

Information Note

TO SUPPORT AFRICAN UNION MEMBER STATES AT THE UNFCCC COP29 TO HIGHLIGHT AND STRENGTHEN COMMON POSITION ON AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

11th to 22nd November, 2024 Baku, Azerbaijan

Background:

The African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), is a specialized technical office of the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (DARBE) of the African Union Commission (AUC). AU-IBAR is mandated to support and coordinate the utilization of livestock, fisheries, aquaculture and wildlife as resources for both human wellbeing and economic development in the African Union Member States (AU-MS).

The Vision of the AU-IBAR in the Strategic Plan 2018–2023 is an Africa in which animal resources contribute significantly to integration, prosperity and peace. AU-IBAR's intervention in the fisheries and aquaculture sector is guided by the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa (PFRS) which is aimed at improving governance of the sector for increased sustainable contribution to food security, livelihoods, and wealth creation within the framework of the African Union Agenda 2063.

The African Continent is adjacent to highly productive marine ecosystems including the seven African Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) viz., Agulhas Current (LME), Benguela Current (LME), Guinea Current (LME), Canary current LME, Mediterranean Sea (LME), Red Sea (LME) and Somali Current (LME). The continent is also endowed with networks of freshwater Rivers and Lakes. The Seas, Oceans, Lakes and Rivers inhabit a significant number of biodiversity, and the ecosystems provide sources of livelihoods, food security and wealth. The African aquatic ecosystems inhabit living and non-living resources. However, the unsustainable exploitation of these resources is threatening the biodiversity, natural resources and environmental sustainability. Several factors are threatening aquatic biodiversity in Africa's aquatic ecosystems.

These include; overexploitation of living species, pollution from several sources (land-based municipal and agricultural activities), uncontrolled introduction of exotic species in aquaculture systems, effluents from mining activities. Other threats to aquatic biodiversity include; poorly and or unplanned urban development and resource-based industries, such as mining, coastal tourism activities, coastal infrastructure development that destroy or reduce natural habitats. In addition, air and water pollution, sedimentation and erosion, and climate change also pose threats to aquatic biodiversity.

Consequently, important aquatic resources are becoming increasingly susceptible to both natural and artificial environmental changes. Hence 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. The need to strengthen capacity of AU Member States and Regional institutions for protection and sustainable exploitation of living resources within their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) is identified as priority in conservation of aquatic biodiversity to ensure sustainable contribution to food security, livelihoods, and wealth creation.

Of significance is the gender vulnerability and specifically the threat to women's livelihoods and the imperative need to safeguard the marginalized groups. The exposure of women to climatic threats and weather risks is a key contributing factor to aquatic biodiversity destruction leading to a vicious cycle of poverty in communities, especially in fisheries and aquaculture, touristic locations. The question is 'How do we empower women, as agents of change and frontrunners, to build new pathways or accelerate transition to aquatic biodiversity conservation and sustainability?'

The highest political organ of the African Union endorsed the African Blue Economy Strategy (ABES) aimed addressing some of these challenges and for the AU–Member States to sustainably harness the resources of aquatic ecosystems. The ABES envisioned an inclusive and sustainable Blue Economy that significantly contributes to Africa's transformation and growth. The Strategy incorporates key critical vectors for promoting Blue Economy development on the Continent, including fisheries, aquaculture and ecosystem biodiversity conservation; oil and gas exploration, shipping, maritime safety and trade; climate change, environmental sustainability and ecotourism; sustainable energy and extractive mineral resources; governance, institutions and job creation.

The objective of the ABES is to guide the development of an inclusive and sustainable Blue Economy that becomes a significant contributor to Continental transformation and growth, through advancing knowledge on marine and aquatic biotechnology, environmental sustainability, marine ecosystem utilization, conservation and carbon sequestration, the growth of an Africa-wide shipping industry, the development of Sea, River and Lake transport, the management of fishing activities on these water bodies, and the exploitation and beneficiation of deep Sea mineral and other marine resources.

The African Blue Economy Strategy (ABES) is consolidated based on the following five thematic technical areas:

1. Fisheries, aquaculture, conservation and sustainable aquatic ecosystems;
2. Shipping/transportation, trade, ports, maritime security, safety and enforcement;
3. Coastal and maritime tourism, climate change, resilience, marine ecosystem, environment, infrastructure;
4. Sustainable energy and mineral resources and innovative industries; and,
5. Policies, Institutional and governance, employment, job creation and poverty eradication, innovative financing.

Accordingly, AU–IBAR with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), is implementing a 3–year project on “Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in African Blue Economy” whose overall objective is to enhance the Policy environment, Regulatory frameworks and Institutional capacities of African Union – Member States and Regional Economic Communities to sustainably utilize and conserve aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems.

The specific objectives of the project are as follows:

1. To provide support to African Union Member States (AU–MS) to ratify and/or align key Global Instruments related to Blue Economy themes (with specific reference to protecting and conserving biodiversity);
2. Optimizing conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity while minimizing conflicts among Blue Economy sub–themes;
3. Strengthening measures for mitigating the negative impacts of coastal and marine tourism, oil, gas, deep Sea mining and climate change on aquatic biodiversity and environment, and;
4. Strengthening gender inclusivity in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management.

Rationale:

The UNFCCC COP 29 annual meeting has been scheduled to take place in Baku, Azerbaijan, between the 11th – 22nd November, 2024 with the following agenda:

The agenda focused mainly towards assessing progress and specifically on issues affecting the Environmental sustainability, Aquatic biodiversity conservation and ecosystems management that have been occasioned by climate change. Several items have been included on the [Agenda and of great attention is the Agenda item 1 \(7\) On Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts](#) and joint annual report of its Executive Committee and the Santiago network for averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of Climate Change.

During the UNFCCC COP 19 and 20, Parties requested the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts (WIM) Executive Committee to report annually to the COP through subsidiary bodies and to make recommendations, as appropriate.

Accordingly, matters relating to the report of the Climate Change Impacts Executive Committee are considered under the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the SBI. Article 8, paragraph 2, of the Paris Agreement states that the WIM shall be subject to the authority and guidance of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) and may be enhanced and strengthened as determined by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA). Accordingly, the matters referred to in paragraphs 43–44 of the agenda are considered under the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI).

Also, Agenda Item I(8) Matters relating to finance where issues like:

- (a) Long-term climate finance;
- (b) Matters relating to the Standing Committee on Finance;
- (c) Report of the Green Climate Fund to the Conference of the Parties and guidance to the Green Climate Fund;
- (d) Report of the Global Environment Facility to the Conference of the Parties and guidance to the Global Environment Facility;
- (e) Report of the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage and guidance to the Fund;
- (f) Arrangements between the Conference of the Parties, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement and the Board of the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage;
- (g) Seventh review of the Financial Mechanism will be discussed.

In addition, Agenda item I(9) on Matters relating to technology development and transfer:

- (a) Joint annual report of the Technology Executive Committee and the Climate Technology Centre and Network;
- (b) Linkages between the Technology Mechanism and the Financial Mechanism;
- (c) Poznan strategic programme on technology transfer.

I(10) Matters relating to capacity-building.

I(11) Matters relating to the least developed Countries.

On the Agenda item I(14). Gender and climate change

COP 25 adopted the enhanced five-year Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan. Secondly, COP 28 requested Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) to initiate the final review of the implementation of the enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan with a view to concluding the review at Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI). Accordingly, matters relating to this agenda item are considered under the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI).

Also, COP 25 requested the secretariat to organize an in-session dialogue on Gender Day to be held annually during sessions of the governing bodies; to prepare a compilation and synthesis report on the implementation of gender-responsive climate policies, plans, strategies and action as reported by Parties in regular reports and communications under the UNFCCC process; and to continue preparing an annual report on gender composition.

In addition, the COP will be invited to refer consideration of the annual report on gender composition and the compilation and synthesis report on the implementation of gender responsive climate policies, plans, strategies and action to the (SBI). It will also be invited to take any action it deems appropriate on the basis of the recommendations of the (SBI).

Expected outcomes of the participation at UNFCCC COP 29:

1. AUMS will be supported and encouraged to advocate for long term financing of programs aimed at facilitating the aquatic biodiversity and environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation and mitigation, prioritize Technical capacity development and technology transfer; and,
2. Issues relating to Gender inclusivity and climate change adaptation and the International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts will be highlighted and emphasized.

Date & Venue

11th to 22nd November, 2024 of Baku Azerbaijan.

