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**First Meeting of the Bureau of the Contracting
Parties to the Convention on Cooperation for
the Protection, Management and
Development of the Marine Environment and
Coastal Areas of the Atlantic Coast of the
West, Central and Southern African Region
(Abidjan Convention)**

On-line, 30 July 2026

SECRETARIAT OF THE ABIDJAN CONVENTION

Agenda item 3.1:

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2025–2027

From May 2025 to June 2026, the Secretariat continued implementing the Programme of Work adopted by COP14 despite significant financial constraints. Progress was achieved across all four programme components through strategic partnerships, project implementation and technical support to Contracting Parties.

Progress noted from May 2025 to June 2026 include:

1. Strengthening implementation of the Convention and its Additional Protocols;
2. Supporting countries on BBNJ ratification and implementation;
3. Advancing marine spatial planning and integrated ocean governance;
4. Supporting the establishment and management of Marine Protected Areas;
5. Developing regional and national responses to marine plastic pollution;
6. Mobilizing financial and technical partnerships;
7. Enhancing regional coordination and political engagement;
8. Developing plans for recovering financial contributions from Contracting Parties.

Introduction

1. The first year of implementation of the Programme of Work 2025–2027 was marked by steady progress in advancing the decisions of the Fourteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP14), despite limited financial resources.
2. Most activities were delivered through strategic partnerships with Contracting Parties, regional and international partners, donors and by leveraging externally funded projects.
3. This report provides a summary of progress achieved under each component of the Programme of Work 2025–2027. For each component, the report highlights the main activities undertaken during the reporting period, key achievements, and the partnerships that supported implementation.

Component 1. Ecosystem assessments

4. The objective of this component as stated in the approved Programme of Work is to improve knowledge of marine and coastal ecosystems to support evidence-based decision-making.
5. Implementation under this component has been limited due to insufficient financial resources. The preparation of a *regional State of the Marine and Coastal Environment Report*, one of the flagship activities under the Programme of Work, requires substantial technical and financial investment.
6. To address this financial gap, the Secretariat is in discussion with GRID Arendal to explore technical and financial support, including potential funding from Norway. If successful, this partnership would provide the basis for developing a comprehensive regional assessment.
7. However, it is unlikely that the report will be completed and launched in time for the Fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15). Resource mobilization for this activity remains a priority for the Secretariat.

Component 2. Management of marine and coastal ecosystems

8. The objective of this component as stated in the approved Programme of work is to promote sustainable management and reduce degradation of marine and coastal ecosystems. Key achievements include:

Marine Protected Areas

9. In response to COP13 Decision 05, the Secretariat is finalizing the draft Additional Protocol on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). During the reporting period, the draft Additional Protocol was circulated to Contracting Parties for comments and inputs through national consultations. The original deadline of 31 December 2025 was extended to June 2026 as several Contracting Parties had not yet undertaken their national consultations. To date, two Contracting Parties, namely Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, have conducted their national consultations. The Secretariat is actively mobilizing resources to support the national consultation processes in the remaining Contracting Parties for a conclusion of the review by

June 2027. While the ACP-MEAs 3 project that supported this work was completed in December 2025, the Secretariat is actively engaging with philanthropic organizations, development partners, such as WAEMU and the World Bank under the WACA Programme to mobilize the resources required to finalize the process and convene the Conference of Plenipotentiaries by the end of 2027.

10. The Secretariat provided technical support to Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal for the management of existing MPAs. These efforts contribute to strengthening the long-term management of existing MPAs while supporting national commitments under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including the 30x30 target.
11. Through the ACP MEA 3 project, two MPAs have been supported in Senegal : the Somone MPA where the Management Plan has been developed and validated; and the Palmarin MPA with support to implement its Management Plan through several activities including women training on alternative livelihood activities; degraded soil restoration through mangrove planting; MPA guards trainings; and mangroves restoration trainings.
12. Implementation of the GEF-funded Grand-Bereby Marine Protected Area project in Côte d'Ivoire started in April 2026 with the recruitment of the Project Coordinator. The project supports the operationalization of the country's first marine protected area through biodiversity assessments, stakeholder engagement, management planning, and capacity-building, while generating lessons that can inform marine conservation efforts across the region.

Marine Spatial Planning

13. The Secretariat continued to promote Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) as a key tool for integrated ocean governance, ecosystem conservation and the sustainable management of coastal and marine resources.
14. The Secretariat supported national MSP implementation in Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and São Tomé and Príncipe. This support contributed to strengthening national coordination, stakeholder engagement and the use of environmental and socioeconomic information in planning the sustainable use of marine areas.
15. Implementation of the UN-Habitat-led Adaptation Fund project "Improved Resilience of Coastal Communities in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana" continued during the reporting period. The project supports the integration of climate risks into coastal and marine planning through the development of MSP frameworks, coastal risk assessments, early-warning systems and nature-based solutions. The Secretariat is leading the regional knowledge management component of the project, supporting the compilation and dissemination of lessons learned and best practices on coastal climate adaptation. The Secretariat is setting up a regional knowledge platform and organizing a regional workshop to bring together Contracting Parties, technical institutions and local communities to exchange experiences on climate adaptation, including marine spatial planning, early warning systems, nature-based solutions, blue carbon, resilient livelihoods and other innovative approaches. The project also promotes transboundary cooperation between Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana and supports the replication and

scaling-up of successful adaptation practices across the Convention area. The process of recruitment of the Coordinator is almost complete.

16. At the regional level, the Secretariat established a Technical Expert Group on MSP in the Abidjan Convention area, with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (UNESCO-IOC). Launched in May 2025, the Group serves as a regional platform for technical cooperation, knowledge exchange and the promotion of coherent approaches to marine spatial planning as a tool for integrated marine and coastal zones management across the Abidjan Convention area. Co-chaired by Côte d'Ivoire and Benin, the Group is set to develop a *Regional Marine Spatial Planning Roadmap* by 2027. Five thematic working groups on governance, data and knowledge, ecosystem-based management, sustainable blue economy, and capacity development were established to support the development of the Roadmap. The Group intended to comprise two representatives from each Contracting Parties. As of May 2026, 15 Contracting Parties had nominated their representatives. The nomination process is still ongoing.

Ecosystem restoration

17. The Secretariat promoted ecosystem-based approaches to strengthen coastal resilience and restore degraded ecosystems, with particular attention to mangrove restoration and community empowerment.
18. In Senegal, support was provided to the *Palmarin* MPA to advance mangrove restoration and improve the resilience of coastal ecosystems and communities. These activities contributed to restoring degraded areas while strengthening the role of mangroves in shoreline protection, biodiversity conservation and local livelihoods. Women received training in mangrove restoration techniques to rehabilitate degraded coastal areas and in alternative income-generating activities to reduce pressure on natural resources and strengthen household resilience. Supports was also provided to Sierra Leone for mangrove restoration along the Scarcies River Estuary (ScRE) and the Sierra Leone River Estuary (SLRE). In addition, ecological, environmental and socio-economic baseline surveys were conducted in selected communities within both estuaries, to inform the design and implementation of restoration interventions. The project was completed in December 2025.

Biodiversity assessments and support to NBSAPs

19. The Secretariat completed a regional assessment on how marine and coastal ecosystems are reflected in the revised National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) of the Contracting Parties and to identify opportunities for stronger alignment with the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The assessment was supported through the UNEP-led GEF-8 Umbrella Programme for NBSAP updates and the preparation of seventh national reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
20. The assessment found that most Parties have made progress in updating their NBSAPs, but that the integration of marine and coastal priorities remains uneven across the region. Key gaps were identified in marine spatial planning, monitoring and reporting systems, financing, technical capacity, and the availability of baseline data.

21. The assessment also reviewed the integration of marine and coastal priorities under the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Targets relating to sustainable use, protected and conserved areas, and ecosystem restoration were the most strongly reflected: 8 countries had substantially integrated Target 9, 7 countries had integrated Target 3, and 6 countries had integrated Target 2; while most other targets were only partially included.
22. The findings provide the first regional overview of the status of marine and coastal biodiversity mainstreaming across the Convention area and establish a useful baseline for guiding future technical assistance, capacity-building and regional cooperation.
23. The Secretariat produced a regional assessment report and a summary of the main findings, which are available to Contracting Parties as reference documents to support national planning, implementation and reporting under the CBD and the Abidjan Convention.
24. Fourteen Contracting Parties responded to the assessment questionnaire, namely Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. The project was completed in December 2025.

Implementation of COP14 Decision on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)

25. The Secretariat continued to support Contracting Parties in implementing COP14 Decision CP.14/5 on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), with a particular focus on promoting ratification of the Agreement and preparing countries for its effective implementation. Ten of our contracting parties are yet to ratify the Treaty.
26. During the reporting period, the Secretariat provided technical assistance to Senegal, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire to advance their national ratification processes, while maintaining dialogue with other countries at different stages of the process.
27. The Secretariat assisted Contracting Parties in accessing GEF-8 Early Action funding to strengthen national preparedness for the entry into force of the Agreement: technical support was provided to Benin, Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, and Togo.
28. In parallel, the Secretariat continued to raise awareness of the opportunities presented by the BBNJ Agreement through regional meetings, bilateral consultations and technical exchanges. These efforts have contributed to building regional momentum for implementation and to positioning the Abidjan Convention as a platform for coordinating regional action in support of the new international legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction.
29. The Secretariat is in discussion with the IUCN Technical Assistance Facility of the Global Ocean Programme funded by the European Commission for potential financial support for BBNJ COP1 preparations and beyond.

Pollution prevention

30. The Secretariat continued to support Contracting Parties in strengthening national and regional action to prevent and reduce marine pollution, with a particular focus on plastic pollution and land-based sources.
31. The Secretariat supported the preparation and validation of National Action Plans on Plastic Pollution in Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania and the Democratic Republic of Congo through our partnership with the BRS Secretariat. The plans identify priority sources of plastic pollution and set out national measures to improve prevention, waste management, recycling, stakeholder coordination and monitoring.
32. The Secretariat continued to engage regional institutions, including ECOWAS, to promote greater policy coherence and regional cooperation on plastic pollution and other land-based sources of pollution. These efforts aim to connect national action with broader regional initiatives and strengthen the implementation of the Abidjan Convention's Protocol on Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities.

Component 3. Coordination, legal and policy framework

33. Implementation under this component focused on advancing the implementation of the Abidjan Convention and its Protocols, strengthening regional partnerships, and enhancing cooperation with key institutions to support Contracting Parties.

Implementation of the Convention and its Additional Protocols

34. The Secretariat continued to support the implementation and ratification of the Convention's legal instruments. Through the ACP MEAs 3 Project, technical assistance was provided to Contracting Parties to advance the ratification of the Additional Protocols. During the reporting period, Mauritania and Benin ratified all four Additional Protocols in June 2025.

Regional cooperation

35. Since February 2026, the Secretariat is seeking to strengthen collaboration with key regional stakeholders, including Regional Fisheries Bodies, UNESCO-IOC, GRID-Arendal, the Regional Partnership for Coastal and Marine Conservation (PRCM), World Bank, GEF Secretariat, IUCN, AU-Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), WAEMU, African Development Bank and other Regional Seas Conventions. These partnerships if successful will provide an opportunity for joint programming, technical cooperation, knowledge sharing, and resource mobilization.
36. The Secretariat is pursuing contractual discussions with WAEMU and World Bank on implementation arrangements for the WACA ResIP 2 programme, and WACA+ to start mid-2027. The discussions aim to define the respective roles and responsibilities of the Secretariat in implementing the regional component of the WACA Programme and to identify the most appropriate implementation arrangements for the Secretariat's continued technical engagement. Once finalized, these arrangements will enable WAEMU to support the implementation of priority activities under the Abidjan Convention, including technical assistance to Contracting Parties, delivery of regional priorities, and preparation of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15).

Component 4. Communication, information and capacity development

Communication, information and outreach

37. Implementation under this component was constrained by limited financial resources. As a result, some planned activities, including the development of the new Abidjan Convention website and the establishment of an online Resource Centre, have not yet commenced. These activities are expected to be implemented during the second half of 2026 under the ongoing UNEP Regional Seas Programme's communication and branding initiative.

Capacity development

38. Capacity development activities during the reporting period were constrained by limited financial resources. Despite these challenges, the Secretariat continued to promote knowledge sharing through targeted online initiatives. In April 2026, it co-organized with UNEP, a regional webinar on sargassum, bringing together experts and stakeholders to exchange knowledge on the monitoring, impacts and management of sargassum influxes in the Abidjan Convention area. The webinar contributed to strengthening regional awareness and facilitating the exchange of emerging good practices from Ghana, Senegal and Sierra Leone on this growing environmental challenge.

Political engagement

39. Between January and June 2026, the Secretariat participated in several regional events as part of efforts to increase the visibility of the Abidjan Convention. These included the Forum of Marine Protected Areas in West Africa (FOMACO), the 11th Our Ocean Conference, the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Global Dialogue, and the Regional Training Workshop on the Governance of MPAs organized by AU-IBAR .

40. In the margins of FOMACO, the Secretariat convened an extraordinary ministerial meeting on the financial situation of the Abidjan Convention with the Contracting Parties present. Ministers reviewed the financial status of the trust fund, the status of assessed contributions, discussed measures to improve the financial sustainability of the Convention, and endorsed several recommendations to strengthen resource mobilization and Party engagement. These included prioritizing high-level missions to Contracting Parties with the largest arrears, encouraging the development of multi-year payment plans, increasing ministerial engagement in resource mobilization efforts, and strengthening partnerships to support implementation of the Programme of Work. The meeting reaffirmed the shared commitment of Contracting Parties to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Convention.

41. The Secretariat co-organized with the Nairobi Convention a ministerial side event during the 11th Our Ocean Conference on the 30x30 target, biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), and regional ocean governance, helping to raise the profile of the Regional Seas Conventions as regional platforms for ocean governance in Africa.