CONCEPT NOTE


BACK-TO-BACK WITH

THE AU 2050 AIM-STRATEGY CONFERENCE
21 – 22 JULY 2015

AND

THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC TASK FORCE ON THE 2050 AIM-STRATEGY
23-24 JULY 2015

AU HEADQUARTERS, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA.
Towards harnessing the potential of the blue economy to achieve Agenda 2063 and the post-2015 development agenda

**Context and justification**

1. Over the past decade Africa has recorded an average of 4-5% growth rate, despite a recent unfavorable international economic and financial environment. Six of the world’s 10 fastest growing economies were in Africa¹. Growth has mainly been driven by high commodity prices, investment in infrastructure, diversification of trading partners and increasing domestic demand. In addition, improved governance, institutional reforms and sound macro-economic policies have also provided new impetus. It is expected that if this high level growth continues, Africa could significantly reduce widespread poverty in the next decade.

2. Despite this remarkable economic performance, assessment of the quality of Africa’s growth shows that it has not been inclusive and broad-based enough to have a significant impact on widespread inequalities, poverty levels and economic structures. In this perspective, one of the daunting challenges facing African policy makers is that of economic and social planning to catalyze inclusiveness and economic transformation.

3. Since the last decade, there is an emerging consensus regarding the critical role that the Blue Economy² could play in fostering structural transformation³ in Africa during the next decade and beyond under the global framework of Agenda 2063⁴ and the post-2015 development agenda⁵.

4. Under its first Aspiration “A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development”, Agenda 2063 recognizes the huge potential of the Blue Economy as a catalyst of socio-economic transformation through knowledge on marine and aquatic biotechnology, the growth of an Africa-wide shipping industry, the development of sea, river and lake transport and fishing; and exploitation and beneficiation of deep sea mineral and other resources.

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³ In this document, the structural transformation is a process by which the reallocation of economic activity sectors with low productivity to those where it is strongest in optics inclusive and sustainable growth conducive to the creation of decent jobs and better paid for youth and women. This process is marked by at least two stylized facts: (i) increasing the share of manufacturing and services with high added value in GDP, coupled with a steady decline in the share of agriculture; and (ii) the decline in the share of agricultural employment and the transfer of workers to more productive sectors of the economy (ADB, 2013).

⁴ The African Union Agenda 2063 is a forward-looking framework for Africa to achieve its vision of “an integrated, people-centered and prosperous Africa at peace with itself”. The overall objective of the exercise is to develop a plan in the short, medium and long-term which will chart Africa’s development trajectory over the next 50 years.

⁵ UN on the Post-2015 Development Agenda released “A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development,” a report which sets out a universal agenda to eradicate extreme poverty from the face of the earth by 2030, and deliver on the promise of sustainable development. The report calls upon the world to rally around a new Global Partnership that offers hope and a role to every person in the world.
5. Prior to Agenda 2063, the 22nd Ordinary Session of Heads of State and Government adopted the 2050 Africa’s Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM-Strategy®) and its Plan of Action for implementation (Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.496 (XXII)). In addition, the 23rd Ordinary Session of Heads of State and Government in Malabo requested the Commission in consultation with PRC to facilitate the establishment of a Strategic Task Force composed of Representatives of Member States, the Commission and the RECs, with a mandate to consider the technical details of the 2050 AIM-Strategy and propose a road map for the incremental implementation of the strategy in conformity with International Maritime Law; (EX.CL/Dec.822(XXV)).

6. With regard to the paragraph above, the African Union has scheduled an **Inaugural Meeting of the Strategic Task Force** from the 23rd – 24th of July 2015 at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The purpose is to:

   (i) consider and adopt the Terms of Reference for the work of the Strategic Task Force to accomplish the mandate given by the Malabo decision mentioned above; and

   (ii) develop and adopt in consultation with PRC an implementation roadmap for the 2050 AIM-Strategy according to the mandate given by the Malabo decision mentioned above.

7. This Inaugural Meeting of the Strategic Task Force shall be preceded by the **AU 2050 AIM-Strategy Conference**, which will be held from the 21st – 22nd July 2015 also at the AU Headquarters. Working group sessions on cross-cutting African Maritime issues in relation to the implementation of the 2050 AIM-Strategy will be convened.

### Objectives of the meetings

8. The overall objective of the meetings will be to put the Blue Economy at the center of Africa’s economic and social transformation under the global framework of Agenda 2063.

9. The work group sessions during the **AU 2050 AIM-Strategy Conference** should give outputs that can feed into the continued work of the Strategic Task Force work on the roadmap for implementation of the 2050 AIM-Strategy.

10. Detailed Agendas will follow in due course.

### Focus areas of the Meetings

11. Given the fact that the 2050 Africa’s Integrated Maritime Strategy is cross-sectoral and affecting many Ministries, Departments, Agencies and Industries, Member States are encouraged to ensure representation to the meetings focus on areas of:

   a) **Africa’s Blue Economy**

12. This focus area will provide a unique opportunity to the AU Commission and various key stakeholders to engage in a constructive policy dialogue on how to better take advantage of the transformative economic potential of the Blue Economy. In that
perspective, special attention will be placed on key sectors such as: Coastal Tourism, Marine Biomedicine and cosmetic Industry, Marine Chemical Industry, Marine Communications and Transportation Industry, Marine Electric Power Industry, Marine Fishery and Aquaculture, Marine Salt Industry, Ocean Mining Industry, Offshore Oil and Gas Industry, Seawater Utilization Industry, Marine Engineering, Shipbuilding and Repair Industry.

b) Maritime Protection and Governance

13. Through this focus area, the Commission will engage with its Member States and relevant stakeholders to examine the optimal policy actions for improving the business and investment climate, especially for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises with a view to harness the potential of the Blue Economy. This approach can be made more effective by improving the quality of country and sector diagnostics for prioritization of reforms, and through engagement of the private sector in action-oriented public-private dialogue at the level of policy formulation in the perspective of tracking and curbing illicit maritime exploitation activities, knowledge management and establishment of Maritime think tanks. The Commission also aims at contributing to the improvement of available policymaking tools for measuring and comparing the quality of governance architecture across countries. This will be made possible by the promotion of responsible maritime business practices and the sharing and dissemination of best practices at national, regional and continental levels.

c) Maritime Capacity Development

14. Harnessing the potential of the Blue Economy necessitates the development of greater capabilities to sustainably use the seas and maritime resources. This requires better training of government officials, key stakeholders at the various levels of the maritime value chain as well as effective implementation capacity for the AUC, RECs and Member States. In that perspective, to concentrate scare resources and enhance the effectiveness of the continental policy interventions, targeting and prioritization of the steps to ensure convergence are needed. This capacity development should be coupled with water education, research and innovation activities at national, regional and continental levels.


15. Furthermore, the decision adopting the 2050 AIM-Strategy provides for an African Day of Seas and Oceans on 25 July each year and 2015-2025 as the “Decade of African Seas and Oceans”.

16. With regard to the paragraph above, the African Union will launch the 2015-2025 Decade of African Seas and Oceans and celebrate the African Day of Seas and Oceans on 25 July 2015.
17. The objective of the launch and the celebration is to:

(i) increase awareness amongst stakeholders of the strategic importance of Africa’s Blue Economy in its Agenda 2063 Vision and to disseminate information regarding the contents of the 2050 AIM-Strategy;

(ii) launch the Decade of African Seas and Oceans (Africa’s Decade of the Blue Economy); and

(iii) Recognize the establishment of the 2050 AIM-Strategy Strategic Task Force.

18. During the launch day, the planned programme is as follows:

(i) Statement by the Chairperson of the Commission

(ii) Keynote Statement (on issues surrounding the 2050 AIM Strategy and its implementation)

(iii) Presentation of the 2050 AIM Strategy

(iv) Panel Discussion and some of the Panelists will be Heads of State and Government

19. The AU Commission encourages all AU Member States to organize events that focus on African Oceans, Seas and Lakes and other waterways on this African Day of Seas and Oceans i.e. 25 July 2015 as the Commission launches the Decade of African Seas and Oceans.

20. The AU Commission also encourages all AU Member States to encourage children of all ages to be part of the events, and organize painting and essay writing competitions as well as ocean-related documentaries/movies sessions.

Participants

21. The participants in the Strategic Task Force event (23 to 24 July) will be the Member States and RECs/RMs that have already indicated there willingness to participate in accordance with the Malabo decision.

22. The following African stakeholders are invited to take part on the 21 - 22 July conference:

a) Member States (government departments, administrations, agencies and operators in the maritime sector, the port communities);

b) Regional Economic Communities (RECs);

c) Regional Mechanisms (RMs);

d) African Youth;

e) Women in Maritime in Africa;

f) African institutions and organizations specialized in maritime and maritime-related matters ;

g) Financial institutions and insurance companies;
h) Students, teachers and researchers;
i) The media;
j) International organizations dealing with maritime and maritime-related matters;
k) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs);
l) Development partners;
m) The African and International private sector;
n) Shippers Councils;
o) Port Associations;
p) Maritime Education and Training Institutions;
q) Maritime Desks of REC’s;
r) African Navies / Coast Guards;
s) Ship Owners Associations and
t) African Diaspora.

23. The 25 July is open to All, including International specialized organizations as well as International partners and private sector.

24. In order to ensure that the 2050 AIM-Strategy is well disseminated across all regions on the continent, the AU Commission will invite three or four journalists per region in order to participate in the AU 2050 AIM-Strategy Conference.

25. **ALL Participants shall be self-sustained (travel-, hotel-, DSA costs etc.) and make their own travel and hotel arrangements.**

**Submission of Communications**

26. All correspondence relating to this event should be communicated to the following address:

**Office of the Legal Counsel**
**African Union Commission**

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