



The State of Eritrea



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

**23rd Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of
Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE)**

ECA Office for Eastern Africa

Concept Note for the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting (AEGM):

Harnessing the Blue Economy for Regional Integration

Asmara, Eritrea

05-07 November 2019

I. Background

The “Blue Economy” considers all activities deriving from marine and aquatic ecosystems (oceans, coasts, seas, rivers, lakes and groundwater, and associated resources) and recognizes their synergies. The concept includes recognition that the productivity of healthy fresh-water and ocean ecosystems is a basis for aquatic and maritime-based economies. It recognises that a healthy Blue Economy can work to ensure that islands, coastal countries, and even land-locked states, can benefit from Blue-Economy resources.

This idea is encapsulated in the African Union’s *2050 Africa’s Integrated Maritime Strategy* (AU 2050 AIMS), which describes the Blue Economy as the “new frontier of African Renaissance”. The annual value of the African maritime industry, alone, has reached around USD 1 trillion.

The contribution of the Blue Economy to the sustainable development agenda was highlighted extensively during the first Global Blue Economy Conference, in November 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya. Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) and Member States have since engaged in the development of strategic frameworks, policies, strategies and action plans on the Blue Economy, as a way of contributing to achieving their socio-economic and environmental objectives, which include improved well-being for beneficiary populations.

After Asia, Africa is the second-largest continent in the world with an area of approximately 30 million km². Its two oceans (the Atlantic and Indian) and two strategic seas (Mediterranean and the Red Sea) for international trade and maritime transport make the continent a pivot of international commerce and a source of abundant maritime resources. Of Africa’s 54 countries, 38 are coastal and island States. The Territorial Seas and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) under the jurisdiction of African Coastal States are extensive, measuring around 13 million km², and their outer continental shelves amount to some 6.5 million km². Africa is also home to the second and third-longest rivers in the world (the Nile and the Congo). There are 63 international river basins covering approximately 64% of the continent’s land area. The African Great Lakes constitute 27% of the world’s surface fresh water, while groundwater represents 15% of the continent’s renewable water resources.

The 21st session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) on *Transformative Growth: Constraints and Catalysts*, held in Moroni, Comoros, on 7-9 November 2017, included a session on *The Blue Economy: How to leverage its full potential?* The meeting recognized that the Blue Economy has the potential to create wealth, economic growth and transform the lives of Africa’s citizens. The meeting also noted the importance of cooperation between Member States at all levels to ensure a peaceful resolution of disputes over the delimitation of borders and sea areas, which is an essential condition for optimal use of Blue Economy resources.

Increased regional cooperation could also facilitate the sustainable use of existing port facilities and corridors and the development of new infrastructure projects as part of an integrated approach to investment in support to the creation of regional value chains.

The 2016 *Blue Economy Policy Handbook for Africa* is an essential tool in developing national, regional and continental policy frameworks to support rational and sustainable exploitation of Blue Economy resources. The current approach to the Blue Economy is linear and compartmentalized with weak connections and links between levels of intervention (global, regional, and national). The Handbook proposes a paradigm shift in both conceptual and institutional approaches. The proposed framework adopts a multi-sectoral approach, in which environmental, social and economic dimensions are intertwined between the Blue Economy sectors – and synergies strengthened. The *Policy Handbook* includes a step-by-step methodology to using such a multisectoral approach.

The African Union (through AU-IBAR, Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Seychelles, among others as well as the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa) have embarked on Blue Economy policy development, with the *Policy Handbook* as a reference. However, there is a strong need for further alignment and synergies at all levels to ensure smooth implementation. The August 2019 Nairobi Stakeholders' consultative workshop on Africa's Blue Economy Strategy further recognized the essential value of such an alignment.

The potential of aquatic and marine ecosystems and associated resources is still barely known. More than 80% of the oceans remain completely unmapped, yet we need solutions to so-far-unknown problems in the way of protecting environments and rendering all forms of exploitation viable and sustainable over the very long run. This is very complex. It is, therefore, strategically important to emphasize building the knowledge and capacity development of key stakeholders in the Blue Economy so that they can support policy making to achieve outcomes that can protect the Blue Economy.

Harnessing the full potential of the Blue Economy through adequate policy formulation at all levels, building on knowledge generation and capacity development, depends on strengthening regional integration in Africa (in particular, in Eastern Africa) through identifying Blue Economy policy development synergies among the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs).

Enhanced regional integration would, in turn, contribute to greater cooperation and common efforts at all levels towards the sustainable use and management of natural resources. Linking national, sub-regional and continental policy frameworks and aligning them with development agendas, while forging partnerships with a wide array of stakeholders (private sector, academia and civil society), is necessary to prevent duplication and wastage of resources and to optimize positive impacts of Blue Economy policy implementation and enhance regional integration.

II. Objectives of the Session

The session will showcase continental, sub-regional and national policy initiatives to harness the Blue Economy, highlighting challenges and lessons learned, good practices and achievements. It will also discuss options for further alignment among and between policy frameworks and development agendas for enhanced regional integration. Participants will be invited to provide inputs to the discussion and to review the following questions:

- a) How can we strengthen the **knowledge and awareness of Blue Economy assets** for policy development?
- b) What are the **key existing examples of Blue Economy policy development initiatives** that could be replicated and scaled up?
- c) How can we improve the **alignment** between Blue Economy policy frameworks at all levels (national, sub-regional, continental) and with development agendas such as Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030?
- d) How can relevant stakeholders **build partnerships** to support Blue Economy policy implementation?

III. Format of the Meeting

This will be one of the parallel sessions on Wednesday 06 November 2019, 13:30 – 17:30.

Presentations by:

- **Daya Bragante**, Blue Economy expert, UNECA
- **Amb. Tewelde Weldemichael**, D.G., Department of Marine Development, Ministry of Marine Resources, Eritrea
- Ministry of Mining and Energy, Eritrea
- **Fatime Kanté**, Economist, Department of the Blue Economy, Seychelles
- **Ahmed Ouledi**, Research and Training, Blue Economy Committee, Comoros
- **Andriantsilavo Jean Michel RABARY**, Blue Economy expert, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Madagascar
- **Gilles Ribouet**, Head of Communications, Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)
- **Eshete Dejen**, Blue Economy Unit Coordinator, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

- **Mohamed Seisay**, Senior Fisheries Officer, African Union InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR)
- **Dave Muli**, Regional Coordinator, Eastern and Southern Africa, International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- **Joseph Chisasa**, Professor, University of South Africa

The convener and contact person for this session is Daya Bragante, Blue Economy expert, UNECA. Further clarification can be requested from the convener via email: bragante@un.org.

IV. Participation

The session will include experts from Eastern African countries, as well as representatives of RECs, IGOs and other relevant institutions.

V. Supporting Documents

African Union. (2012). **2050 African Integrated Maritime Strategy**. Available at: <https://au.int/en/documents-38>

ECA. (2016a). **Blue Economy Policy Handbook for Africa**. Available at: <https://www.uneca.org/publications/africas-blue-economy-policy-handbook>

ECA. (2016b). **The Blue Economy**. Available at: <https://www.uneca.org/publications/blue-economy>