



25 July 2015

**Statement from the Secretary-General of the OECD, Angel Gurría, on the  
1<sup>st</sup> African Day of Seas and Oceans and the kick-off of the Decade of African Seas and Oceans (2015-2025)**

The OECD welcomes the first African Day of Seas and Oceans and the kick-off of the Decade of African Seas and Oceans. The health of our seas and oceans, and the sustainable use of their resources, is one of the major challenges facing humanity, especially with mounting stresses resulting from over-exploitation, pollution, habitat-destruction and climate change. Given what we know today, the need for better-informed, more sustainable management of our seas and oceans is clearer than ever before. This is as true for Africa as it is for the rest of the world.

Sustainable seas and oceans' management means achieving a better balance between the maritime economy, and the conservation and sustainable use of marine ecosystems and resources on which we are so fundamentally dependent. The OECD is helping to support governments in Africa and around the world achieve this balance through our work on the future uses of ocean resources and on the economics of marine protected areas.

Our Future of the Ocean Economy project<sup>1</sup> is examining projected trends in ocean use to 2030-2050, and developing a coherent forward assessment of growth potential – for the economy, for innovation, and for employment creation. While there is huge potential for the maritime economy, there will be increasing pressure on and competition for ocean resources and use of ocean space. More coherent and multi-sectoral strategies to manage this vast and valuable resource are therefore needed, particularly in a continent like Africa with such a rich natural endowment and where oceans offer a great potential for economic development. The Future of the Ocean Economy project is helping governments boost the long-term prospects of emerging ocean industries, while managing environmental and ocean ecosystems impacts such as ocean acidification, to support responsible, sustainable development of the ocean's economic potential.

The OECD's ongoing research on the Economics of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) will also offer valuable knowledge, conclusions and potential policy recommendations to African countries. It is examining how to better design and implement MPAs in more environmentally- and cost-effective ways. MPAs have the potential to conserve areas that harbour important biodiversity, serve as nursery grounds for often over-exploited fisheries, help to ensure more sustainable tourism, and much more. Today, about 3% of our seas and oceans are under protection; Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have agreed to expand this to 10% by 2020. There is, therefore, much still to be done, particularly in regions where economic development needs to come hand in hand with the protection and preservation of the environment for the generations to come, such is the case for Africa.

I extend my warm congratulations to the African Union for this important initiative and commend the African Union Commission for the 2050 African Integrated Maritime Strategy, which will play a key role in fostering increased wealth creation from Africa's oceans and seas in a secure and environmentally sustainable manner. The OECD stands ready to share the emerging good practice insights from our work, as together we strive to foster more sustainable, resilient economies into the future.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.oecd.org/futures/oceaneconomy.htm](http://www.oecd.org/futures/oceaneconomy.htm)