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Women in Blue Economy Workshop Calls for Unreserved Participation of Women to Achieve the Continental Blue Economy Initiative



Ensuring participation and representation of women in the blue economy is a driving force for the economic development of the continent in all sectors. This was the prominent key message coming out from the Women in the Blue Economy Workshop that took place from 16-17 June 2022 in Abuja, the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Participants at the workshop exchanged views on the African Union Blue Economy Strategy and ensuring women's empowerment in the fisheries development sector. The workshop also reflected on possible ways of financing women's participation in the blue economy.



Speaking at the opening ceremony, Amb. Josefa Sacko, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment at the African Union Commission emphasised the importance of blue economy as a pillar of Africa's development and transformation agenda. "The continent shares a coastline of over 47,000km and its maritime transport continues to grow in terms of volume of goods transported, since it's the main trade route for the continent. More than ever, it has become relevant for the African continent to look towards its seas and oceans and inland waters not only for food security, but also as a pathway for

connectivity, innovation, trade and nature-based solutions for the various challenges that the planet is facing", she reiterated.

While addressing the meaningful participation of women on the blue economy as a catalyse instrument in the blue economy industry, Amb. Sacko also pointed out the gaps that needs to be addressed in some sectors. “In the fisheries sector, women play an important role in post-harvest aspects of the seafood value chain, including processing, marketing, and selling seafood. Very often, this contribution goes unseen as it is done on a subsistence scale, in the informal economy, or it is undervalued. “We do not have the full picture of women’s contribution, and women remain excluded from the higher levels of decision making around fisheries”. She reaffirmed, that the complex nature of fishing agreements, processing, and trade exacerbates this situation. Already, it is estimated that while the fisheries sector in Africa is valued at \$24 billion, most of this revenue does not go into the economic development of the Continent.



H.E. Hon Sharon Ikeazor, Federal Minister of State for Environment, Nigeria, underscored how crucial it is to understand women’s contribution to the blue economy, and setting up the mechanisms, networks, and resources to enhance this contribution while ensuring they receive a fair return on their investment. “It is also important to empower women to reach leadership positions in the blue economy. ‘Only then will Africa prosper’, she stressed.

The Minister also emphasised on the need for deliberate policies to promote women in the entire spectrum of Blue Economy, including in science and

innovation, business and investments, as well as in the area of security for Africa aquatic ecosystems.

This meeting brought together a range of multisectoral high-profile and inspirational stakeholders to discuss tangible, actionable ways of supporting women in the blue economy in Africa. It was organised by the African Union Commission in collaboration with the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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