



**Welcome Remarks by Madam Francisca Gonah, on behalf of Acting  
Director AU-IBAR, Dr. Nick Nwankpa, 8 December, 2021,  
Naivasha, Kenya**

Representative of the Hon. Minister in charge of Blue Economy in Kenya

Representative of the Government of Sweden

Representative of AUDA-NEPAD

Representatives of African Union member states

Representatives of Regional Economic Communities

Representatives of specialized regional institutions

Development partners

Experts

Non-state actors

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

A very good morning to you all.

I have the honour and privilege to welcome you all to this inception workshop of the project on 'Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in African Blue Economy'. The project is implemented by the African Union InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) and funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). First of all, I wish to convey warmest greetings from Her Excellency Ambassador Josefa Sacko, the Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (DARBE) and her appreciation to the Government of Sweden for the support to her department towards blue economy development. Her gratitude is also expressed to the Government of Kenya for hosting AU-IBAR and the unrelenting collaboration in animal resources development. It is a great source of delight to observe the presence of AU member states, RECs and other specialized institutions, Non-states actors, including woman, in this inception workshop. AU-IBAR has always valued your cooperation.

**Representative of the Hon. Minister and distinguished delegates,**

I seek your indulgency to give a brief introduction of my institution. AU-IBAR is a specialized technical office of the African Union Commission under the department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment and has the mandate to promote coordination, sustainable exploitation and utilization of fisheries, aquaculture, livestock and wildlife for the socio-economic development of the AU member states and the Regional Economic Communities. AU-IBAR is the lead institution mandated to spearhead the implementation of the African Union Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for fisheries and aquaculture. AU-IBAR coordinated the formulation of the African Blue Economy Strategy and is currently supporting the implementation of this pan African instrument which has a vision of promoting inclusive and sustainable blue economy that significantly contributes to Africa's transformation and growth in fulfilment of a key goal of the African Union Agenda 2063.

### **Representative of the Hon. Minister and distinguished delegates,**

The support of the Government of Sweden towards ‘conserving aquatic biodiversity in African Blue Economy’ is timely and is a significant step towards enhancing the sustainable and integrated development of African blue economy resources. This support is thus a giant step in aligning with the aspirations of the African Union development agenda 2063. It is no gainsaying to state that the need to conserve and protect the aquatic biodiversity in African aquatic ecosystems is very urgent. As delegates are aware, the seas, oceans, lakes and rivers inhabit significant number of biodiversity and the ecosystems provide sources of livelihoods, food security and wealth. However the unsustainable exploitation of these resources are threatening the biodiversity, resources and environmental sustainability. In Africa, several factors are threatening aquatic biodiversity in African aquatic ecosystems. These include overexploitation of living species, pollutions from several sources (land-based municipal and agricultural activities), uncontrolled introduction of exotic species in aquaculture systems, effluents from mining activities etc. Consequently, important aquatic resources are becoming increasingly susceptible to both natural and artificial environmental changes. Thus, conservation strategies to protect and conserve aquatic life are necessary to maintain the balance of nature and support the availability of resources for future generations.

Against the above background, the Swedish Embassy to the African Union collaborated with AU-IBAR to conceptualize a proposal that was developed into a full project, which will be launched within the next three days. The project is aimed at strengthening institutional capacity on the continent for conserving the threatened aquatic biodiversity in both marine and freshwater ecosystems. The beneficiaries would be AU member states, regional institutions, Non-state actors, women and youth.

### **Representative of the Hon. Minister and distinguished delegates**

Within the course of the next three days, delegates would have the opportunities to be briefed on the project activities, implementation mechanisms and to also give opinion or recommendations. There will also be expert’s presentations on critical issues on aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems conservation as well as environmental governance – on lessons learning and best practices.

Before concluding, I wish again, on behalf of Her Excellency the Commission for DARBE, to underscore our gratitude to the Government of Sweden for this timely support in our endeavor for blue economy development in Africa. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the Kingdom of Norway for their support in initiating the implementation of the African Blue Economy Strategy and the ongoing rolling of the Strategy out among AU member states and RECs. I also wish to thank the European Union for their support to AU-IBAR for the implementation of the policy framework and reform strategy for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa, particularly support to AU-IBAR for the ongoing project on enhancing governance of the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

I thank you for your attendance