

**STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP TO ROLLOUT THE JOINT  
MANAGEMENT PLANS AND PROTOCOLS AND THE HARMONIZED REGIONAL  
FRAMEWORKS IN SHARED FRESHWATER ECOSYSTEMS FOR CONSERVING  
AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT, 23RD TO 24TH MARCH,2023.**

**KAMPALA, UGANDA**

**Opening Remarks by Dr. Shigalla Mahongo, the Executive Secretary of Lake  
Victoria Fisheries Organization**

The Ag. Director-AU-IBAR- Dr. Nick Nwankpa, represented here by Madam Francisca,

Representative of the East African Community, Ms. Sindi Kasambala

Representative of IGAD, Dr. Eshete Dejen

Representative of the AU-IBAR

Representative of the East African Community Member States

The consultant-Dr. Ruby Asmah

Distinguished Experts

Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of Executive Secretary of Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO), Dr. Shigalla Bassanda Mahongo who could not be here with us due to other equally important assignment, I have a pleasure to welcome you to this important stakeholder consultative workshop to rollout the Joint Management Plans and Protocols and the Harmonized Regional Frameworks for Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity. As you all are aware that the East African region is endowed with oceans, African Great lakes and other lakes, dams and rivers which inhabit a

significant number of biodiversity. These aquatic ecosystems are very important as sources of livelihoods, food security and wealth to the riparian communities at the region.

### ***Ladies and Gentlemen***

There are several factors are threatening aquatic biodiversity in East African region aquatic ecosystems. These include;

1. Habitat loss and degradation: The destruction and alteration of aquatic habitats through activities such as dam construction, deforestation, urbanization, and agriculture can negatively impact the biodiversity of aquatic ecosystems.
2. Pollution: Pollution from human activities such as industrial and agricultural runoff, oil spills, mining and waste disposal can contaminate water bodies and harm aquatic biodiversity.
3. IUU fishing: IUU fishing can lead to declines in fish populations and disrupt food webs, affecting the biodiversity of aquatic ecosystems.
4. Climate change: Climate change can affect aquatic biodiversity through changes in water temperature, acidity, and nutrient levels, which can alter the composition and distribution of aquatic species.
5. Invasive species: The introduction of non-native species into aquatic ecosystems can displace native species and disrupt food webs, leading to declines in aquatic biodiversity.
6. Unsustainable water use: Unsustainable water use can lead to the depletion of water resources, affecting the biodiversity of aquatic ecosystems.

Therefore, conservation efforts in East Africa must address these factors and work towards sustainable management and protection of aquatic ecosystems to ensure the long-term survival of aquatic biodiversity to support livelihood, food security and wealth creation.

### ***Ladies and Gentlemen***

The support from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), to implement a project “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 at regional level is very much appreciated. The support underscores the global initiatives in ocean governance and ocean economy and promoting SDGs, especially SGD 14 (life below water).

***Ladies and Gentlemen***

The Lake Victoria basin has been designated as an Economic Growth Zone due to its central role it plays in the economic, social, cultural and general development of the East Africans. Therefore, I would like to thank the AU-IBAR for selecting Lake Victoria as one of the two Regional transboundary ecosystems selected for technical support. This support include to rollout the joint management plans and protocols and harmonize Regional frameworks for conserving aquatic biodiversity and to support Member States to revise existing National Instruments to align with harmonized Regional biodiversity frameworks, the joint management plans and protocols for conserving aquatic biodiversity and environmental management in shared aquatic ecosystems.

***Ladies and gentlemen,***

I wish to acknowledge a number of support to the East African region in biodiversity conservation through a number of interventions. This include GBIF—the Global Biodiversity Information Facility; JRS Biodiversity Foundation; LVEMP-I&II (Aquatic biodiversity mapping), LVBC {Identification and Mapping of Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) and Lake Victoria Biodiversity Informatics) among others. Let us use the experiences and lessons learnt from these interventions to inform the development of these important guiding documents under discussion today.

***Ladies and gentlemen,***

My profound appreciation to AU-IBAR for the support to EAC in the development of the Joint Management Plans and Protocols and the Harmonized Regional

Frameworks for Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity which will provide regional directions on how the aquatic biodiversity will be conserve and sustainably utilized for the betterment of the East Africans and beyond. I also wish to thank the consultant for the work well done, all the delegates, experts present here this morning as well as acknowledge the support of Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) to AU-IBAR and the continent at large.

Finally, it is my humble request that this support from AU-IBAR be extended to Republic of Burundi as well, since Burundi is one of the LVFO Partner States which also faces lots of challenges as far as biodiversity management is concerned within its national waterbodies.

I wish to reiterate the commitment of LVFO to coordination this activity to its fruition.

Thank you very much and I wish everyone fruitful deliberations.