

Regional Ocean Governance Strategy



PRELIMINARY DRAFT
(in preparation)
(November 2023)



for

Discussion & Comment

by the

**Nairobi Convention Focal Points,
Regional Ocean Governance Task Force,**

and for the stakeholder information, including through the

**Marine Regions Forum
Dar es Salaam, November 2023**

The DRAFT Regional Ocean Governance Strategy will be provided for discussion through the official processes for preparation of Decisions by the Conference of the Parties to the Nairobi Convention to be held in 2024. The Secretariat of the Nairobi Convention also provides for additional stakeholder inputs through an online Community of Practice portal [LINK to be provided].

The proposals, opinions or views expressed in this draft document should not be taken as representing the views of UNEP or any organisation mentioned.

**SECTIONS IN GREY HIGHLIGHT ARE IN PREPARATION
OR AWAITING FURTHER STAKEHOLDER INPUT**

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A TECHNICAL ANNEX
(in preparation)
WILL PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE BACKGROUND INFORMATION
AND LINKS TO SOURCE MATERIALS
This has been done in an effort to reduce the size of the main ROGS document

PREPARATION OF THE ROG STRATEGY

1. The Regional Ocean Governance Strategy (ROGS) was prepared in response to the decisions of the Nairobi Convention (NC) Conference of the Parties (COP) and the African Ministers of the Environment Conference (AMCEN).
2. The ROGS is has been developed through a participatory process, based largely on the work of a regional Task Force (TF). The Task Force members were appointed by the member states party to the NC, by the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and by the African Union (AU) and complemented by representatives of the private sector and other regional experts co-opted by the Task Force. NC Secretariat provided technical support.
3. Following review through the Nairobi Convention established processes, the ROGS will be considered by the Conference of the Parties (COP) scheduled for mid-2024. The draft ROGS is/ will be publicly available through the NC website through which comments and suggestions from institutions and civil society can be submitted for consideration in the review process. Working Papers and reports of Task Force technical dialogues and workshop and related technical materials are/ will be also available on the website.

WIO REGIONAL OCEAN GOVERNANCE STRATEGY (ROGS) DRAFT BACKGROUND DOCUMENT FOR DISCUSSION

1 THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

1.1 MANDATE, VISION, OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

4. **Mandate.** The decisions of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) (2015) and of the Nairobi Convention Conference of the Parties call for development of the Regional Ocean Governance Strategy (ROGS).

5. **Vision.** The vision for the Western Indian Ocean Regional Ocean Governance Strategy is:

“A peaceful stable Western Indian Ocean region with an environmentally healthy ocean and a blue economy based on the protection and conservation of natural resources that delivers sustainable benefits with due regard to equity and wellbeing.”

6. **Objective.** The objective of the Western Indian Ocean Regional Ocean Governance Strategy is:

“To develop a regional mechanism through which the key regional stakeholders can cooperate in a coherent and structured manner to achieve the vision.”

7. **Scope.** The technical scope of the strategy includes all aspects of the ocean and coastal environment, the blue economy and the related communities, institutions, productive activities, risks and opportunities. The ROGS does not attempt to resolve all the complex challenges facing ocean governance in the WIO, but provides a framework for WIO countries and regional institutions to cooperate more effectively to address national and regional their priorities and to focus their joint efforts, based on a common understanding of the state of ocean governance and the blue economy. The ROGS focuses on selected priorities and creates a framework for future regional actions on numerous other priorities and in order to meet emerging challenges. Guided by the COP decisions, the ROGS focuses on enhanced cooperation between existing regional institutions rather than on creating any new regional institutions (unless critical gaps are identified), as the policies and activities of the regional organisation already reflect national aspirations and positions.

8. **WIO region.** For the purposes of the ROGS the geographical scope of the WIO is taken to be: *“the relevant jurisdictional areas of the parties to the Nairobi Convention and the adjacent large marine ecosystems (LMEs)”*. This geography may extend beyond the national jurisdictional areas of the parties where the LMEs, the populations of living aquatic resources, or the related physical processes extend beyond these limits.

1.2 POLICIES AND COMMITMENTS

9. Policy support for the development of the ROGS is provided through wide range of high-level global and regional instruments. These include declarations and national commitments, such as, those related to the Sustainable Development Goals, to Agenda 2063 ‘*The Africa we want*’, AU policies and strategies on climate change, on maritime cooperation and the blue economy. Policies, protocols or strategies approved by the Regional Economic Communities or countries inform and guide the ROGS process.

10. The UN Convention on the law of the Sea (UNCLOS) requires countries to cooperate on ocean governance with countries and with global and regional institutions in numerous areas: from suppression of piracy, to prevention of pollution and conservation of biodiversity. WIO countries are also party to numerous other international conventions and treaties under which the countries incur international legal obligations to cooperate on ocean-related matters, including shipping, climate,

science and human rights. WIO countries have also made numerous international ocean-related commitments which are not legally binding, including, to the SDGs and through the Global Ocean Forum, the UN Decade for Ocean Science and other instruments.

1.3 PRINCIPLES, GUIDELINES AND APPROACHES

11. Global principles of sustainability, human rights and international cooperation are a cornerstone of the ROGS. The ROGS takes account of the core values and approaches set out in key global and regional instruments. These include: the UN Charter, in the Constitutive Act of African Union, and those set out in the foundation instruments of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). The principles and approaches underpinning the ROGS include: those of the Rio Declaration, the polluter pays principle and the participatory, precautionary, ecosystem, and circular economy approaches. Numerous other internationally-accepted principles and guidelines inform the priority actions set out in the ROGS.

12. The ROGS takes account of the special circumstances of small island developing States, of least developed countries and marginalised communities. It draws on international guidelines and plans of action, including on fisheries, shipping, trade, biodiversity, the blue economy, and sustainable investment. In addition to the mandates and higher-level guidance, the ROGS takes due account of the existing regional cooperative arrangements at sector, business and scientific levels and contributes to the proposed African (continental) ocean governance strategy. The ROGS aims to use the best available science and scientific information to inform collective regional decisions through participatory and transparent processes and contribute to global initiatives on ocean science.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR A REGIONAL APPROACH

13. The ROGS has a regional rather than national focus. This means that the priority regional activities must add value to design, financing or implementation of national priorities. This added value will accrue through building mutual trust, shared understanding and policy cohesion. The regional approach will improve national effectiveness in numerous ways, including through synergies among activities, shared lessons, cost savings, joint financing, efficient use of scarce resources, avoidance of duplication or conflict, more coherent and targeted use of knowledge. A regional approach will create economies of scale, open other trade and business opportunities, and generate common positions in global dialogues or negotiations.

14. Many regional priorities are already addressed by the existing regional cooperation arrangements, or are expressed through existing policies, or targeted through existing regional programmes and initiatives. A key task of the ROGS is to build a framework to consolidate and enhance these diverse cooperative arrangements and initiatives across the institutional ocean space; across sector and thematic boundaries; and across knowledge clusters and to resolve any policy divides by developing common understanding and consensus on priorities and approaches. National ocean strategies generally call for increased regional cooperation, through the AU, the RECs and established international and regional organisations.

2 THE STATE OF THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN

2.1 FRAMEWORK

15. Informed regional decisions on ocean governance require a shared understanding of: the state of the WIO environment; the blue economy; the flow of sustainable benefits to WIO communities. The ROGS provides a framework to progressively build this common understanding of the state of the WIO, changes in the WIO, and the drivers of these changes by:

- a) presenting available information or indicating the sources of such information on key quantitative and qualitative environmental, social, economic and governance indicators;¹ and
- b) using an ocean accounts framework as a means of progressively compiling available information across sectors and themes to provide ‘science-based’ advice to governance.

16. **Ocean wealth and flow of benefits.** The state of the WIO can be represented in two ‘higher-level’ indicators, which can be captured by a system of ocean accounts. Sustainable oceans mean that both the ocean wealth, or capital and the flow of benefits remains stable, or (preferably) increase.

- a) the ocean wealth or ‘blue’ capital indicators. The ‘wealth measure’ captures the value of natural capital (e.g., coral reefs), produced capital (e.g., green ports) and human capital (e.g., education, governance), and
- b) the flow of benefits indicators. The ‘benefits measure’ captures the flow value from fisheries, tourism and other ocean activities.

17. **The role of the ROGS.** Rather than generating the raw data, the task of the ROGS is to provide the framework for making the knowledge available for policy decision and to ensure a balance between sector and thematic interests. This involves several tasks:

- a) synthesising and verifying critical information across sectors and themes to inform governance decisions at national, REC and regional levels, through reviews, science to governance conduits and cross-sectoral communication
- b) developing means of linking fragmented information in dashboards, hubs or platforms and in particular ensuring coherence and coordination between national, regional and global assessment processes and data aligning the various processes
- c) generating public awareness of the importance of healthy oceans to support political will for investment in sustainability and behavioural change.

2.2 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Three major sources of information enable the progressive development of a ‘regular process’ to report on the state and trends of the WIO. These are broadly classified below and selected information summarised in the Technical Annex:

- a) global indicators of state and change, such as the SDG indicators, governance and business climate indicators
- b) global assessments, or the Sub-Saharan African or island states contributions to these assessments, such as the World Ocean Assessment
- c) regional assessments, reviews or reports prepared at WIO, African or Indian Ocean levels, such as those prepared on the blue economy, marine conservation, or coastal livelihoods
- d) national assessments and reports and accounts, including environmental and satellite accounts for the blue economy.

18. **Indicators.** The ten SDG 14 indicators are a shared regional set of indicators and a useful measure of sustainable oceans. However, these indicators may not always reflect the ‘reality on the ground’ or information required for decisions. They need to be complemented with additional verifiable social, blue economy and governance indicators. Some of these may be drawn from other SGG goals,

¹ The Technical Annex summarises selected quantitative and qualitative information on the state of the WIO and provides links to the related assessments and reports.

for example indicators on poverty (SDG1), food supply (SDG2), education (SDG4), climate action (SDG13) and many others.

19. **Global assessments.** The WIO contributions to global assessments and data sets provide standardised information on status and trends of those targets in the WIO. These assessments include the World Oceans Assessment, assessments of biodiversity, protected areas, climate change, fisheries, governance and many others (see Technical Annex for selected global and regional assessments).

20. **Regional and national assessments.** Many regional assessments provide detail on the state and trends of the WIO. The ROGS requires preparation of regular and comparable of syntheses of these assessments in a manner to inform policy and decision makers. Available information includes information on fish stocks, coasts, biodiversity, the blue economy. The regional assessments are often based on national studies which generate information on governance, the investment climate, fisheries, tourism, oil and gas exploration and extraction, and many other priority sectors and themes. The regional assessments provide key information to reinforce regional cooperation and build political will in the face of growing threats to ocean health.

21. **National ocean strategies and plans.** The ROGS draws on the existing national oceans strategies, blue economy plans and related instruments. The Technical Annex summarises available selected quantitative and qualitative information. An initial phase of ROGS implementation will be tasked with organising a more comprehensive synthesis. The ‘State of the WIO’ is reported under four clusters: (i) maritime security; (ii) blue economy; (iii) environment and natural resources: and (iv) knowledge and capacity building. However, it is clear that there cross-cutting issues and actions shared across the clusters. For example, sustainable fisheries (blue economy cluster) benefits from maritime security, from a healthy ocean environment, from knowledge of the fish stocks and the advice of informed fisheries specialists.

2.3 MARITIME SECURITY

22. Maritime security underpins ocean governance by supporting compliance with the rule of law with respect to the sustainable use of the oceans. While the benefits of maritime security are not readily estimated, the losses from lack of maritime security are amply evidenced by the \$1.2. billion/ year estimated costs incurred by the region, and global costs in the order of \$9 billion.

Piracy, fisheries enforcement and illicit trafficking have fostered regional cooperation. The Djibouti Code and its Jeddah Amendment, the MASE and recent creation of the Contact Group on Maritime Crime and Security (CGMCS) serve as focal points for such cooperation. Several points emerge from regional dialogues:

- a) the high cost of maritime security is likely to require ongoing external support and arrangements for rapid response to any ‘crisis’ may be required
- b) the current cooperative arrangements are relatively weak and may benefit from stronger institutional links, such as MOUs, rapid response plans and communication protocols

2.4 BLUE ECONOMY

23. **Blue economy - meaning.** The term ‘blue economy’, as used in the ROGS, has two different meanings. It is used to refer to all economic activities related to oceans, seas and coast. However, when referring to investment or ‘development’, the term blue economy is used to refer to sustainability, or to “sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and ocean ecosystem health”. Several WIO countries and RECs have blue economy strategies.

24. **Economic value.** The gross marine product of the WIO (equivalent to the annual marine GDP, or ‘market value’) is estimated to be is at least US\$20.8 billion. The total ocean wealth (or estimated capital value of the ocean and ocean ecosystems) of the Western Indian Ocean region is at least US\$333.8 billion. This estimate does not include the value of non-market goods and asserts, such as some ecosystem services or cultural values. Approximately 60 million people in the WIO live within 100km of the coast.

25. The WIO blue economy is heavily influenced by global economic trends. These include inflation, rising national debt, increased business risk, possible fragmentation in some supply chains and in trade relations. Information on the scale and type of regional public and private investment is not readily available (see section on finance – Regional Blue Portfolio). Despite commitments to support the sustainable development agenda by the ‘global north’, leaders have recognised that there is a growing technology and investment gap. The region will need to ensure inclusion of the ocean economy in recent calls for an overhaul of the global financial architecture

26. **‘Mega’ projects.** Two types of investment dominate the blue economy: (i) oil and gas exploration and extraction; and (ii) hub port and corridor development. These investments are orders of magnitude larger than any others and have major influence on the national economies. The total capital investment (capex) for oil and gas exploration activities in (all) Africa reached \$5.1 billion in 2022. African enterprises accounted for less than one-third as foreign investors finance and execute most of the activities. Port and corridor (road, rail and possibly pipeline) investments are also linked to oil, gas and other extractive industries in the interior of the continent. Despite confirmed hydrocarbon resources, the scale, financing and timescale for many of these projected investments (such as LNG terminals) remains uncertain. A substantial part of the ‘corporate’ blue economy in many WIO countries is either owned by or operated by non-WIO enterprises, including in: shipping, tuna fleets, ports, and tourism.

27. **Shipping, fisheries, tourism.** Shipping has largely recovered to pre-Covid levels. Two key tuna stocks are considered overfished and about 40% of assessed coastal fisheries are considered overfished. However, there have been substantial advances in community co-management of small-scale fisheries, in agreement on minimum terms and conditions of access for tuna fisheries and major advances in understanding of ecosystem connectivity and in mariculture development. Tourism continues to recover from Covid 19. The larger corporate operators have had the capacity to rebuild but in the absence of support packages, many smaller enterprises have not. Tourism also suffers from the capture of benefits by global ‘discount tourism’ operators, high internal travel costs.

28. **Net benefits.** In aggregate, the net balance of payments for the regional blue economy is likely to be negative as most key inputs (energy, manufactured goods) are imported, many from outside the region; because a significant part of the value added may not be captured in the local economy; because the opportunities for inter-regional trade are limited; and because the circular economy is in its infancy. However, quantitative information on the balance of trade and net benefits from the blue economy are lacking.

2.5 STATE OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

29. **Historical trend.** Historical trends have generally been negative: declines in mangrove and seagrass habitats, degradation of coral reefs, loss of marine and coastal biodiversity and decline in endangered species. For example, Kenya and Tanzania lost about 18% and Mozambique lost 27% of mangroves habitats over the last several decades. The losses are directly attributable to use human actions, including: use of mangrove timber for firewood or for house construction, clearance for construction of salt or shrimp production units, pollution, landfill and changes in the environmental flows of rivers.

30. **Protection and conservation.** Growing On the other hand, leaders have recognised the threats to coral reefs, to mangroves, wetlands, seagrass and seamount habitats and to ecosystem health. Numerous initiatives have been launched, including through Nairobi Convention protocols, establishment and extension of marine protected areas, marine spatial planning, and coastal zone management. Biodiversity concerns have been embedded in fisheries management and coastal development. Studies on pollution have been completed and regulatory measures on single-use-plastics put in place. Action plans on marine plastic pollution and marine litter and guidelines and standards for water quality have been prepared.

31. Knowledge, scientific understanding and capacity on the marine environment has expanded significantly and public awareness of the challenges has grown markedly, including through expanded civil society organisations, more responsible corporate behaviour and enforcement of environmental

regulations. Specific targets, including for establishment of MPAs, for biodiversity and GHG emissions have been adopted and commitments made to global initiatives on ocean health.

[Section to be completed]

2.6 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

[Sections to be completed]

2.6.1 Status and trends in ocean knowledge, science and awareness

2.6.2 Status and Trends in WIO Regional Ocean Governance

32. **Regional governance gap analysis.** Regional discussion has identified several gaps in ROG. These include:

- a) lack of common political and economic agenda on ocean exploitation
- b) lack of coordinated approach to ensure maritime security (piracy, illegal migration, smuggling, human trafficking)
- c) unresolved and emerging maritime border disputes on territorial seas and EEZ
- d) weakness in actions to end destructive fishing practices and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing
- e) lack of concrete action to address challenges of climate change
- f) inadequate internally-generated funding mechanisms, hence donor-dependency
- g) inconsistent prioritization influenced by individual nations' economic agenda defined by political landscape and international relations.

2.6.3 National ocean governance initiatives

2.6.4 Resources for regional ocean governance

2.6.5 Cross-cutting issues

3 IDENTIFICATION OF REGIONAL PRIORITIES

33. The regional priorities were identified by the ROGS Task Force and are listed in **Error! Reference source not found.** For the purposes of the ROGS, the priorities are grouped under four overlapping and inter-related clusters. Additional cross-cutting issues, such as finance and institutional arrangements are considered separately. The clusters are as follows:

- a) Cluster. Maritime Security
- b) Cluster. Blue Economy (the blue economy and maritime security clusters were combined in a single cluster during the Task Force dialogues but are detailed separately)
- c) Cluster. Environment and Natural Resources
- d) Cluster. Knowledge Management and Capacity building.

34. The clusters and priorities overlap on thematic and subject matters that require complementary actions. For example, 'fisheries' is placed in the blue economy cluster, but has links to regional maritime enforcement, to natural resource management and regional cooperation on knowledge and capacity building. Similarly, the marine plastic pollution is placed in the environment and natural resources cluster, but most of the actions required (such as solid waste management) fall under the blue economy cluster (e.g. investment in waste management and circular economy), while monitoring of marine litter and awareness raising falls within the knowledge cluster.

35. The ROGS addresses those priorities identified by the TF in so far as the resources available for the preparation of the ROGS allowed. Those priorities which are not addressed in detail and other emerging regional strategic priorities are expected to be addressed during implementation of the ROGS

36. A participatory process led by the Task Force [and engaging stakeholder organisations and a public consultation process] developed inputs to the ROGS for each priority. The following sections present the results of the dialogues. The presentation of all the priorities is structured in a similar manner as follows

- a) identification of regional priority as a ‘consensus’ characterisation of the priority
- b) proposed regional goal(s) and key regional actions required
- c) proposed leadership or regional implementation arrangements

4 MARITIME SECURITY CLUSTER

37. Maritime security provides the stability and basis for effective actions on the priorities within the other clusters. Partly because of the sensitive nature of the subject no Technical Dialogue has been held on maritime security *per se*. However, several other technical dialogues and related workshop inform the specific actions set out under this cluster. Some of these actions, prevention and preparedness for oil spillage, might equally be placed under the Environment and Natural Resources cluster.

38. The current maritime security target areas include prevention of piracy, fisheries enforcement operations, prevention of traffic in drugs, arms and people. Detailed action plans already exist for many of these targets. However, there are several areas where additional coordinated actions are required. These include:

- a) oil spillage prevention and preparedness directly linked to the Nairobi Convention ‘Emergency Protocol’ Articles 3.1 and 3.2.
- b) threats to undersea or subsea cables
- c) monitoring and control of activities in the ABNJ
- d) joint positions on deep sea mining exploration and extraction, including contributions to a possible updating of the AU AIMS with respect to deep seabed mining
- e) strategic positioning.

39. **Strategic positioning.** The WIO is a crossroads of geopolitical interests. The strategic interests include the flow of oil and petrochemicals by shipping from the Gulf States, the potential extraction of oil, gas and minerals from offshore and inland resources, and the development of trade corridors to landlocked countries. Other geopolitical interests include the establishment of security alliances, bases for distant-water fishing fleets, a range of financing initiatives and growing interest in deep sea minerals. While these issues are considered to be outside the scope of the ROGS, ROGS activities will need to take account of the balance of geopolitical interests.

4.1 COOPERATION ON MARITIME SECURITY

40. In its implementation phase, the ROGS will support actions to develop effective cooperation on maritime security based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority.** This priority is identified as: enhanced regional cooperation on maritime security.
- b) **Actions.** The actions are: (i) reinforced institutional arrangements between stakeholders, including for information exchange and ‘domain awareness’; (ii) preparedness and response plans for potential maritime security incidents; (iii) arrangements of financing or supporting rapid ‘emergency’ action.
- c) **Leadership.** The Contact Group will take the leadership role in convening stakeholders, initiating or updating regional cooperation plans and establishing the means to support ongoing or recurrent requirements and rapid response facilities to emergencies.

41. The existing initiatives have been described in the previous section (also see Technical Annex). The Djibouti Guidelines/ Jeddah Amendment is a framework. The MASE is a project with a potentially limited timeframe; actions are undertaken by different agencies (IGAD, COMESA, EAC) with the IOC providing a coordinating role. IORA is focused largely on trade and investment. The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) covers the entire Indian Ocean. A regional network of maritime information

'fusion centres' include two in the WIO, in Seychelles and Madagascar. The UNODC provides support on combatting drugs and maritime crime. The 'loose' nature of the previous CG had the advantages of providing a forum for dialogue among legitimate stakeholders, a network for information exchange. It provided a means of organising joint actions on an incident or threat-response basis, rather than providing a permanent programme of actions requiring a secretariat and institutionalised commitment by partners.

42. The re-tasked Contact Group (CG) has the potential scope to address the spectrum of maritime security issues. While the CG initiative involves relatively weak international commitments, it provides a flexible and inclusive platform which can engage both regional and international stakeholders (e.g., enforcement agencies, ship owners, insurance companies, UN agencies). The ROGS can direct attention to the advantages and disadvantages of constituting a more formal structure.

4.2 PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS FOR SPILLAGES

43. **Prevention of spillage.** In its implementation phase, the ROGS will support actions to prevent spillage of oil and other contaminants (e.g., nurdles, chemicals) from both shipping and offshore platforms, based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority.** Development of regional plans to prevent spillages of oil and other pollutants, including provisions for their approval and implementation. Existing preparedness plan(s) do not adequately address the prevention of spillages.
- b) **Actions.** The regional plan preparation process will examine: (i) the need for creation of special areas for navigation in ecologically sensitive areas; (ii) designation of 'places of refuge' in the event of spillage; and (iii) enhanced tracking of and reporting by tankers and other bulk carriers.
- c) **Leadership.** (i) Joint actions by WIOMSA and IMO based on NC guidance. (ii) Scoping paper by WIOMSA for further consideration by countries and the region. (iii) Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Activities.

44. **Sensitive areas and places of refuge.** International measures to protect ecologically sensitive areas must be agreed through the IMO. The measures may include designation of shipping lanes, Areas to Be Avoided (ATBAs), speed restrictions, communications measures, reporting systems. The Northern Mozambique Channel is an example of such a PPSA. Designation of places of refuge for ships in distress (e.g., an oil tanker on fire) is a highly sensitive political and ecological challenge. The need stems refusals by port states to allow such vessels into their ports because of the potential environmental or economic costs which may result. The designation of a place of refuge (alternative to a port) implies choosing the 'lesser of two evils'. The regional implication is that the coastal state which provides the place of refuge potentially prevents a major spillage which may also adjacent countries. The ROGS activity will initiate a regional dialogue on this complex challenge with a view to building regional understanding and trust.

45. **Preparedness for spillages.** Extensive stakeholder consultations have resulted a regional oil spill contingency plan compliant with IMO guidance) and currently in draft form. In its implementation phase, the ROGS will actions based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority.** Approved regional oil spill preparedness plan to enable its implementation
- b) **Action.** Organisation of approval process and required follow-up work on commitments and resourcing arrangements.
- c) **Leadership.** Nairobi Convention Secretariat or a designated NC working group to initiate approval process including the institutional and resourcing challenges. In this regard, the NC will work in close cooperation with key stakeholders, including the IMO, the Funds, the industry organisations and the regional ports' organisations,

46. The ROGS Task Force considered that the draft regional oil spill preparedness plan should be adopted and implemented through a participatory process determined by the NC-COP and supported by the NC Secretariat (see Technical Annex for details).

4.3 MONITORING AND CONTROL OF ACTIVITIES IN THE ABNJ.

47. The coastal (and landlocked) countries have legitimate interests in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. ROGS actions will be based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority.** To ensure the consensus voice and collective authority of the region is effectively articulated and implemented in relation to activities in the ABNJ.
- b) **Actions.** WIO states are obliged to control the activities of their flag vessels in the ABNJ. However, WIO coastal states have no jurisdiction over the activities of non-WIO-flag vessels in the ABNJ. These activities are only subject to the rules of international conventions, which include the decisions of the IMO, the RFMOs (4), the International Seabed Authority and several conservation conventions.

The ROGS will convene a regional dialogue with the international organisations that have jurisdiction over activities the ABNJ to collectively indicate: (i) their programme of action in the WIO; (ii) how they plan to cooperate or develop synergies in areas of overlapping interest in the WIO; and (iii) to consider establishing a permanent WIO cooperation platform and programme of regional coordination backed with WIO-specific MOUs between the conventions or their secretariats. The regional dialogue will also include the formulation joint positions on deep sea mineral exploration and extraction.

- c) **Leadership.** The NC Secretariat with the possible support of the IOC.

48. **Secure undersea telecom cables.** Undersea telecommunications cables are the Western Indian Ocean's governance and security lifeline. About 95% of all international IT transactions pass through these cables which are essential for finance, trade and security. The 14 WIO cables are almost exclusively owned by private companies, most of which are large global IT companies. The international legal regime governing the cable network is deficient, partly because the cables also run through areas beyond national jurisdiction and also because the cable companies may be in competition. Most disruption is caused by accidents (e.g., fishing, anchoring), but some malicious damage is possible. Robust arrangements for repair and avoidance of disruption, including through cooperation between the cable service providers is deficient making WIO countries extremely vulnerable to incidents. The Indian Ocean Commission has already prepared a framework for action. Actions taken as part of the ROGS will be based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority.** Secure the integrity of the regional undersea cables network
- b) **Actions.** (i) Recognise the cables as critical regional infrastructure and part of geopolitical arrangements. (ii) Recognise the risks to the IT cables network. (iii) Follow up on work done by the Indian Ocean Commission on a framework for assessment of risks, building resilience, providing an effective legal framework and ensuring regional cooperative actions.
- c) **Leadership.** Indian Ocean Commission, given its interest and work to date.

5 BLUE ECONOMY CLUSTER

49. **Blue economy - meaning.** As already indicated, the term 'blue economy', as used in the ROGS, has two different meanings. It is used to refer to all economic activities related to oceans, seas and coasts. However, when referring to investment or 'development', the term 'blue economy' is used to refer to "sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and ocean ecosystem health". The blue economy links to many of the SDGs and SDG 14 in particular. Numerous economic activities are included in the blue economy. These include: tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, ports and shipping, offshore extractive and renewable energy industries, salt production and desalination. Development of the blue economy implies the development of a circular economy, the reduction of GHG emissions, and promoting equity in these sectors or industries.

50. **Policies.** The regional commitment to developing the blue economy is reflected in policies or strategic plans at AU, REC and national levels. High-level guidance is provided by the Africa Blue Economy Strategy (2019), the African Integrated Maritime Strategy, the Mining Vision, the Maritime Transport Charter and the PFRS (fisheries). COMESA and EAC (2022), IGAD (2021) and SADC are

all in various stages of development of blue economy strategies, which are aligned with the Africa Blue Economy Strategy. The recent Moroni Declaration by the WIO island states further consolidates the policy seascape. The REC blue economy strategies generally take the form of frameworks or roadmaps, and are not instruments to finance particular blue economy sectors. All WIO countries have national blue economy strategies or their equivalents, at times embedded in other economic development instruments. The national strategies have a more specific focus on inter-ministerial or inter-agency coordination and selected sector development. Given the diversity and scope of challenges, the ROGS focuses on selected topics and sectors, while recognising that considerable further regional cooperation can be of benefit with respect to those topics which are not addressed below.

51. The present iteration of the ROGS focuses on those priorities where there the benefits from regional cooperation are most evident in the short-term, while also identifying other areas where challenges remain in identifying a clear roadmap. The focus areas include: (i) fisheries; (ii) tourism; (iii) combatting marine plastic pollution; and (iv) marine extractive industries.

5.1 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

52. All WIO countries aim to increase benefits from sustainable tourism and all countries have various form of tourism plans and strategies which include marine or coastal tourism. There are multiple inter-related challenges in developing a regional strategy for tourism: scale and connectivity, multi-sector coordination, diverse financing and investment requirements, market segmentation. The geographical scale of the WIO and of some WIO countries makes cost-effective connectivity and synergies difficult to organise, for example with regard to linking tourism experiences across frontiers. For example, national airlines have limited capacity to build intra-regional tourism routes, and small/medium cruising and transboundary tourism corridors are in a development phase. Consequently, national or sub-regional strategies may be the most effective functional units. The public infrastructure required (roads, airports, electricity, ICT facilities, medical) is multipurpose and may not prioritise tourism. Hotels, lodges, resorts, and other tourist amenities depend on private finance and many national investors are decapitalised or in debt following Covid 19. There may be significant ‘leakage’ of tourism revenues through booking and credit-card agencies, which may potentially be captured in the national economies. The tourism market has numerous segments. There is a growing domestic market and market for sustainable blue tourism. Some countries envisage expanding high-end hotel tourism while others favour SMEs and ‘boutique’, community, or guesthouse models. These diverse visions require different financing, presentation and marketing. Recent stakeholder consultations identified the weak investment climate, particularly for SMEs, coordination in logistics and poor consumer information on sustainable blue tourism among the priority challenges.

53. Due to the diversity of challenges and the complex multi-polar nature of potential ‘solutions’, the ROGS will structure further regional stakeholder consultations to further specify actionable priorities based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority:** Identify practical, cost-effective regional actions to promote sustainable blue tourism and establish means to implement these actions.
- b) **Actions:** (i) Establish a programme of stakeholder consultations to address the priority. (ii) Prepare a set of regional strategic briefs that analyse and prioritise cost-effective regional actions and identifies the possible sources of national, external and industry financing. These briefs will may include use of tourism satellite accounts and tourism scenarios. (iii) Building on existing initiatives, consider the establishment of a robust regional working group with strong industry representation to focus these efforts and maintain impetus.
- c) **Leadership.** The NC Secretariat in close collaboration with UNECA and the WTO will convene key stakeholders to identify the leadership.

54. The actions will include a review of the experiences and lessons from national and regional tourism projects and initiatives in the WIO and other relevant seascapes, compilation of available scenarios on tourism futures, application of global guidelines and codes of conduct on blue tourism. The work will also ensure that all available opportunities for capacity building and development of the

digital interface for tourism are made accessible to SMEs and the prospects for new regional projects are explored.

5.2 BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

55. **A focus on benefits.** Sustainable capture fisheries are crucial to the wellbeing of coastal communities and central to ocean governance and. Fisheries have links to multiple SDGs and other ROGS priorities. Many coastal fish stocks and at least two of the main tuna resources are considered overexploited. In general, when fish stocks are exploited at their biologically sustainable level, the net economic and social benefits are substantially below optimum. This is due largely to higher costs per unit of catch and often lower unit catch value as fisher target fish lower on the trophic chain. As net incomes fall, the calls for larger vessels and improved fishing gear increase and drive increased resource pressure. In the WIO region the potential losses from ‘economic overfishing’ are in the order of \$200 million per year (landed value).

56. **Pathways.** The pathways to sustainable fisheries are already relatively well understood. The challenges are in implementation: (i) to implement the reforms required in the coastal fisheries and (ii) to achieve a balance in the sharing of benefits from the pelagic (tuna) fisheries, which mostly fall under an international management regime. Both challenges take account of the related biodiversity and ecosystem health targets.

5.2.1 Small scale and coastal fisheries

57. Sustainable fisheries are often seen as biological problem, rather than an economic, social and political challenge. Where fisheries are overexploited, the challenge is to create sustainable fisher behaviours while offsetting the negative social and economic impacts of the reduced fishing activity needed to balance fishing effort with resource availability. While scientific advice is important, the key actions address the economic and social drivers. These actions will include: improvement in the post-harvest value chain that benefit producers; support for alternative livelihoods in aquaculture, tourism, or payments for ecosystem services; education and technical training, community empowerment and many other interventions. Effective enforcement of actionable fishing rules will be linked to access to the social and economic incentives to drive community- level compliance. There is an understanding that continuity in the reform processes requires broad stakeholder support across political cycles.

58. Many WIO national and regional projects target sustainable small-scale and coastal community fisheries. However, many target only a part of the challenge: the science, the ecosystem, poverty, food supply, markets, technology, co-management of the fish resource. The ROGS will build a shared vision for each fishery and its role in the community, build a community consensus on the vision and the short to long-term steps for communities, and generate means of securing the support for implementation based on the following understanding.

- a) **Priority.** Build sustainable small-scale and coastal fisheries.
- b) **Actions.** (i) Prioritise economic and social interventions for reforms based on social, economic and biological scientific advice and community-level long-term consensus vision for the fishery. (ii) Build an integrated portfolio of fisheries initiatives both at national and regional levels to create synergies, avoid duplication, generate partnerships and provide consensus on objectives, processes, impacts, timescales and continuity of support systems.
- c) **Leadership.** The Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission as a convenor of national stakeholders and external development partners with a strong regional engagement in fisheries, coastal community and SME development, social reform and other relevant areas.

5.2.2 Tuna and shared fisheries

59. The benefits of the tuna and related pelagic fisheries (sharks, billfish) are captured by the WIO coastal states, by foreign fleets, by the regional and international processing industry and along the distribution and retail chains. The distribution of the benefits is strongly influenced by fleet and processing plan ownership, contractual arrangements on supplies of raw and processed tuna changing import tariff regimes, particularly for canned tuna. The productive assets (fleets and processing plants)

are largely owned or controlled by corporations ‘outside’ the WIO and tuna which is exported ‘raw’ may ultimately compete with WIO tuna on supermarket shelves. The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) has the international mandate to set the ‘rules’ for the different fisheries which include the purse seine fishery (for canned tuna), the longline fishery (for frozen tuna mainly for direct consumption) and multiple coastal fleets which reach ‘industrial scale’ in the Maldives. Most of the stocks managed by the IOTC are subject to overfishing, overfished or have an uncertain status. Consequently, the capital value and flow of potential benefits to the point of landing is threatened.

60. In order to secure increased benefit from the fishery WIO countries have agreed upon a set of minimum terms and conditions of access (MTC) which include both technical conditions and levels licence fee payments directed largely at distant water, or foreign-flag fleets. There are ongoing discussions on allocation of tuna ‘quotas’ between the parties to the IOTC, which include numerous non-WIO countries that have rights to fish these stocks under international law. Discussions are under way to enhance the consensus built on the MTC by drawing on the (sub-regional) tuna management experiences of the Nauru group of countries in the Western Central Pacific.

61. The ROGS will support the development of and management of a sustainable WIO tuna fishery and efforts to secure a more equitable share of the benefits from the fishery based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority:** Development of and management of a sustainable WIO tuna fishery with a secure a more equitable share of the benefits.
- b) **Actions.** (i) Support regional initiatives to ensure economically sustainable fisheries for highly migratory species tuna, including through the SWIOFC, joint actions in the IOTC and initiatives by SWIOTUNA and the WIO industry stakeholders which are beneficially owned in WIO countries. (ii) Link the actions required to other ROGS priorities, including on maritime security and compliance, climate change, a circular economy for waste fishing gear, scientific advice, capacity building and ocean accounts. (iii) Consider parallel actions, as appropriate, in relation to the effective management and equitable distribution of benefits from sustainable deepwater fisheries.
- c) **Leadership.** The Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) will coordinate actions including through memoranda of understandings with the Nairobi Convention and others and, subject to the instructions of the parties to SWIOFC, establish clear institutional arrangements with key regional stakeholders and provide a platform for implementation of relevant components of future regional projects or initiatives.

5.3 PREVENTION, REDUCTION AND CONTROL OF MARINE PLASTIC POLLUTION

62. **An economic or environmental challenge?** Arguably, given its linkages to the NC Protocol on Land-based Sources of Pollution, this priority could equally be placed within the Environment and Natural Resources cluster. However, many of the actions required are spread across awareness building, changes in corporate and consumer behaviour, investments in solid waste management and a circular economy, and legislative changes. Many of these actions rest on an economic foundation and require strong engagement by economic actors.

63. **Current initiatives.** Communities, businesses and countries have benefited from an era of ‘cheap plastics’ – cheap, because the environmental costs of plastics were not included in the market price of plastic products. Combatting marine plastic pollution (MPP) and plastic pollution in general requires that the environmental costs be allocated along an international value chain from producers of plastic raw materials to consumers. A hierarchy of initiatives inform the ROGS: (i) the global ‘plastics treaty’ draft negotiating text provides a rapidly changing framework (all plastics actions); (ii) a regional action plan on marine plastic pollution (MPP only) takes account of (iii) a regional marine litter action plan (plastics plus other marine litter – plastics comprise over 80% of marine litter).

64. The ROGS will implement a regional marine plastic pollution (MPP) action plan based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority:** To prevent reduce and control marine plastic pollution in the region

- b) **Actions:** Consider and adopt a regional action plan on MPP which has the following key components. (i) Preparation, review and support for implementation of national action plans on MPP. (ii) Shared knowledge and capacity. (iii) Alignment of policies and measures, including on the responsibilities of industry, on technical definitions, standards and trade classification for plastics, on consensus positions in the global plastics treaty and related WTO trade and the environment negotiations. (iv) access to affordable finance for implementation of national action plans and investment in a circular economy and its enabling environment.
- c) **Leadership.** The NC Secretariat will establish a dedicated task force to implement the regional action plan. The task Force will have broad representation and expertise from stakeholders directly involved in implementation, in particular from industry (including circular economy innovators and the waste management industry), municipal authorities, international trade, waste-pickers, leading NGOs, consumer groups and the financial partners and the RECs. Regular task force reports will be made publicly available and specifically directed to the relevant AMCEN agenda and the Africa Group established for the plastics treaty negotiations.

65. **Fishing gear and the circular economy.** The Indian Ocean Commission and other actors have significant advances in scoping the potential for a regional blue circular economy. This is partly driven by the perception that many smaller or island economies lack the economies of scale required for a viable plastics circular economy. Lost or waste fishing gear and end-of-life plastic fishing and recreational vessels comprises a significant proportion of MPP. The regional action plan may direct particular attention to introducing extended producer responsibility (EPR) requirements for these products as a focal or ‘flagship’ activity. Some collection of waste fishing nets already occurs in the region (for recycling outside the region) and functional EPR schemes for plastic vessels exist in some (non-WIO) jurisdictions.

5.4 MANAGING OFFSHORE EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES

5.4.1 Offshore oil and gas

66. Although no Technical Dialogue has been held on offshore extractive industries, guidance for the ROGS is provided by the African Mining Vision (2009), the Natural Resources Charter (2008), the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, SDG 12 and many other sources. WIO countries with oil and gas resources face competing choices between securing the benefits from extraction of these products and contributing to the increased global emissions. ‘Sustainable mining’ may be a contradiction in terms, but assuming that extraction proceeds, a regional approach can help avoid some negative impacts, including by implementing best available environmental, economic and social practices. These practices include: (i) the use of strategic environmental assessments (SEAs) and EIAs; (ii) transformation of the revenues generated by the sales of mineral capital into sustainable growth of communities, businesses and effective governance for peace and prosperity; (iii) measures to avoid the ‘resource curse’ and ‘Dutch disease’ (both attributable to weak governance); and (iv) transparent management of revenues, including through sovereign wealth funds.

67. ROGS support can potentially target several areas: (i) capacity building for management of SEAs and EIAs, including establishment of environmental, social and economic baselines for the communities and their living natural resources and ecosystem health; (ii) identifying areas of special ecological value; (iii) supporting information systems to track and value resource extraction and its impacts and distributional effects; (iv) fostering dialogues on resource allocation and extraction in transboundary offshore oil and gas basins; and (v) providing independent assessments of potential economies of scale in shared large-scale shore-based investments, such as LNG and port facilities or marine pipelines. ROGS actions will be based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority:** Apply the Africa Mining Vision “Transparent, equitable and optimal exploitation of mineral resources to underpin broad-based sustainable growth and socio-economic development” to offshore extractive industries and shore-based infrastructure in the WIO.
- b) **Actions:** (i) Build national and regional capacity for SEAs and EIAs, including regional expertise to interpret and assess the studies prepared by the investors. (ii) Support establishment of verifiable environmental baselines and indicators prior to extraction facilities. (iii) In

association with key stakeholders, consider the creation of a facility to provide independent environmental, social and economic assessment of major investment that are likely to impact the coastal and marine environment. (iv) Identify transboundary offshore oil and gas basins and principles and best practices equitable allocation. (v) Support independent monitoring, assessment, and transparent reporting of the environmental, social and economic of the impacts of extraction.

- c) **Leadership.** The NC Secretariat will convene key stakeholders to establish a process to support implementation of consensus actions.

5.4.2 Deep Seabed Minerals

68. Three policy instruments make reference to deep seabed minerals (DSM): the AU AIMS, the AU Blue Economy Strategy and the UNECA Blue Economy Handbook. These minerals are largely located in the ABNJ, are the common heritage of mankind and authorisation by the ISA is required both for exploration and exploitation. In the Indian Ocean, China, Germany, India and Korea have all expressed interest in mineral resources. Several exploration areas have been designated and one reserved area (see map in Technical Annex).

69. While extraction of (DSM) in the Indian ocean region is not expected in the near future, the WIO coastal states need to keep informed of developments and build the capacity for effective engagement. The ISA has an obligation to build capacity for developing States, including ensuring the expansion of opportunities for participation in activities in the Area. An [ISA survey](#) of these requirements prioritised regional strategic frameworks for oceans research, for oceans and for the blue economy.

70. The ROGS will support regional actions based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority:** Regional capacity building and institutional development to ensure the WIO region can benefit from DSM and protect WIO ocean ecosystems.
- b) **Actions.** (i) Make full use of the capacity building and advisory support provided by the ISA and other organisations, including to review legal and institutional requirements at national level. (ii) Take measures to ensure policy coherence at AU, REC and national levels, including formulation of a common position in international fora (such as the ISA, IORA). (iii) Consider means of engagement in any exploration activities in the Indian Ocean.
- c) **Leadership.** Indian Ocean Commission in close collaboration with the Nairobi Convention Secretariat and the AU.

5.5 SUSTAINABLE PORTS, TRADE AND MARITIME CONNECTIVITY

[Technical Dialogue to be prepared]

5.6 INNOVATION AND TRANSFER OF MARINE AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

[Considered outside the scope of the current version of the ROGS]

6 ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES CLUSTER

71. The following priorities, which are closely linked to many of the NC Protocols are detailed:

- a) Water quality and prevention, reduction and control of nutrient and chemical pollution
- b) Development of sustainable marine protected areas
- c) Implementing the BBNJ treaty
- d) Conservation of biodiversity [Technical Dialogue to be prepared]
- e) Adaptation to and Mitigation of Climate Change [Technical Dialogue to be prepared]
- f) Conservation and rehabilitation of coral reef ecosystems [Technical Dialogue to be prepared]

6.1 CLEAN AND HEALTHY MARINE AND COASTAL WATERS

72. Coastal waters around cities, river outflows areas of intensive agriculture, and industrial complexes may be significantly impacted by chemical or nutrient pollution from land-based sources. The SDG 14 Prevention, reduction and control of chemical pollution target 14.1, states “By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution”. The Nairobi Convention already has a protocol on land-based-sources of pollution (LBS Protocol) and a strategic framework backed by guidelines on setting water and sediment targets for coastal and marine areas has been prepared. The framework draws on accepted international principles, including pollution prevention, waste minimisation, the polluter pays principle, and participatory precautionary adaptive assessment approaches.

73. The ROGS will take action to prevent, reduce and control marine, estuarine, coastal and ocean water pollution based on the following understanding:

- a) **Priority:** Water quality (WQ) in the WIO region meets international standards by year 2035.
- b) **Actions:** (i) Adopt the Strategic Framework for Coastal & Marine Water Quality Management in WIO Region and the Guidelines for Setting Water and Sediment Quality Targets for Coastal and Marine areas. (ii) Elevate the WIOSAP – Regional Task Force for Water, Sediment and Biota Quality to the level of a NC Regional Task Force on Water Quality (WQTF). (iii) Mandate the WQTF to coordinate regional WQ activities; facilitate national actions; collect and compile standardised regional information on WQ; identify pollution hotspots and constraints to achieving WQ targets. (iv) Contribute to the formulation of regional projects or initiatives to reduce water pollution. (v) Consider the progressive introduction of mandatory WQ reporting for major hotspots under the NC LBS Protocol.
- c) **Leadership.** NC Secretariat upon direction of the COP and with the support of the existing Task Force and partners.

6.2 MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Outcome of Technical Dialogue in preparation

6.3 RATIFICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BBNJ TREATY

Outcome of Technical Dialogue in preparation

6.4 CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY

[Technical Dialogue to be prepared]

6.5 CONSERVATION AND REHABILITATION OF CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEMS

[Technical Dialogue to be prepared. The coral, mangrove and seagrass habitats are grouped under this priority as these coastal systems are often closely linked, actions to promote sustainable use are broadly similar; and grouping may facilitate access to financing and other resources.]

6.6 ADAPTATION TO AND MITIGATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE

[Technical Dialogue to be prepared and linked to the African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032)]

Note: Several rapidly developing considerations will need to be addressed, including:

- the outcome of UNFCCC COP28 Nov/Dec 2023
- the potential of the ‘new’ IMF Resilience and Sustainability Facility and
- the outcome the Request for an ITLOS Advisory Opinion on Climate Change and International Law (when available).

7 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING CLUSTER

7.1 SCIENCE FOR GOVERNANCE

[To be prepared following the NC Science to Governance meeting, December 2023]

7.2 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

[See Draft Information Management Strategy to be presented at the Marine Regions Forum]

7.2.1 Monitoring the State of the WIO

[See:

- Implementation of the ROGS (below).
- Information Management Strategy.
- Workshop on Ocean Accounts]

7.2.2 Communications strategy and raising public and political awareness

[This is part of the implementation process but the content is developed by the Cluster and is part of the IMS]

7.3 DEVELOPING REGIONAL INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

[Resources for Technical Dialogue TBD]

7.4 DEVELOPING HUMAN RESOURCE CAPACITY

[Resources for Technical Dialogue TBD]

7.4.1 Addressing Gender issues and disadvantaged coastal communities

8 IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

8.1 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

74. **Platforms.** Three high-level platforms on policy, finance and technical challenges are required for effective regional ocean cooperation and implementation of the ROGS, to drive consensus and decisions, to provide long-term vision, to underpin financing, monitor progress and impacts and adjust the ROGS to changing oceans. The institutional structure and function of the platforms outlined below will be subject to further extended discussions convened to implement the ROGS. The ROGS will establish the following platforms:

- a) **Ocean Policy Platform** which facilitates enhanced cooperation among WIO countries through the RECs, with the AU and with prospective sources of support for ROGS implementation and is advised by the Finance and Technical platforms.
- b) **Blue Finance Platform** which addresses all financing challenges, including the compilation and monitoring of investments and impacts and provides an interface for accessing affordable finance
- c) **Technical Platform** which consolidates the work of [four] Cluster Platform and provides consensus advice to the Policy Platform. This ‘Science to Governance’ interface and could have the form of a ‘scientific council with space for private sector and civil society’. The Technical Platform is supported by four Cluster Platforms on: (i) maritime security; (ii) blue economy; (iii) environment and natural resources; and (iv) knowledge and capacity.

75. **Leadership and hosting.** The following outline arrangements will be reviewed and negotiated during the implementation of the ROGS:

- a) the Ocean **Policy Platform** will be comprised of the RECs and the IOC and potentially hosted by the AU or UNECA with a chair revolving among the RECs

- b) the **Blue Finance Platform** is an ‘open-ended’ regular consultation process involving both WIO-based and external sources of public and private finance. It is tasked to prepare ROGS financing plans and secure financial commitments for implementation of the ROGS. It will be hosted by either the IOC (which manages a number of existing regional funds in a cost-effective manner) or the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). National ‘blue finance’ institutions such as SeyCATT, ProAzul and BIOFUND will provide technical advice.
- c) the **Technical Platform** is co-hosted by the NC (environment) and the ECA (social and economic advice) and the four Cluster Platforms will be established as follows:
 - (i) Maritime Security hosted by the Contact Group on Maritime Crime and Security (CGMCS)
 - (ii) Blue Economy – hosted by the IOC and may require sector-level breakout
 - (iii) Environment and Natural Resources hosted by the NC
 - (iv) Knowledge Management and Capacity Building hosted by WIOMSA

76. **Resourcing the Platforms.** Resourcing will be secured through the redirection of some of the existing financing and human resources, such as existing regional working groups, inclusion of the Platform resourcing in new initiatives, in proposals new grant funding and establishing partnerships. The ROGS may target initiatives currently under discussion with the GEF and others.

8.2 FINANCING THE ROGS

77. **Financing gap.** Affordable blue finance is a constraint to both public and private sectors, for capital investment and in order to support the recurrent costs of conserving and maintaining global public goods, such as coral reef biodiversity or blue carbon sinks. There is a disconnect between the high demand for blue finance and the supply of affordable finance. There is surplus of investment capital seeking verifiable, sustainable green/blue investments and large numbers of unfunded blue projects, investment proposals and initiatives seeking affordable finance. Given the estimated financing required by the global south (about \$2 trillion/ year) for climate change related investments alone, the business-as-usual, project-by-project approach

78. **Blue Finance Architecture.** The ROGS will help bridge the financing gap through a Blue Finance Architecture with the following core elements:

- a) a **regional blue finance platform** as a convener of a permanent dialogue on WIO blue finance
- b) a **regional blue portfolio** to create a large pipeline of investment which reflects the aggregate financing requirements of the region’s projects and provides the scale and vision required to attract major funding, to leverage and blend different sources of finance, to create synergies, to reduce transaction costs and to spread risk
- c) a **blue taxonomy** to link the blue investment portfolio to the SDGs, to net zero targets and other high-level regional targets, to reduce transaction costs by applying a common set of investment criteria, indicators and safeguards across investment categories, including by progressively developing and applying the Sustainable Blue Finance Principle and lessons from green taxonomy experiences
- d) **regional ocean accounts** to monitor and evaluate performance of the regional blue portfolio, to provide common metrics to track investment performance, and to avoid duplication in project-by-project monitoring and evaluation requirements.

79. **Blue Finance Platform.** The Blue Finance Platform is a partnership between: (i) the WIO countries (including the private sector); (ii) the Regional Economic Communities; and (iii) sources of national and external finance for sustainable oceans and the blue economy. The potential financial partners in the Platform are envisaged to include institutions managing grant, loan, debt, commercial and impact finance at national, regional and global levels. The financial partners include the existing bilateral development partners, the international finance institutions, the climate and impact funds, philanthropic funds, the national blue funds and private sector representatives.

80. **Blue Portfolio.** The demand for blue investments will be 'bundled', or aggregated across the WIO countries (particularly the smaller economies), or across sub-national entities/ municipalities in

larger economies (e.g. for municipal solid waste management investments). This blue portfolio creates a large pipeline of investment and reflects the aggregate financing requirements of the region's projects. The pipeline is structured as a 'portfolio' of prospective investments in sustainability and can be structured by sector (e.g. green ports) or by theme (SDG 14 indicators, Net Zero). The blue portfolio provides a number of benefits:

- a) it creates the scale of investment which is more attractive to major institutional investors
- b) through the blue taxonomy, it links the investments to global objectives (SDGs, Paris commitments) for which there is already funding available
- c) the scale enables the different providers (grant, loan, equity) to design leveraging instruments to blend different sources of finance, to co-finance projects or an entire portfolio segment
- d) it creates synergies, reduces transaction costs while the the diversity of projects in the portfolio offsets risks
- e) enables planning a medium/long-term series of investments within a common framework
- f) common metrics can be used to assess investment viability, to track performance, to share reporting, to reduce transaction costs and to learn lessons and collectively establish a range of solutions, experiences and approaches
- g) it facilitates the continuity and sustainability of regional initiatives which may be undermined by stop/ start project finance.

81. **Blue Taxonomy.** Application of the blue taxonomy has several implications. Funding agencies may be expected to align their criteria, processes, guidelines and monitoring and evaluation requirements within a common set of indicators and metrics. National agencies charged with tracking key indicators will need to provide timely and verifiable information in a transparent manner. The blue taxonomy is a bridge between the ocean accounts and the investment portfolio. The taxonomy provides a generic systematic appraisal or orientation of blue investments in relation to the SDG14 (and other indicators) while the ocean accounts provide a framework for tracking these indicators at national and regional level. Actions are already under way to develop national ocean accounts and related knowledge products.

8.3 MONITORING, REVIEW AND ADJUSTMENT OF STRATEGY

[See Report of the Ocean Accounts workshop and the draft IMS strategy]

82. The ocean accounting framework will be used to monitor the ROGS as it includes environmental, economic and social elements and additional governance metrics can be added (see below). The system will progressively be established with the assistance of the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP).

83. The monitoring and reporting scheme will forge strong links to the UN Regular Process for which regional capacity will be built. The SDG indicators will be among the items tracked and the system will draw on experiences in other ocean regions, including OSPAR and the monitoring of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.