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Advancing Sustainable Ocean Governance in Africa

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The purpose of this note is to provide a comprehensive outlook on strengthening sustainable ocean governance in Africa. It underscores the African Ocean Governance Strategy and its implementation plan both of which have been validated by African Union Member States and key stakeholders. The note also outlines Africa's proposed engagement in the global ocean discourse, including negotiations under the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction and preparations for the United Nations Ocean Conferences. This paper seeks to secure endorsement and operationalization of the Strategy and to position Africa as a policy leader in the international ocean arena in line with Agenda 2063 and SDG 14.

II. Background

2. Africa's ocean territory, the Exclusive Economic Zones, high-seas, areas beyond national jurisdiction, and linked estuarine and freshwater system, supports over 200 million coastal residents and underpins fisheries valued at more than US \$24 billion annually¹. Beyond fisheries, Africa's offshore oil and gas reserves exceed US \$300 billion in proven assets², and wind, wave and tidal energy potential could supply up to 20 percent of the continent's electricity by 2050³.
3. Yet coastal poverty rates run roughly 20 percent higher than inland averages, driven by limited access to health, education and sanitation services⁴. Rapid urban growth in port cities is projected to add 100 million residents by 2050 and this increases vulnerability to sea-level rise and extreme storms⁵, while gender disparities in marine value chains persist: women

¹ FAO. The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2024

² World Bank. Africa's Offshore Energy Potential, 2023

³ Ibid.

⁴ UN Human Development Reports, Coastal Dimensions, 2022.

⁵ UN DESA, World Urbanization Prospects, 2023.

dominate fish processing yet lack tenure and decision-making authority limiting their resilience to climatic shocks⁶.

4. Economically, small-scale fisheries provide up to 30 percent of animal protein for coastal populations, but post-harvest losses of up to 40 percent and weak market linkages limit incomes⁷. Aquaculture in West Africa grows at under 5 percent annually, far below a 12 percent potential, due to seed-stock shortages and inadequate extension services⁸.
5. Environmentally, overfishing threatens 34 percent of assessed stocks and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing costs Africa about US \$1.3 billion per year⁹. Mangroves are cleared at 1–2 percent per annum undermining their crucial role in coastal protection and carbon sequestration, seagrass meadows decline up to 10 percent per decade, and microplastics now appear in 90 percent of sampled fish¹⁰. Warming waters and acidification imperil coral reefs that support US \$50 billion in tourism and fisheries each year¹².
6. Pollution from land-based source such as plastics, agricultural runoff, and untreated sewage, exacerbates eutrophication and biodiversity loss, with microplastics detected in 90 percent of sampled fish. Climate change compounds these pressures: warming waters and acidification threaten coral reefs that support tourism and fisheries worth US \$50 billion annually.
7. Climate change amplifies socio-economic and ecological vulnerabilities across Africa's Ocean spaces. Accelerating sea surface warming shifts fish stocks into new areas, undermining small scale fisheries and complicating management efforts. More frequent and intense storms increase coastal disasters, stretching disaster response budgets and disrupting local economies. The degradation of coastal blue carbon ecosystems, mangroves, seagrasses, and salt marshes, also diminishes Africa's climate mitigation capacity.
8. On another spectrum, Ocean resource degradation driven by the factors mentioned above undermine the economic and social fabric of coastal communities. As fish stocks decline, small scale fishers lose a key income stream, deepening food insecurity and poverty. The removal of coastal wetlands eliminates natural barriers against storms and erosion, increasing damage to homes, roads and critical infrastructure. Together, these interconnected stressors erode community resilience, amplify livelihood risks and threaten the very foundations of Africa's emerging blue economy.
9. In summary, Africa's Ocean space sits at a crossroads: without urgent action to address social inequities, bolster economic infrastructure, and safeguard environmental integrity, the promise of the blue economy may remain unrealized.
10. Conversely, targeted investments in inclusive governance, green infrastructure, and ecosystem restoration could unlock trillions in value, climate resilience, and shared prosperity for coastal populations. This background underscores the imperative for the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment to champion a unified continental approach that aligns development, equity, and conservation in Africa's blue domain.

III. Continental and Global Decisions on Africa's Ocean Space

⁶ UN Women, Gender in Fisheries, 2021

⁷ World Bank, Fish Value Chains in Africa, 2023

⁸ FAO Aquaculture Statistics, 2023.

⁹ MRAG Ltd., IUU Fishing Losses in African Waters, 2022.

¹⁰ Global Mangrove Watch, Status of African Mangroves, 2023

¹¹ Jambeck et al., "Plastic Pollution in Marine Fish," *Science*, 2022

¹² IPBES, *Marine Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Assessment*, 2023.

11. Since ministers first called for an African ocean governance strategy at the fifteenth session of the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment in Cairo, Egypt, the Conferences' decisions have steadily elevated oceans in its ministerial outcomes. At its Sixteenth Session of the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment in Libreville Gabon, in 2017, ministers formally endorsed the development of a "governance strategy on oceans and seas in Africa," urging member States to strengthen national and regional institutions, adopt comprehensive ocean policies, and implement area-based planning tools across their Exclusive Economic Zones. They further called on the United Nations Environment Programme and the Regional Seas programmes to collaborate with fisheries commissions and support all ocean-based sectors including fisheries, coastal tourism, aquaculture, maritime transport, offshore renewable energy, and seabed mining through ecosystem-based approaches designed to foster an inclusive and sustainable blue economy.
12. At its 17th session in 2019 in Durban, South Africa the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment "took cognizance of the African Union blueprint for Africa's Blue Economy Strategy" and committed to raise the profile of the blue economy. It also reaffirmed ecosystem-based management of coastal and marine resources and urged implementation of SDG 14 ("Life Below Water") through continental and national action. These pronouncements led to the development of the Africa Ocean Governance Strategy.
13. At the regional level, Agenda 2063, Africa's strategic framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development, emphasizes the sustainable management of the continent's marine and freshwater resources as a critical enabler of prosperity, resilience, and regional integration. The African Union's 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS 2050), adopted in 2014, provides the long-term vision and institutional anchor for concerted, coherent, and coordinated maritime governance across Member States and Regional Economic Communities. By setting out comprehensive goals, AIMS 2050 underpins national and sub-regional policies and guides the alignment of sectoral mandates with continental priorities. Complementing this, the Lomé Charter—formally the African Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa—was adopted by the African Union in 2016. It establishes a robust legal and technical framework for preventing and responding to maritime threats such as illicit trafficking, piracy, and pollution, thereby strengthening Africa's capacity for an integrated and secure ocean governance regime. In addition, Africa's Blue Economy Strategy adopted in 2019 under the African Union provides the policy backbone for coordinated action for transforming Africa's waterways into engines of sustainable growth. At the sub-regional level, several Regional Economic Communities have developed complementary blue economy frameworks: the Economic Community of West African States adopted its Blue Economy Policy Framework in 2018 to enhance sustainable fisheries, port development and maritime transport; the East African Community launched its Integrated Blue Economy Strategy in 2019, aligning coastal and inland water management with aquaculture, tourism and trade; and the Southern African Development Community incorporated blue growth into its Maritime Transport and Fisheries Strategy in 2020 to strengthen value chains and support coastal livelihoods. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development has likewise embedded transboundary water resources management within its Blue Economy Action Plan.
14. The African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy Water and Environment at its 5th session in 2023 emphasized the critical role of Africa's aquatic biodiversity governance in regional, continental, and global environmental management. The committee endorsed mechanisms to enhance the participation of African Union Member States in international ocean governance processes, acknowledging that while

African nations have ratified several global and regional agreements, challenges in compliance, monitoring, and participation persist. The Specialized Technical Committee urged Member States, Regional Economic Communities, Regional Fisheries Management organisations and Regional Seas Programmes to strengthen governance, surveillance, and scientific research to improve decision-making in ocean governance. The African Union Commission was also tasked with coordinating and monitoring the implementation of these mechanisms, further reinforcing Africa's position in global discussions on ocean sustainability.

15. Under the Regional Seas Programmes, the Nairobi Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Western Indian Ocean has developed a dedicated Regional Ocean Governance Strategy, completed in May 2024, to feed directly into the continental Africa Ocean Governance Strategy. This ensures that regional priorities such as integrated coastal zone management, marine biodiversity protection, and area-based planning are fully aligned with the broader Africa Ocean Governance Strategy. In West and Central Africa, the Abidjan Convention has adopted the Regional Seas Strategic Directions (RSSD) 2022–2025, a high-level roadmap emphasizing pollution prevention, habitat restoration, sustainable fisheries, and capacity building.
16. Regional Economic Communities have also embedded ocean-related provisions into their protocols. For example, the East African Community's Blue Economy Policy (2022) mandates joint management of transboundary fish stocks, regional port-city resilience planning, and harmonized environmental impact assessment standards for offshore projects. The Economic Community of West African States Protocol on Fisheries (2018) requires member States to coordinate monitoring of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and cooperate on marine protected area networks across national boundaries. The Southern African Development Community's revised maritime transport strategy (2023) emphasizes sustainable port operations, green shipping corridors, and integration of coastal tourism with marine conservation objectives. These Regional Economic Communities level frameworks provide collective action on Africa's Ocean-space.
17. Globally, Africa has endorsed the United Nations Environment Assembly decisions through their adoption. Resolutions UNEA 2/10, UNEA 5.2 EA.5/Res.14 and UNEA 6/15 called for ecosystem-based management of seas and coasts, tackle marine pollution, implementation of Regional Seas Conventions, ending plastic pollution including in the marine environment, and promoting of sustainable use of marine resources. These commitments align directly with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) targets for conserving coastal and marine biodiversity and reinforce Sustainable Development Goal 14 ("Life Below Water"), under which the United Nations Ocean Conference is convened to accelerate global action for healthy and productive oceans. Furthermore, Africa's engagement in the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) underpins efforts to strengthen ocean knowledge, capacity and resilience, ensuring that science-based solutions guide policy and management across the continent's marine and coastal realms.
18. Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, African States exercise sovereign rights over living and non-living resources. The Convention imposes binding obligations on all States to protect and preserve the marine environment (Part XII, Articles 192–196) and requires environmental impact assessments for activities with potential transboundary harm (Articles 204–206), reinforcing Africa's capacity to regulate its oceans space. The Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction builds on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea by providing a dedicated framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national

jurisdiction. Through its provisions on marine genetic resource sharing, area-based management tools, environmental impact assessments in the high seas, and capacity building and technology transfer, the Agreement enhances Africa's ability to operationalize UNCLOS obligations for biodiversity management across all ocean realms and strengthens continental cooperation on ocean governance.

19. Across these three decision-making arenas, that is, global, continental, and regional, Africa's Ocean governance has evolved. This multi-level policy coherence provides a solid foundation for the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment to propose its next decisions to operationalize integrated ocean governance, climate-resilient blue investments, and equitable resource sharing across Africa's vast ocean space.

IV. The Africa Ocean Governance Strategy and Implementation Plan

20. Building on Africa's vast, yet vulnerable, ocean space, the evolution of continental and global decisions reveals how African governance bodies have risen to the challenge. By formally recognizing the strategic importance of oceans, Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment set in motion a sequence of mandates that culminated in the Africa Ocean Governance Strategy and regional ocean governance strategies.
21. With the foregoing, the Africa Ocean Governance Strategy is designed as the unifying framework to coordinate, facilitate, support implementation and operationalisation all existing continental, sub-regional and national instruments as well as raise Africa's interests in the global ocean space.

V. Why the Africa Ocean Governance Strategy?

22. Africa's Ocean space is hampered by fragmented institutions, overlapping frameworks, insufficient science to policy integration, funding gaps, limited stakeholder participation, and escalating threats from climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. While several mechanisms for ocean governance exist, gaps and duplication remain. Despite the proliferation of ocean-related instruments, from United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to regional fisheries bodies, regional seas conventions, and African Union strategies, Africa's marine governance remains hampered by institutional silos, overlapping mandates, inadequate financing, weak data systems and limited stakeholder engagement.
23. Cooperation and coordination across sectors have always proved challenging. Considering the value of healthy oceans to African countries, an African ocean governance strategy was envisioned to bridge gaps and facilitate coordination and implementation efforts.
24. The Africa Ocean Governance Strategy fills these gaps by offering a single continental "umbrella" to harmonize all existing frameworks—continental and regional—under a coherent institutional architecture. It targets the cross-cutting gaps by prescribing integrated governance mechanisms, pooled financing instruments, interoperable data platforms and multi-stakeholder engagement processes. The Africa Ocean Governance Strategy does not replace but leverages African Union frameworks and Regional Economic Commissions protocols. By aligning its vision and objectives with Agenda 2063, other existing frameworks, the Strategy ensures political ownership at the highest African Union levels.
25. The Africa Ocean Governance Strategy is necessary to provide a unified approach that bridges the sectoral, regional and thematic divides that have long undermined effective ocean stewardship. By harmonizing existing frameworks, the Strategy provides the structural and

strategic foundation for Africa to present coordinated, continent-wide commitments and implementation in the ocean arena.

26. At the global level, the Africa Ocean Governance Strategy will serve as the continent's cornerstone for articulating a unified position in international negotiations and forums, such as the United Nations Ocean Conferences, other multilateral environment agreements, enabling African States to leverage their collective scale to secure high-level ocean-related commitments, and build essential partnerships for the sustainable development of Africa.
27. The Africa Ocean Governance Strategy also prioritizes inclusive governance mechanisms, ensuring that women, and youths are actively engaged in decision-making and benefit sharing. This aligns with the African Union's policy on gender equality and youth empowerment and helps build ownership at grassroots level.

VI. The Journey to the Strategy

28. Following the decisions of the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment and African Union Specialised Technical Committee and the request for support for the development of the strategy to the United Nations Environment Programme, a scoping meeting was held in Zanzibar in 2018 to identify the main issues at hand. This meeting culminated in an annotated outline for the development of the Africa Ocean Governance Strategy.
29. Four regional consultative meetings were held in the process of development of the strategy. These meetings were member state led, with the participation of stakeholders, development partners, AUC and UN agencies. At the first regional consultative meeting in Nairobi in November 2018, government experts and stakeholders agreed that the Strategy would cover Exclusive Economic Zones, areas beyond national jurisdiction and linked freshwater systems, and that it must weave together—not replace—existing frameworks such as the 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy, the Lomé Charter and regional seas conventions. They also identified four pillars for the Strategy: ecosystem-based management, multi-sector coordination, science-policy interface and stakeholder engagement.
30. At the Second Consultative Meeting in October 2020, experts sharpened linkages to African Union and UN instruments, prioritized data systems, financing mechanisms, and sketched a two-tier governance model.
31. The Third consultative Meeting held in June 2021 presented five governance scenarios and finally endorsed a hybrid model and agreed on the guiding principles and strategic objectives. Member States mandate the African Union and United Nations Environment Programme together with other experts to finalise the Ocean Governance Strategy. At the Eighteenth Session of Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment in Dakar, Senegal in 2022, ministers reiterated their commitment to finalizing and implementing the Africa Ocean Governance Strategy to ensure sustainability in ocean management.
32. The fourth consultative meeting was held in June 2024, in Swakopmund, Namibia, under the auspices of the West Indian Ocean Regional Ocean governance strategy. The meeting provided a platform for member States to refine the continental Africa Ocean governance strategy while looking at its implementation in the different sub-regions. At this meeting Member States, requested for the finalization of the Strategy.
33. This culminated in the formulation of a working group of the African Union Commission, United Nations Environment Programme and ocean experts to finalize Africa Ocean Governance Strategy and its implementation plan and ensure coherence with Agenda 2063, the Blue Economy Strategy and sub-regional ocean governance strategies.

34. Finally in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, a validation meeting was held from 1-4 April 2025, attended by 33 African States, six Regional Economic Commissions and partners where the draft Africa Ocean Governance Strategy and its Implementation Plan was unanimously validated.

VII. Next Steps

35. With validation secured, the Africa Ocean Governance Strategy will be tabled at the 20th Ordinary session of Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment and submitted to the African Union 6th Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, Water and Environment for adoption and thereafter presented at the Heads of State Summit for Endorsement.
36. The Africa Ocean Governance Strategy represents the culmination of a decade-long continental endeavour to forge a single, African Union-led “umbrella” for coordinating every facet of ocean governance. As Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment marks its 40th anniversary, Ministers will endorse a Strategy that finally knits together a coordinated and coherent approach for ecosystem-based, people-centred blue-economy development.
37. Over the coming years, this unified approach will turn Africa’s vast ocean promise into measurable gains in livelihoods, environmental health and continental integration, fulfilling the vision set in motion at Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment 15 and realized at its 40th anniversary.

VIII. The Case for an African Group of Negotiators on Oceans

38. At the final validation meeting in Dar es Salaam, member states called for the establishment of an Africa group of negotiators on oceans. As Africa’s oceans interests expand, the continent faces an increasingly complex web of international negotiations under United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Agreement on Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement, the United Nations Ocean Conferences. Other global forums such as the Paris Agreement on blue carbon and a host of African sectoral instruments such as maritime, fisheries agreements also call for a unified African voice to safeguard its interests and priorities. To navigate this landscape effectively, Africa must speak with a single, coordinated voice.
39. The establishment of an African Group of Negotiators on Oceans (AGN-Ocean) would institutionalize that unity and deliver a range of strategic benefits. The AGN-Ocean would:
- a) Develop common negotiating positions on core ocean issues ensuring consistency across all continental mandates.
 - b) Coordinate consultations, and inputs from member States, Regional Economic Communities, stakeholder inputs, academia and the private sector to align Africa’s common position.
 - c) Represent Africa in intergovernmental fora and negotiations.
40. Africa’s diversity means that without a unifying body, national delegations risk advancing fragmented agendas that weaken continental bargaining power. The existing Africa Groups of Negotiators on climate change, plastics, biodiversity, provide a strong precedent on the importance of this bargaining power for Africa. By establishing a dedicated African Group of

Negotiators on Oceans, the continent secures the strategic unity, technical rigor and diplomatic weight required to shape the global ocean agenda.

IX. Africa's engagement in the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction

41. The Agreement on Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement seeks to fill a critical legal gap under United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea by establishing rules for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (the high seas and the seabed beyond Exclusive Economic Zones).
42. Although United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides the overall legal framework for maritime zones, it did not comprehensively address high-seas biodiversity. In 2015, the UN General Assembly launched an intergovernmental process, the Agreement on Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction negotiations, mandated to develop a new implementing agreement under United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, that will address Marine genetic resources and equitable benefit-sharing; Area-based management tools, including marine protected areas; Environmental impact assessments; Capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology.
43. Four Preparatory Committee sessions were held from 2016–2017 and produced zero-draft texts; three formal negotiating sessions took place from 2018–2023 and yielded a text adopted by consensus at the Fifth Committee in June 2023. That text was forwarded to the United Nations General Assembly for final adoption; formal signing opened in September 2023. As of writing of this paper, 114 States have signed and 21 have ratified the agreement. Only three African countries have ratified, Malawi, Mauritius and Seychelles.
44. The Agreement offers African nations an opportunity to secure their interests on areas beyond national jurisdiction. By filling critical gaps left by United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and to establish clear rules on access to and sharing of benefits from marine genetic resources, standardized environmental impact assessments for deep-sea activities, and collaborative designation of area-based management tools. The treaty creates a legal and practical framework through which Africa can both protect its marine heritage and harness the “blue dividend” for sustainable development.
45. Ratification of the Agreement would transform Africa's relationship with the high seas by conferring legally binding rights and obligations that address the continent's most pressing ocean-governance challenges. Once the treaty enters into force for an African State, that country gains full participation in the decision-making bodies responsible for establishing rules on marine genetic resources, area-based management tools such as marine protected areas, and environmental impact assessment standards.
46. This participation ensures that Africa's priorities are formally reflected in the global regime. Ratification also triggers access to capacity-building and technology-transfer provisions: African research institutes and government agencies become eligible for training and capacity building initiatives. Such support can close current gaps in capacity, thereby strengthening the continent's ability to monitor, manage, and sustainably develop both its Exclusive Economic Zones and adjacent high-seas areas.
47. Moreover, by securing a voice in benefit-sharing negotiations, ratifying States can attract investments and establish joint research ventures that generate revenues and knowledge transfers essential for domestic blue-economy growth.

48. By contrast, failure to ratify would leave African States on the margins of the emerging high-seas legal order, with only observer status in the bodies that set rules for Marine Genetic Resources access, Area-based management designation, Environmental impact assessment protocols. Without ratification, countries cannot sponsor or co-manage high-seas marine protected areas, nor can they compel the inclusion of their scientific or socio-economic interests in digital sequence-information governance or benefit-sharing mechanisms.
49. This exclusion would exacerbate existing institutional and technical deficits identified in the Africa Ocean Governance Strategy's gap analysis, undermining continental coherence in ocean governance. In practical terms, non-ratifying States risk losing out on funding streams earmarked for the Agreement on capacity-building under the Global Environment Facility and other multilateral instruments, leaving them reliant on ad-hoc assistance rather than the structured, treaty-mandated support their peers enjoy.
50. Such marginalization would weaken Africa's bargaining power in regional fisheries management organizations and diminish its ability to shape international norms that directly affect the sustainability of fisheries, the protection of biodiversity, and the resilience of coastal communities to climate-driven ocean changes.

X. Africa's Capacity and Preparedness to engage in the Agreement on Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction

51. African States are making important strides toward readiness for the Agreement on Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement. Capacity building initiatives on the agreement have begun including at the validation meeting in Dar es Salaam, where member states identified various capacity needs for effective participation in the Agreement. However, significant capacity gaps remain that must be addressed before ratification and effective implementation can occur. A number of African countries have designated national focal points for the Agreement, and some countries have established inter-ministerial committees to draft preliminary implementation roadmaps.
52. These institutional foundations enable coordination across sectors, yet many focal offices lack the technical staff and legal expertise to translate treaty provisions on marine genetic resources, environmental impact assessments, and digital sequence information into national law.
53. Capacity-building initiatives under the Nairobi Convention and other partners have supported familiarization of African states with the agreement. However, these efforts remain ad hoc and underfunded. Sustained financing and institutional support are needed to transform sporadic workshops into comprehensive, long-term programmes that equip national agencies with the expertise, equipment, and legal frameworks required for effective treaty implementation.
54. On the scientific front, few countries possess technologies required for high-seas sampling and analysis. Data systems remain fragmented: national oceanographic databases vary widely in coverage and interoperability, and there is no continent-wide platform for data pending the operationalization of the Africa Ocean Governance Strategy information-management plan. Similarly, expertise in Environmental impact assessments methodology for deep-sea activities is scarce, with most environmental authorities experienced only in coastal Environmental impact assessments.
55. Legal preparedness is also slow, while some States have begun revising their maritime laws to incorporate benefit-sharing and Area-based management provisions, most lack the legislative drafts and regulatory frameworks needed for rapid treaty ratification.

56. In sum, Africa's preparatory progress is slow but provides a promising foundation. Yet to achieve full readiness, States must strengthen capacities that will ensure that when the Agreement enters into force, African nations can swiftly translate its provisions into national practice, thereby safeguarding their interests in high-seas governance and reaping the full benefits of the global marine biodiversity regime.

XI. Next Steps

57. To propel Africa into full readiness for the Agreement, capacity enhancement must unfold on three interlinked strategic fronts, nationally, regionally through the Regional Economic Commissions and Regional Seas Programmes, and partner-driven through development partners, each transforming isolated efforts into a continent-wide engine to support ratification of the Agreement. Capacity building must also be based on comprehensive needs assessments focusing on policy, legal, technical and institutional aspects.
58. Africa must also actively participate in substantive meetings of the Preparatory Commission for the Entry into Force of the Agreement under United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on Agreement on Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction and the Convening of the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement and present a unified voice for Africa with a Common Africa Position.
59. The Conference is requested to explore ratification of the Agreement on Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. Furthermore, the Conference should establish a continental BBNJ Advisory Group or Task Force to guide, monitor, and support coordinated implementation, capacity building, and resource mobilization across the continent
60. Africa must ensure that it is not left behind in the ratification of the Agreement on Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, thereby securing Africa's voice in the governance of the high seas. By joining the Agreement regime, Africa will ensure it remains an active participant in the emerging global ocean economy.

XII. Considerations for the 20th Ordinary session of Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment

61. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, at its twentieth session, is requested:
- a) To adopt the Africa Ocean Governance Strategy and its implementation Plan
 - b) To establish an African Group of Negotiators for Ocean (AGN Ocean) to craft common positions and speak with one voice in global Fora.
 - c) To provide policy directions on Africa's engagement in the Agreement on Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction and its ratification
 - d) To provide policy directions on Africa's engagement in future United Nations Oceans Conferences and global fora.