

## **Towards A Regional Mangrove Vision**

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### **Abstract**

At the global level, mangroves deliver substantial ecosystem services that play a critical role in supporting human well-being through climate regulation, disaster risk reduction, food security and poverty reduction for more than 120 million people globally living in tropical coastal areas. The critical need to conserve, manage, and restore functioning mangrove forests and related coastal ecosystems are recognized in multiple international treaties including: the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, 1971; the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), 1992; the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982; and the United Nations Watercourses Convention, 1997 as well as in global commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the potential of mangrove conservation in contributing towards serving such multiple international commitments is still only marginally realized and utilized. The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region is characterized by high coastal and marine biodiversity, both in terms of species and ecosystems, which places it as one of the richest and most interesting ocean regions of the world.

Mangrove loss rates vary immensely between regions and, particularly when their distribution and health are non-linear at national and local levels, that isn't surprising in the WIO region where four countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and Madagascar) hold ca. 99% of its mangrove cover. The coastal areas of the WIO region have experienced increasing loss rates over the past decades, a change in that trend started only to manifest in recent years. The policy recommendations are:

- I. Call on the Nairobi Convention Parties to develop a regional mangrove vision (and related strategy framework as needed) that encapsulates the region's commitments and priority needs.
- II. Call on the Nairobi Convention Parties to facilitate the mainstreaming of mangroves in national development planning
- III. Call on the Nairobi Convention Secretariat and Parties, and the WIO Mangrove Network, to establish the relevant institutional structures such as the proposed Regional Advisory Group for supporting synergies between mangrove-related initiatives, crafting the elements of the regional mangrove vision, and supporting a regional policy dialogue on mangroves.
- IV. Urge the Nairobi Convention Secretariat, Parties and partners to create a strong case for the regional mangrove vision through regional and global dialogues (beyond the dialogues in the proposed Regional Advisory Group) to enhance mangrove conservation goals, commitments and priority needs at regional and international level. This will help profile the WIO region as a "mangrove champion" in the global sphere.