



CONCEPT NOTE

1ST PROJECT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING AND 1ST PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING FOR CONSERVING AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY IN AFRICA BLUE ECONOMY PROJECT

20-21 & 22-23 SEPTEMBER 2022 RESPECTIVELY MOMBASA, KENYA

CONTEXT

The African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), a specialized technical office of the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (DARBE) of the African Union Commission (AUC), 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 Member States of the African Union. The Vision of the AU-IBAR 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. Also, within the framework of the African Union's Agenda 2063, Goal 7: Blue/ocean economy for accelerated economic growth, the Africa Blue Economy Strategy (ABES) was developed to guide an inclusive and sustainable blue economy that significantly contributes to Africa's transformation and growth. Furthermore, ABES advances knowledge on marine and aquatic biotechnology, environmental sustainability, marine ecosystem utilization, management and 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 aquatic spaces, and the exploitation and beneficiation of deep-sea mineral and other marine resources.

The Africa Blue Economy Strategy is endorsed at the highest political level of the continent. The Strategy incorporates key critical vectors for promoting blue economy development of the continent, including fisheries, aquaculture and ecosystem conservation; shipping, maritime safety and trade; climate change, environmental sustainability and ecotourism; sustainable energy and extractive mineral resources; governance, institutions and job creation.

The Africa Blue Economy Strategy 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.

The concern and actions towards the protection and conservation of aquatic biodiversity is embedded in all the five thematic areas of Africa Blue Economy Strategy. Thematic areas 1-4 put a strong emphasis on the set of actions required for protection and conservation whereas thematic area 5 (Governance) is cross-cutting and addresses issues of social welfare and ensuring overall coherence and coordination of all measures taken and implemented within the blue economy domain.

RATIONALE:

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 rivers and lakes. The seas, oceans, lakes and rivers inhabit significant number of biodiversity and the ecosystems provide sources of livelihoods, food security and wealth. These African aquatic ecosystems inhabit living and non-living resources; however, the unsustainable exploitation of these resources is threatening the biodiversity, resources and environmental sustainability. Several factors are threatening aquatic biodiversity in Africa aquatic ecosystems. These include but not limited to overexploitation of living species, pollutions from several sources (land-based municipal, mining and agricultural activities), and uncontrolled introduction of exotic species in aquaculture systems. 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.

AU-IBAR, with support from the Swedish Agency for International Development (SIDA), is implementing a 3-year project on “Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in African Blue Economy”. The overall objective of the project is to enhance the policy environment, regulatory frameworks and institutional capacities of AU member states (AU MS) and regional economic communities (RECs) to sustainably utilize and conserve aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems. The specific objectives of the project are as follows:

1. 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
4. Strengthening gender inclusivity in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management

The project provides for the establishment of Project Technical Committee (PTC) to support and guide for informed deliberation of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) as well as to generate synergies in implementations of activities between related projects and interventions by other partners. Thus, the main function of the PTC is to ensure coherence in the implementation of activities between the related projects, key implementing partners and relevant institutions at national, regional and continental levels. Additionally, the PTC develops recommendations for deliberation by the high-level PSC meetings.

Also, similar to the establishment of the PTC, the overall objective of the PSC is to give overall strategic direction and policy orientation of the project implementation. The key activities of the PSC include critical review of annual work-plans, progress of implementation of the project activities and other related project matters, including technical and financial reports.

The general composition of the PTC and PSC shall comprise of experts with deep knowledge and experience on issues of aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management. These are the Representatives from AUC-DARBE; Representatives of funding Partners; Representatives of implementing Partners, including AU-IBAR, which serves as the Secretariat; Representative AU Member States (AU MS) in charge of environment and biodiversity, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), specialized regional institutions (RFBs, RFMOs) including water-basin commissions, regional sea conventions (RSC), Centres of Excellence, non-state actor's representatives including women, youth and private sector. Other institutions, Co-opted experts will be invited as and when necessary as observers to the project steering committee

OBJECTIVES OF THE 1ST PROJECT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

The overall objective of the First Project Technical Committee is to review and validate the terms of reference (ToRs) for the committee as well share information on the implementation of the project so far as well as other ongoing initiatives on issues of conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environmental protection on the continent.

The specific objectives are to:

- a. Review and adopt the PTC terms of reference
- b. Disseminate project information as well as planned and ongoing activities
- c. Share information on planned and ongoing activities by relevant partners
- d. Map ongoing related ongoing initiatives and identify areas of potential areas of collaboration between the projects and other ongoing initiatives
- e. To develop complementarities and minimize duplications in implementation of activities
- f. Develop recommendations for consideration by the Project steering committee meeting

OBJECTIVES OF THE 1ST PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

The overall objective of the first Project Steering Committee is to review the draft terms of reference and formally establish the Project Steering Committee

The specific objectives are to:

- a. Review and adopt the draft Terms of Reference for the PSC, Chairperson and the Secretariat
- b. Create awareness among Project Steering Committee members on the project
- c. Disseminate information on status of project implementation, including progress on implementation of activities and challenges
- d. Share information on planned and ongoing activities by relevant partners
- e. Develop recommendations for strategic direction of the project

PARTICIPANTS:

The participants would comprise mainly of representatives of AU Member States from relevant institution (e.g. departments in charge of environment, tourism industry, mining, biodiversity, and other selected blue economy sectors). The RECs, specialized regional institutions (e.g. Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs), Regional Sea Conventions), LMEs representatives, AU Centres of Excellence, Non-state actors including women, youth and the private sector: