

Nairobi Convention Partners Meeting

30-31 August 2021

9:30 am – 1:30 pm East Africa Time

***Theme: 'Enhancing resilience and the health of the Western Indian Ocean:
2022-2024 Partners Programme'***

Concept Note

Background and Introduction

The Western Indian Ocean region has unique characteristics of high species and ecosystems biodiversity, making it one of the most rich and interesting ocean regions of the world. The coastal areas of the western Indian Ocean Region are home to over 60 million people who mostly are reliant on the Ocean for their economic, social, and cultural livelihood. The region has experienced a rapid population growth and economic expansion over the past years which have exponentially increased the pressure on coastal and marine resources. The relatively pristine coastal and marine ecosystems in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region are now increasingly experiencing pressures emanating from global climatic changes and human development. The threats are continuously jeopardizing the provisioning and regulating capacities of the coastal and marine ecosystems putting at risk the wellbeing of coastal populations.

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 efficiency and effectiveness of management and conservation initiatives. Global and regional governance frameworks continue to bring marine conservation at 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 provide

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

The Nairobi Convention and its protocols offers 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 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. The active role of the Western Indian Ocean Consortium (WIO-C) of international and regional Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in partnership with intergovernmental organizations that have presence and are active in regional marine and coastal ecosystem management in the WIO region endeavour to improve synergy, coordination, collaboration, information exchange, and joint programmatic approach in addressing coastal and marine issues.

At the March 2021 Science to Policy meeting, WIO-C, the Forum for Academic and Research Institutions (FARI) and several other partners articulated various key emerging issues that are likely to inform governments on important policy interventions to address threats to the WIO marine environment and resources. The recommendations from the Science to Policy dialogue are expected to inform in part the tenth Conference of Parties to the Nairobi Convention (COP10) to be held mid- November 2021.

The Covid-19 pandemic, together with climate change are risk factors influencing sustainable development and the exploitation of ocean resources with severe ramifications on the ocean economy. The Covid-19 crisis has led to significant loss of human life, increasing food and nutritional insecurity and poverty, and depressed global economy. Significant revenue losses have been felt across coastal and marine tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, and the global shipping industries. Port closures, travel restrictions and supply chain disruptions have disrupted ocean-based industries. Coastal communities dependent on fishing for their livelihoods and food security are hardest hit. The situation has resulted in the near total collapse of livelihoods centred around fisheries, tourism, and related economic activities.

The disproportionate impacts of Covid-19 to the already vulnerable coastal communities has the potential to reverse progress made to date on ocean sustainability and exacerbate the existing threats to ocean health, undermining the many goods and services essential for human wellbeing

and the ability of the ocean to continue to be a workplace, a source of income, livelihoods and nutritional food for millions of people in the region.

Undeniably, Covid-19 has impacted global conservation efforts, nevertheless, the crisis should not jeopardize or rollback any progress achieved in the conservation of the coastal and marine environment at the national and regional scale. COP10 of the Nairobi Convention will review and address the impacts of Covid-19 on conservation efforts and the appropriate recovery opportunities available to the Contracting Parties. The partnership meeting preceding COP10, will review recovery options and measures needed or planned to stem or avoid any negative impacts on the marine environment and chart a more sustainable and equitable way forward.

Investment in ‘blue’ recovery in coastal and marine economic sectors, leading to short- and long-term job creation opportunities in priority blue sectors such as tourism, maritime transport and fisheries etc. and promoting economic diversification for coastal communities will build long-term social, economic, and ecological resilience.

Rationale of the Partners meeting

The Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention called for the strengthening and enhancement of existing partnerships between states, multilateral organizations, civil society and private sector and stresses the importance of developing new strategies to harness other expertise, information and technology that the region would otherwise not have access to. It is in this regard that the Nairobi Convention seeks to establish new partnerships, and strengthen working relationships with partners — WIO-C, RECs, Regional Commissions, Fisheries Bodies and Scientific bodies — to support and facilitate sustainable management of coastal and marine resources in the region. Over the years, the Contracting Parties have anchored the need for collaboration and cooperation with partners in several of its Conference of Parties ([COP](#)) decisions, in particular COP4, COP6, COP7, COP8 and COP9. The partnerships have promoted collaborative research, provided evidence-based decision-making, sustainable management of the marine and coastal resources of the WIO region, and supported implementation of various policies, strategic action programmes, projects, and activities.

In line with the ninth Conference of Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention Decision CP.9/7 on developing and supporting implementation of projects, the Secretariat for the Nairobi Convention for the protection, management and development of the marine and coastal environment of the Western Indian Ocean region, within the Ecosystems Division of the UNEP, is implementing a number of projects. Among these include a) the WIOSAP project on implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the protection of the Western Indian Ocean from land-based sources and activities, b) the Western Indian

Ocean Large Marine Ecosystems Strategic Action Programme Policy Harmonization and Institutional Reforms (WIO LME SAPPHERE project), and c) a partnership project between the Nairobi Convention and the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission for marine and coastal governance and fisheries management for sustainable blue growth (NC-SWIOFC Partnership project). Other projects are d) the third phase of the EU funded programme on Capacity building related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA) in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Countries (ACP-MEAs 3), and e) the NocaMo project on Integrated management of the marine and coastal resources of the Northern Mozambique Channel.

The planned 30-31 August 2021 Partners Meeting themed *'Enhancing resilience and the health of the Western Indian Ocean: 2022-2024 Partnership Programme'* seeks to chart a way for strengthened and targeted approach towards partnerships for regional protection of the coastal and marine environment, management and development.

The meeting will focus on Partners efforts in addressing existing and emerging regional issues in the Western Indian Ocean, implementation of projects, activities and initiatives, and explore possible synergies and joint actions towards conservation, management, and sustainable use of the Western Indian Ocean coastal and marine resources.

Specific objective

- Partners responses and interventions to mitigate Covid-19 impacts on the marine and coastal environment at national and regional scale, with proposed actions and policy recommendations for the period 2022-2024.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased awareness of the cumulative impacts of Partners in addressing Covid-19 crisis and other challenges in the Western Indian Ocean region.
- Partners recommendations on potential areas of collaboration, joint actions and partnership prioritized for 2022-2024.

Expected Participants

Representatives of WIO-C members, representatives of regional economic communities (RECs), regional fisheries bodies, Forum for Academic and Research Institutions (FARI), representative of regional commissions, representative of Nairobi Convention Secretariat, active regional projects in the WIO region, CBOs, other partners, forums, networks and associations.