

SHAPING A SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY FOR AFRICA

UN OCEANS CONFERENCE SIDE EVENT

THURSDAY 30 JUNE 2022, 14.30 – 15.45 | COMMITTEE ROOM (BLUE ZONE), ALTICE ARENA

I. OVERVIEW

The UN Oceans Conference is taking place on 27 June to 01 July 2022 with the objective of tackling the challenges facing the world's ocean. Co-hosted by the Republic of Kenya and the Republic of Portugal, the Conference provides a multilateral platform for countries, international organisations, academia, civil society, private sector, the science community and stakeholders to engage in partnerships leading to the implementation of SDG14.

During the UN Oceans Conference, **the African Union Commission is co-organising the side event "SHAPING AFRICA'S SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY" to provide a convening space for African stakeholders and partners to drive partnerships and raise ambition on the protection and sustainable development of Africa's oceans and seas.**

The objective of this side event is to amplify Africa's progress in harnessing her blue economy potential and engagement with the targets of SDG14 and Agenda 2063, supported by the African Union Commission (AUC) and African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), as the continental organisation for Africa, and its implementing organ, respectively.

As a continent surrounded by some of the world's most important marine biodiversity, strategic maritime trade routes, abundant aquatic resources and blue carbon assets, it has become critically urgent for the African Union to guide blue economy development through impactful policies which support the African continent in meeting global and continental targets.

The side event will bring together the major stakeholders driving continental, regional and sub-regional policy in Africa to discuss Africa's needs pertaining to sustainable blue economy development, and identify areas of intervention where actions and partnerships can be directed to support tangible ocean commitments.

II. BACKGROUND

African leaders dubbed the blue economy as the 'new frontier of African renaissance'. A total of 38 out of the African Union's 55 member states are coastal or island states, while 64% of the African continent is covered by a network of freshwater resources such as rivers, lakes, aquifers, basins, watersheds etc. These aquatic resources represent tremendous potential for blue food, nutrition and food security, ecosystem services, employment and wealth creation and innovation.

Nevertheless, Africa's marine resources are under threat from various anthropogenic sources. A paucity of data and evidenced-based decision making, weak institutional frameworks, and limited technical and technological capacity has led to the under-development of knowledge-based sectors of the blue economy.

There is an urgent need to move from outdated, sectoral-based approaches to extractive industries, or inefficient models of sectors such as fisheries, coastal tourism and maritime transport that remain carbon-intensive and extractive, to knowledge-based, high-revenue models which benefit African

communities and stakeholders. This calls for greater cooperation, data, and coordinated approaches as well as future-casting, integrated planning and resilience-building in Africa's blue economy to withstand exogenous shocks and maximise opportunities offered by sustainable development of Africa's blue economies.

The proposed side event will therefore be key in highlighting African priorities and driving commitments towards the thematic areas of the UNOC. It will provide another entry point for stakeholders including private sector, civil society, and academia as well as non-African partners to engage with the African continent on SDG14, its targets, and Agenda 2063.

The proposed side event will deep dive into the following:

- (i) Opportunities for the African continent leverage its blue resources to develop robust economies, while meeting climate targets;
- (ii) Pathways for modernising traditional ocean sectors and incubating emerging 4IR solutions
- (iii) Best practices for favourable and predictable innovation and investment environments for supporting Africa's blue economy development aspirations
- (iv) Concrete immediate actions to ensure measurable progress following the UNOC

III. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Building upon the above, the side event is geared towards:

1. Raising ambition for Africa's blue economy;
2. Developing purpose-driven partnerships across sectors and stakeholder communities;
3. Strengthening Africa's ocean agenda through the convergence of ideas, common positions, priorities.

The side event also aims to create connections for cross-pollination of ideas, resource mobilisation, purpose-led innovation and inclusive blue economy project implementation across and within the continent. It will establish a network of purpose around Africa's oceans which rests on the principles of sustainability, inclusiveness and impact.

IV. PARTICIPANTS

The side event will provide a convening point for African stakeholders and partners to discuss the blue economy as a collective, and establish partnerships, while the insights gleaned from the side event will enable the AUC and AUDA-NEPAD to identify priority intervention areas and resource needs and opportunities for accelerated action. The event is open to all AU Member States representatives, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and bodies in Africa, partners, and stakeholders representing industry, academia, science, women, youth, civil society and tech pioneers.

V. CONTACTS

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