



Africa Ocean Forum Call for Action

Nairobi, 25 June 2024

Context

Recognising the importance of Africa's coastal and marine resources for socio-economic development, and their global significance for climate regulation, biodiversity, food security, and cultural heritage, **we, the leaders and representatives of African nations and partners at the Africa Ocean Forum**, hereby declare our commitment to strengthen African leadership on ocean actions.

This **Call to Action** commits to enhancing cooperation within Africa and with global partners to promote knowledge, innovation, and equitable use of coastal and ocean resources. Aiming to regenerate coastal and marine ecosystems while addressing climate challenges, socio-economic needs, and development priorities.

Principles

- **African Leadership:** Strengthen African leadership in ocean conservation and regenerative blue economy development through inclusive governance, regional cooperation, and capacity building and learning, whilst enhancing South-South collaboration as well as South-North dialogue and cooperation.
- **Regenerative:** Ensure the transition from Blue Economy to a regenerative blue economy that drives conservation outcomes, is socially inclusive, and economically viable for coastal communities, and that it is embedded in global commitments.
- **Equity:** Promote equitable, inclusive and effective governance of shared ocean spaces, access to and sharing of benefits from ocean and coastal resources, prioritising women, youth, marginalised and vulnerable communities.
- **Innovation and Knowledge:** Integrate local traditional ecological and social knowledge and insights into modern scientific research to drive innovation in coastal and ocean conservation and climate resilience.
- **Resilience:** Strengthen the resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems, habitats and communities against climate change, marine pollution, and other environmental stresses.
- **Blue Justice:** Ensure that ocean policies, financial flows and progress on ocean action are co-designed with, and responsive to the needs of, ocean-dependent peoples, the "tropical majority", youth, women, and coastal communities.

Call to Action

Facilitate the self-empowerment of coastal indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) and the youth:

1. Affirm the critical role of IPLCs and youth, acknowledging their indigenous and local knowledge vital for conservation, and as stewards and custodians of the planet's future, and ensuring their active and meaningful participation in planning, decision-making, and management of coastal and ocean resources.
2. Enhance IPLCs and youths' beneficitation from the ocean, including through opportunities that diversify and optimise culturally appropriate benefits from a regenerative blue economy that re-connects communities to their environment, while conserving biodiversity, whilst taking into consideration the need for legal recognition.
3. Create innovative funding mechanisms for concessional financing to coastal IPLCs and young entrepreneurs to support scaling of their solutions.
4. Collaborate on establishing a network of marine IPLCs in Africa, starting with the building a database of existing IPLCs and supporting expansion and their integration into existing regional networks such as AICA, WIOMPAN, and the Community Leadership Network.
5. Document and disseminate lessons learned from the LMMA application and philosophy in the Western Indian Ocean and to facilitate its potential expansion across Africa.

Strengthen ocean governance and institutional frameworks:

6. Strengthen the functionality and effectiveness of institutions for improved coastal and ocean governance at local, national, and regional levels, and enhance transparent, inclusive, and participatory decision-making processes involving all stakeholders.
7. Support governments to harmonise existing, and where necessary, revise legal and policy frameworks that facilitate effective understanding of the OECMs concept, implementation of co-management and locally-led management of coastal areas, and the sustainable use and management of coastal and marine resources.
8. Support and facilitate an Africa-led coalition of subnational governments for enhanced exchange on best practices, sharing of opportunities, and through provision of knowledge and tools necessary to strengthen coordination and acceleration of ocean action and impact at seascape and local level.
9. Implement measures to protect and promote ecological restoration of degraded coastal and marine ecosystems, critical to both climate mitigation and adaptation.

Promote coastal and marine conservation, restoration, and sustainable resource management

10. Ramp up efforts to meet Target 3 and Target 4 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework on protecting and restoring respectively of at least 30% of marine and coastal areas by 2030, ensuring ecologically representativeness, connectivity and their equitable governance, including unpacking them in local languages to drive action at local level.

11. Promote establishment of transboundary marine conservation areas for ecological connectivity and the recognition of seascapes and locally managed marine areas for positive biodiversity, socio-economic and local livelihoods outcomes.
12. Support the moratorium on deep-sea mining until a criteria including the introduction of assessments, effective regulation and mitigation strategies are met and eliminate harmful fishing methods such as bottom trawling.
13. Promote application of the IUCN Global Standard on Nature-based Solutions and ecosystem-based management approaches to strengthen the design, acceleration and achievement of effective, ambitious and sustainable outcomes for conservation projects and regenerative actions.
14. Support measures to support enforcement of regulations and other measures to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and develop and implement data-driven fisheries management plans, including through the use of technology, regenerative fisheries management practices, minimisation of bycatch, for improved ecosystem health and resilience to safeguard small-scale fisheries.

Advance development of a Regenerative Blue Economy:

15. Develop and implement regenerative blue economy strategies at local, national and regional levels, and expand their scope to include protected areas, ocean conservation, sustainable tourism, regenerative aquaculture, renewable energy, maritime transport, and support to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises through access to knowledge, resources, finance, technology, and markets.
16. Support the development of, and stimulation of regenerative value chains, blue food systems, and ocean-positive sectors including, but not limited to, capacity building, access to finance, markets, and investments, whilst enhancing gender-sensitive value addition and ensuring fair and equitable sharing of benefits to all.
17. Promote awareness of the IUCN guidance on a Regenerative Blue Economy to promote understanding of the Regenerative Blue Economy concept, its principles, and linkages between conservation and sustainable development across the African continent.

Foster ocean science, education and training:

18. Invest in science and research institutions to enhance output of knowledge on coastal and ocean ecosystems that informs and facilitates innovative disruption in ocean conservation and management practices and encourage innovation and the use of emerging technologies.
19. Invest in state-of-the-art oceanographic research, data analytics, and communications and storytelling infrastructure and training programs across the African continent to enhance promotion and amplification of African science through differentiated mechanisms.

20. Ensure that Regenerative Blue Economy policies and actions are harmonised, concrete, specific and are informed by science and local and indigenous knowledge, and that regional frameworks integrate the regeneration principle and are supported by scientific metrics.
21. Facilitate knowledge exchange and data-sharing among African and global practitioners for a comprehensive understanding of ocean systems, including the high seas and deep sea.

Strengthen regional and international cooperation:

22. Foster regional collaboration through dedicated platforms and frameworks, including through engagement with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and inter-regional cooperation mechanisms to address transboundary ocean governance challenges.
23. Strengthen South-South cooperation and leadership at an inter-regional level on ocean governance, conservation, and Regenerative Blue Economy development, and establish an inter-regional forum for mutual exchange, learning and sharing of best practices.
24. Develop and strengthen partnerships for the promotion of diverse, locally-appropriate innovative solutions compatible with the dynamics across rural and urban Africa, making room for both "smart" and "low-tech" solutions.
25. Promote mutual understanding to better integrate and preserve the diversity of local African cultures, history, and coastal people and ensure that conservation actions integrate the human livelihoods dimension.

Ratify and implement the BBNJ High Seas Treaty:

26. Reduce the gaps in knowledge and awareness around the United Nations agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ High Seas Treaty) to support a coherent, cohesive, determined common African voice towards its early ratification and equitable implementation of its provisions and measures.
27. Foster and support the national domestication of the BBNJ High Seas Treaty through legal and policy review, capacity sharing and strengthening of national institutions, technology transfer, and stakeholder empowerment and engagement, taking into consideration the differences between regions and between countries.

Unlock ocean innovation and investment:

28. Foster collaboration between the private sector, civil society, academia and research, and government to promote innovation and its translation into tangible economic benefits, including through fora to facilitate locally-appropriate Science to Business Solutions.
29. Develop intellectual property frameworks that ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from ocean-based discoveries and exploitation, with a focus on knowledge transfer to African nations.
30. Enhance local livelihoods and economic development by targeting and supporting for-profit coastal communities and involving them in co-designing the required finance and simplifying templates for grant and non-grant funding.

31. Innovative funding models for ocean conservation through implementation of convertible grants that transform into concessional loans based on project revenue, ensuring financed projects promote sustainable practices and uplift community livelihoods beyond fisheries.
32. Engage governments at all levels to identify priority geographies and sectors, to ensure finance initiatives focus on areas with the highest impact potential.

Combat Marine Pollution:

33. Align efforts in the ongoing negotiations to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution that covers the entire life cycle of plastics, ensuring it is ambitious, effective, equitable, science-based, and includes the elimination and phaseout of unnecessary and problematic plastics, chemicals, and products of concern.
34. Advocate for a new dedicated Multilateral Fund under the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, to provide adequate financing for developing countries, and to build on and advance locally-appropriate innovative solutions.
35. Ensure a just transition that leaves no one behind, by ensuring that measures consider the African context, including the economic and social impacts, such as potential job losses and devastation to local and informal livelihoods across the plastics value chain.
36. Promote effective waste management based on the principles of waste hierarchy, prioritising waste prevention and reduction before recycling, including improved product design and strong accountability and responsibility frameworks, such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) systems.
37. Catalyse public-private-civil society engagement and partnerships, and private capital investments in circular economy across the plastics value chain, especially in countries with limited economies of scale.

Conclusion:

This Call to Action signifies our collective resolve to accelerate Africa, and by extension, global South leadership and collaboration on equitable, evidence-based and future-looking ocean action. By harnessing the unique strengths and knowledge of our continent and beyond, we can create a prosperous blue future for Africa, and the world at large. We call upon all African nations, regional bodies, international partners, and stakeholders to join us in this vital endeavour.