

**Directorate of Information and Communication****PRESS RELEASE****Africa's Blue Economy is a vehicle for sustainable development.**

Oslo, Norway, 7 June 2019; In Africa, 38 of 54 African states are coastal states with over 90% of Africa's imports and exports transported by sea, making the continent a strategic gateway for international trade. The continent's geopolitical importance and of sound ocean governance is therefore of significant prominence to the African Union.

At the Africa@Nor-Shipping 2019 conference held under the theme "Unleashing the potential of Africa's Blue Economy", the African Union Commission reiterated the need to create an enabling framework for the development of Africa's blue economy while ensuring environmental and economic sustainability and improving maritime safety and security in Africa's waters.

The Vice President of Seychelles. H.E. Vincent Emmanuel Angelin Meriton, noted that maritime shipping is the lifeblood of Africa, however observing that despite significant opportunities the sector holds, Africa still makes up a small percentage of global trade. He underscored the need for the continent to advantage of the economic potential of its ports and shipping sector if it is to realize its growth ambitions. "If we are to truly unlock Africa's potentials we must acknowledge that despite the successes, Africa is still facing numerous 12 challenges in developing the Blue Economy agenda. These range from financial barriers to limited access to technology, and they are preventing some states to fully implement their plans", he stated with optimism that challenges can be addressed through mutual partnerships and cooperation.

The President of the Republic of Seychelles H.E Mr. Danny Faure was in 2018, nominated as the AU Champion for Blue Economy to advance the Blue Economy agenda at the national and continental level.

While some challenges that threaten the sustainable use of oceans and sea resources such as marine plastic, litter and micro-plastics, biodiversity loss and climate change still persist, the African Union Commission Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) H.E. Josefa Sacko, however highlighted the encouraging efforts, particularly in Africa, in addressing the plastic pollution and waste management. "We are pleased that a growing number of countries are banning the use and sale of plastic bags. This complements the campaign launched by AU Commission earlier this year to reduce plastic pollution", she stated. The campaign identified five first ladies to serve as regional champions for the Campaign. The Commissioner restated AU's commitment to support

efforts for a sustainable Blue Economy to harness its full potential as a vehicle economic development and growth through creation of jobs and reduction of poverty.

With the climate change, the coastal systems are sensitive to changes in sea level, ocean temperature and ocean acidification exposing Africa's six small island states and a coastline to extreme weather, increased vulnerability of communities and loss of biodiversity. To address the threats of climate change to the Blue Economy, the AU Commission is in the process of finalizing a continental strategy on climate change to respond to the impacts of climate change. The strategy will contain a section on addressing climate impacts on oceans, the ecosystems and biodiversity. The Commission is also engaged in the Africa Region Consultative process for the Post 2020 Global Framework for Biodiversity.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, H.E. Ine Eriksen Soreide, on her part, observed that while challenges of poverty, pollution and climate change remain, mutual collaboration is the key to unleash the tremendous potential of the ocean supported by the technological advancement. "We cannot just ask what the ocean can do for us, but also what we can do for the ocean. Instead of worrying what the transition to a greener future is going to cost, many of you have proven that green technology does not lead to red numbers in the account book", she stated.

At the margins of the conference, the AU delegation also held bilateral meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Representatives of the AU Key private sector and institution partners including the Association of Africa Maritime Administrators (AAMA), the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the Association of Women in Maritime in Africa (WIMAfrica) and the African of Shipowners Association (ASA) to deliberate on the new perspective of the Commission regarding Africa's Blue Economy and the importance of collaborative partnerships. The Commissioner was accompanied by Amb. Dr. Namira Negm, AU Legal Counsel and Amb. Rossette Nyirinkindi, Technical Advisor to the Chairperson of the AU Commission on Regional Integration.

For further information, please contact:

Mrs. Christiane Yanrou-Matondo, Principal Communication Officer, Bureau of the Chairperson; E-mail: Yanrouc@africa-union.org.

Mr. Molalet Tsedeke, Media Center Coordinator; Directorate of Information and Communication; AU Commission. molalett@africa-union.org ; Tel: 0911 630631.

Directorate of Information and Communication, African Union Commission, DIC@africa-union.org, www.au.int, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Follow us:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AfricanUnionCommission>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/_AfricanUnion

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/AUCommission>