

## **Talking Points for the DED on 20 August 2024 at the Nairobi Convention Partners Segment: *Opening Segment of the Partners and Focal Points Meeting***

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished delegates, and esteemed colleagues,

I am delighted to be here in Madagascar, together with so many dedicated partners from the Western Indian Ocean region. This is the perfect venue for our COP-11 of the Nairobi Convention, for here – in this jewel of the Indian Ocean – we can see the vital importance of protecting, managing and developing the Marine and Coastal Environment.

SDG 17 calls for us to “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”. And it is with an eye on strategic partnerships that we are gathered here: to find new ways to collaborate and build a new consensus for actions for the benefit of our Ocean.

Since COP 10, three years ago, we have developed a number of strategies, frameworks, guidelines, and assessments which are hoped to be endorsed and adopted at this COP 11. We also have a valuable **toolkit for sustainable port development**: This is all part of the broad-based Programme of Work for 2025 - 2028. I encourage all partners to support the adoption of that Programme of Work and mobilise the enthusiasm, resources and political support that will be required to implement it.

Doing so will be critical to meet the goals of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in the Western Indian Ocean: for example, to reach the target that by 2030, at least 30 percent of coastal and marine areas are effectively conserved and managed.

That will be of vital importance to our marine biodiversity in this region. **473 species are judged Threatened or Near Threatened** and between **7–24% of all species** are estimated as being currently at risk of extinction.

The region now has **143 marine protected areas**. These include habitats such as a million hectares of mangroves, 90% of which are in Mozambique, Madagascar, Tanzania and Kenya. Over twelve thousand hectares of salt marshes, most of which are in South Africa. And perhaps the most iconic habitat, coral reefs.

The Western Indian Ocean contains **16% of the world’s coral reefs**, supporting around 2000 species of fish. Coral reefs support local livelihoods in fishing and tourism, but they are at risk. During the first global coral bleaching event in 1998, **30-50% of corals were estimated to have died**. The western Indian Ocean is one of the most rapidly warming regions in the world with predictions that ocean temperatures will rise by up to **2.5 Degrees C** in the foreseeable future. We need to manage local threats and increase effective management to buy time for marine habitats, while countries increase their commitments to achieve the Paris Agreement.

This will require cooperation. This convention has provided a powerful model for collaboration and partnership. Seventeen years ago, at COP 5 in Johannesburg, a group of regional and international NGOs – all with an interest in marine and coastal ecosystem

management – was brought together under the banner of the **Western Indian Ocean Consortium** – the WIO-C.

WIO-C advances cooperative initiatives to protect and manage the marine and coastal environment of this region, while working to alleviate poverty and support sustainable livelihoods.

WIO-C's role with the Nairobi Convention has:

- increased science-based knowledge and information sharing
- built capacity in national and local NGOs, and government institutions, and
- supported monitoring for improved management impact, such as through the Forum of Academic and Research Institutions. FARI has been instrumental in supporting the Science pillar of the Convention.

As we are discussing partnerships, I must recognize the input of the **Regional Economic Communities and Commissions**. The Southern African Development Community, the East African Community, The Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and COMESA, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, are critical inter-governmental implementation arms of the AU. Alongside the Indian Ocean Commission, these partnerships must be continuously harnessed and strengthened to work at scale and make the urgent impact required for a prosperous Western Indian Ocean region.

The convention has also made strides in engaging the **private sector**. Business can help open up the innovation, finance, and technology we need to make a difference. I am happy to know that we have private sector representation at this COP, and we will be hearing from them as well.

Colleagues,

As we face down the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, the Western Indian Ocean countries have been at the forefront, championing a sustainable regional ocean governance.

The adoption of the **Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management of the Western Indian Ocean** that was held here in Antananarivo in September of last year, was a bold step towards a sustainable blue economy.

We have work to do to reduce marine pollution from land-based sources, and to support the upcoming legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution.

With the **third UN Ocean Conference** taking place in France in June 2025, this COP provides us with an opportunity to put forward ideas, actions, and solutions for a healthy ocean and sustainable development.

So, let us be practical, ambitious – and above all, collaborative – as we look at ways to protect and conserve the marine and coastal resources of this region. We can plan for the impacts of climate change and save and restore biodiversity on which our lives literally depend. In doing so, we leave a legacy not just for this region, but the world.

Thank you.