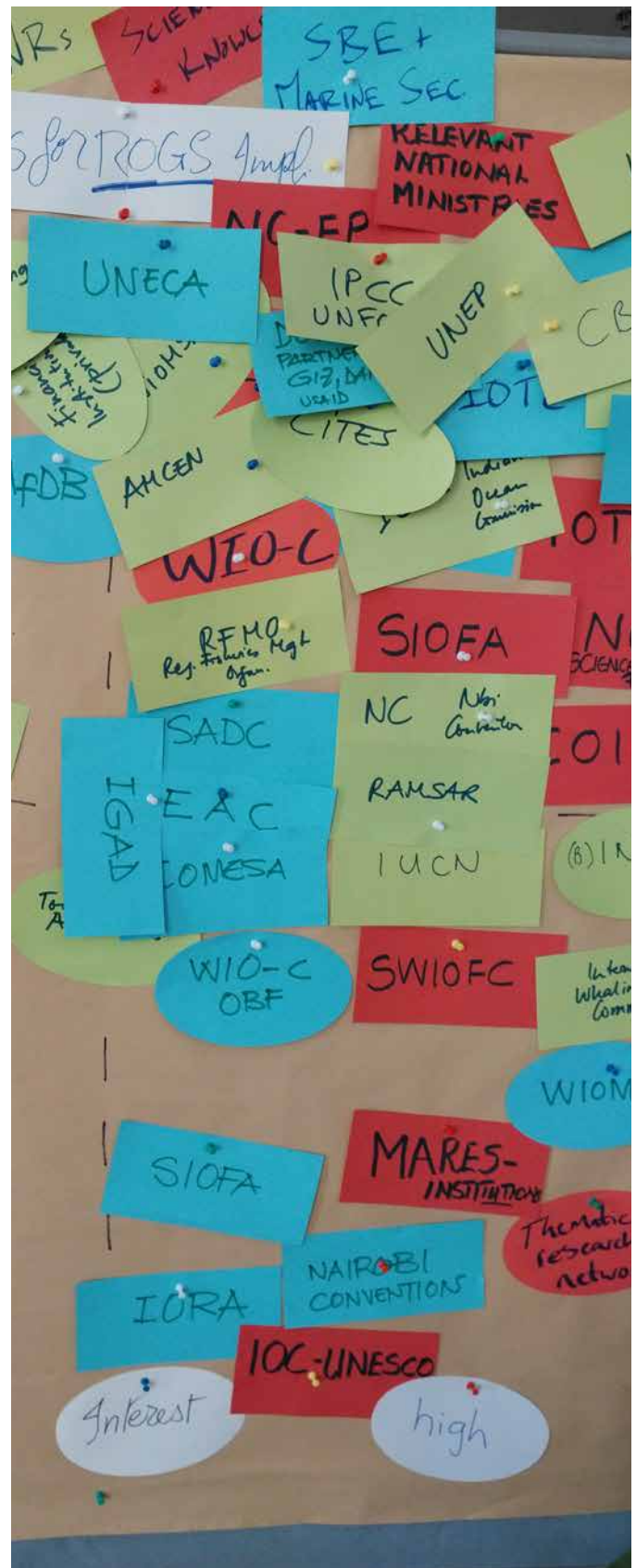
Group photo of the Writeshop participants ▮

Key Next Steps

The ninth IORA dialogue concluded with the presentation of the "Zanzibar Consensus," which recognized the participation and discussions around **four major themes: ocean governance and the blue economy, marine biotechnology and research, advancing IORA's blue economy agenda, and financing the blue economy in IORA.** The ninth IOD further recommended further collaboration with international and regional organizations to enhance cooperation and effectiveness in achieving common objectives of ocean governance in the Indian Ocean region.

At the conclusion of the ROGS and IMS write-shop, it was evident that once finalized, the successful implementation of the two strategies will require collaboration and cooperation between and among key regional actors including the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs), donors, financing institutions and other stakeholders such as NGOs and the private sector. Stakeholders in the ROGS Task Force, for example, proposed establishing (or strengthening existing) flexible institutional relationships, and high-level platforms for policy advice and finance, and implementing an ocean accounting framework for monitoring and evaluation.

Once the two strategies are finalized, the Focal Points of Nairobi Convention's Contracting Parties will be requested to work towards obtaining a Decision at the eleventh Nairobi Convention Conference of Parties (COP 11) that will (i) take note of the ROGS and IMS and their recommendations; and (ii) decide on follow up mechanisms and institutional arrangements for implementation as recommended in the strategies, and prioritise activities to be undertaken.

For more information about these strategies, visit **nairobiconvention.org**

Output of group discussions during the IORA Technical Dialogue