

CONCEPT NOTE

SUPPORT TO AU MEMBER STATES TO ROLLOUT THE JOINT MANAGEMENT PLANS AND PROTOCOLS AND THE HARMONIZED REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS IN SHARED FRESHWATER ECOSYSTEMS FOR CONSERVING AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT.

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 and youths, 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 economic development of the Continent, including fisheries, aquaculture and ecosystem biodiversity conservation; shipping, maritime safety and trade; climate change mitigation and 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 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 AU–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 AU–MS to ratify and / or align relevant International / Regional 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:

Africa is abundantly blessed with a coastline of over 30,000 Kilometers, adjacent to a vast expanse of oceans and seas. Maritime zones under Africa's jurisdiction total about 13 million square kilometers including territorial seas and approximately 6.5 million square kilometers of the Continental shelf. Thirty nine of the

fifty-five African Union Member States are coastal or island States.

The Continent is also endowed with huge networks of rivers, lakes, lagoons, floodplains, waterways, and wetlands with massive potential for socio-economic advancement of the Continent. Africa's ocean, sea and inland waters (lakes, rivers and reservoirs) provide significant benefits in the continent in terms of: i) food and nutrition security from fisheries and aquaculture, ii) economic and social development from fisheries and aquaculture, marine and coastal tourism, shipping, mining, energy and iii) ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, water filtration, atmospheric and temperature regulation, protection from erosion and extreme weather events.

Noting the vast opportunities' as well as the challenges being faced on the African Continent, and in a bid to fully harness these aquatic endowments for the benefits of the Continent's, AU-IBAR hired consultancy services –to conduct an integrated assessment of shared marine and freshwater transboundary aquatic ecosystems. The report of the consultant (Dr. Ruby Asmah) on the transboundary issues in shared freshwater ecosystems is now available and has been validated by stakeholders; the consultancy identified critical aquatic environmental issues affecting aquatic biodiversity conservation, and developed mechanisms for joint management plans and protocols in shared blue economy resources; towards developing harmonized regional frameworks for aquatic biodiversity conservation. As a follow-up on the recommendations from the studies, the project on “Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in African Blue Economy” made provision to support and provide technical assistance to two Regional transboundary ecosystems to rollout the joint management plans and protocols and harmonize Regional frameworks for conserving aquatic biodiversity.

Objectives of the assignment

The main objective of this assignment is providing technical assistance to five AU Member States for revision of existing National Instruments to align with and or mainstream the consultancy report on harmonized Regional biodiversity frameworks, the joint management plans and protocols for conserving aquatic biodiversity and environmental management in shared aquatic ecosystems.

The current report covers studies on is on transboundary freshwater ecosystems and would be implemented in in shared freshwater ecosystems Since aquatic biodiversity and environmental issues are transboundary issues, as in the consultant's report, a Regional approach would be adopted support three AU Member States sharing the Lake Victoria ecosystems. AU-IBAR would therefore leverage on the Regional mandate of Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) facilitate the implementation of this activity in the three AU Member States. The MSs' to benefit from this assignment will include; Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya under the LVFO umbrella and as an inland transboundary ecosystem.

Approach;

The support will go towards stakeholders' engagement, technical assistance for revision of existing national instruments and to align and mainstream with the harmonized Regional aquatic biodiversity frameworks.

- a. Liaise with LVFO to technically facilitate the process
- b. LVFO to nominate a ground facilitator
- c. LVFO to assist to nominate a National Focal Points

Expected Outputs:

The expected output of the assignment will be a revised existing National Instrument aligned to harmonized Regional aquatic biodiversity conservation frameworks.

Other outputs shall include; reports from the respective National Focal Point persons; The harmonized report of the LVFO Focal Point; and a comprehensive workshop report and recommendations at the end of the assignment.

Implementation arrangement of the assignment

Role of RECs

AU-IBAR recognizes the role of the REC and thus, EAC, IGAD, shall be brought on board at some point during the consultative processes.

Role of LVFO

AU-IBAR will request (LVFO) to take the lead on this assignment, facilitate the planning and execution of the Regional workshop involving the AU Member States – Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. LVFO will nominate a technical facilitator and ground facilitator to coordinate this activity in the EAC Region.

National Focal Point

LVFO shall coordinate the nomination of a National Focal Point whose role shall be to coordinate the respective relevant MDAs in each MS whose mandate impact on the aquatic biodiversity conservation. The National Focal Point will be tasked to undertake extensive consultations on the on existing relevant Instruments, identify gaps vis a vis the Regional harmonized aquatic biodiversity frameworks in the respective MS.

Languages: English will be used

Responsible persons

Dr Mohamed Seisay Aquatic Ecosystems and Blue Economy Expert AU-IBAR, Kenindia Business Park Museum Hill, Westland's Road P. O. Box 30786-00100 Tel: +254203674000 Cell: +254718839356 Email: mohamed.seisy@au-ibar.org	Mr. Nadiope Eric Aquatic Biodiversity Conservation Policy, Legal and Institutional Expert AU-IBAR, Kenindia Business Park Museum Hill, Westland's Road P. O. Box 30786-00100 Tel: +254203674000 Cell: +254712183875 Email: eric.nadiope@au-ibar.org	Ms. Mercy Mango Project Administrative Assistant AU-IBAR, Kenindia Business Park Museum Hill, Westland's Road P. O. Box 30786-00100 Tel: +254203674000 Cell: +254706359099 Email: mercymango@au-ibar.org
--	---	--

Participants:

The number of participants shall not be more than 40 and shall comprise of MDAs related to the Blue Economy Sectors from the Three EAC AUMS of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda i.e. (Water transport, Water and Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Mining, Oil and Gas, Tourism and transport and shipping. In addition, Ministries for Foreign Affairs, Justice and the EAC, IGAD and the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC) will be invited

Duration

Two (2) days' Regional consultative workshop event.

Venue:

The Venue shall be Kampala - Uganda