
Draft Concept Note

African Scientific Conference on Advancing the Blue Economy in Africa



2025 African Scientific Conference on Advancing the Blue Economy

Organized by:

IOC Sub-Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States (IOCAFRICA)

In collaboration with

Global Ocean Observing System – Africa (GOOS-Africa)

Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI)

 **Venue:** Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI), Mombasa, Kenya

 **Dates:** 5–6 May 2025

Theme:

Scientific Perspective for Sustainable Blue Economy in Africa



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1. Background and Context

Africa's blue economy represents a vast yet underutilised economic and environmental asset with the potential to drive sustainable development, enhance food sovereignty, and create employment opportunities. Despite the continent's extensive oceanic, coastal and inland water resources, multiple interrelated challenges continue to impede its full realisation. Ineffective regulatory frameworks due to lack of enforcement, overfishing, habitat destruction, marine pollution, uncontrolled coastal urbanisation and construction, etc; limit sustainable growth, while climate change accelerates sea-level rise, coastal erosion, and extreme weather events, exacerbating vulnerabilities of marine and coastal dependent communities. These factors collectively threaten biodiversity, ecological systems, economic resilience, and social stability, underscoring the urgent need for innovative, science-driven solutions.

Insufficient integration of scientific research into policy and practice is a critical barrier to unlocking the full potential of the blue economy. Innovative scientific research and results underpin the full realisation of the blue economy. While scientific infrastructure and massive investments into cutting-edge scientific research and education are uneven in Africa, even existing African scientific education institutions and infrastructures, capacity, and human power with highly qualified expertise on the continent and in the Diasporas are yet underutilised with limited regional collaboration, thus impeding sound scientific information-driven, and decision-making necessary for the effective ocean, coastal and in-land policy, governance and resource management, and establishment of appropriate national, regional and continental technology transfer mechanisms. Furthermore, inadequate and unsustainable national, regional and international financial investments in ocean research and education hinder progress. Addressing these systemic gaps requires a multi-sectoral approach that aligns scientific expertise with policymaking, industry innovation, and community engagement.

This scientific conference seeks to address these pressing challenges by convening experts from Academic and research institutions, governmental and non-governmental organisations, private sector entities, industries, and development organisations. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and knowledge exchange, the conference will serve as a platform for advancing cutting-edge research, promoting technological innovations, and formulating evidence-based policy recommendations. Topics such as sustainable coastal and ocean resources exploitation, including fisheries management, coastal tourism, offshore and coastal oil and gas, marine spatial planning, ocean policy and governance, renewable marine energy, and climate adaptation strategies etc., will be explored in depth.

The overarching goal of this conference is to bridge the existing gap between science, policy, and practice in Africa's blue economy. Through collaborative efforts, Africa will enhance scientific advancements to foster resilient and sustainable economic models that prioritise environmental conservation while ensuring equitable growth. By catalysing action at national and regional levels, this meeting will reinforce the existing foundation for a transformative shift towards a sustained, scientifically informed, economically viable, and ecologically responsible and equitable blue economy.



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2. Objectives

The main objectives of the meeting are:

1. Knowledge Sharing: Facilitate the exchange of scientific research, case studies, and best practices relevant to the blue economy in Africa through keynote presentations, expert-led panel discussions, structured presentations, and interactive poster sessions;
2. Capacity Development: Empower African stakeholders to design, implement, and manage blue economy initiatives by leveraging conference elements such as expert presentations, panel discussions, knowledge exchange sessions, and poster presentations to facilitate learning and skill enhancement;
3. Policy Development: Provide evidence-based recommendations to inform policies, governance frameworks, and sustainable development strategies;
4. Collaboration and Networking: Foster partnerships among academia, governments, the private sector, and civil society to strengthen cooperation, promote knowledge-sharing, and enhance investment in the blue economy through joint initiatives and interdisciplinary scientific collaboration;
5. Sustainability and Resilience: Identify strategies to balance economic development with marine conservation and climate adaptation efforts.
6. The ultimate objective is to call on African Member States to develop adequate national ocean and coastal policy and governance frameworks and mechanisms

3. Scope of the Meeting

The meeting will focus on the following key thematic areas:

1. Science, Observations, Technology, and Innovation for Blue Economy Development
2. Climate Change, Ocean Health, and Sustainable Resource Management
3. Governance, Policy, Regional and International Cooperation for the Blue Economy
4. Emerging Opportunities for Africa's Blue Economy.

4. Expected Outcomes

The meeting aims to produce the following key outcomes:

1. A concise summary report capturing key discussions, research highlights, and key recommendations for sustainable blue economy practices and policies to feed into the IOCAFRICA-VIII and for further distribution.
2. A set of practical policy recommendations to inform African decision-makers and partners on enhancing ocean governance, integrating science into policy, and strengthening regional cooperation.
3. Identification of immediate research priorities and knowledge gaps that require further exploration and funding support.



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4. Strengthened stakeholder networks, fostering collaboration between relevant institutions, scientists, policymakers, industry leaders, and development partners to support future initiatives.
5. Proposed next steps, follow-up mechanisms, and actions, including potential collaborative projects, capacity-development initiatives, and policy engagement opportunities.

5. Participants

The meeting will bring together a diverse group of stakeholders, including:

- Scientists and researchers specialised in marine and aquatic sciences, policy, economics and governance.
- Policymakers and government officials from African countries.
- Representatives from relevant regional and international organisations
- Private sector actors in fisheries, energy, tourism, oil and gas, maritime and shipping industries, etc.
- Civil society organisations/NGOs and community representatives.
- Development partners and funding agencies.

Provisional Agenda

Day 1: Setting the Stage for a Sustainable Blue Economy

Time	Session	Details	No. of Presentations	Confirmed/Suggested Names	Chair(s)/Co-Chair(s)
08:30 – 09:00	Registration & Welcome Coffee	Participants arrive and network	-	-	-
09:00 – 09:20	Opening Ceremony	Four opening remarks (5 minutes each)	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister/Principal Secretary, Ministry of Blue Economy, Mining and Maritime Affairs, Kenya Ms. Louise Haxthausen, Director and Representative, UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa) Prof Kaudio Affian Chair IOCAFRICA/GOOS-AFRICA Ibukun Adewumi Head of the IOCAFRICA Secretariat 	N/A
09:20 – 10:30	Session 1 – Keynote Panel	Historical background and implementation of African initiatives in the Blue Economy	3	<p>Keynote speaker AUC Director</p> <p>Speakers: AU-IBAR</p>	Prof Koudio AFFIAN, Chair IOCAFRICA and GOOS-Africa/ Ibukun Adewumi, Head IOCAFRICA

				<p>Topic: 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIMS-Africa)</p> <p>Dr. Bernice McLean, <i>head of the Blue Economy Program at AUDA-NEPAD is (TBD)</i></p> <p>Topic: AUDA NEPAD Action Plan for Environment Initiative</p> <p>Dr George Mba, <i>Head AUC Blue Economy</i></p> <p>Topic: The Africa Blue Economy Strategy.</p>	
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee Break & Networking	Informal discussions and networking	-	-	-
11:00 – 12:00	Session 2 – Panel Presentations	Keeping track of International and Regional Blue Economy Initiatives	4	<p>Keynote: TBC</p> <p>Ambassador Dr. (Mrs.) Helen Gichuhi, <i>Secretary, Diaspora Welfare and Partnerships, State Department for Diaspora, Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs of Kenya.</i></p> <p>Topic: Implementation of Relevant Results and Recommendations for Africa of the First Global Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy: Harnessing the potential of our oceans, seas, and rivers to improve lives, Nairobi, Kenya, 26-28 November 2018.</p> <p>Prof Amr Hamouda and/or Dr.Suzan Elgharabawy, NIOF, Egypt</p>	<p>Dr. Juliet Hermes (SAEON/SA) and Justin Ahanhanzo, <i>GOOS-AFRICA initiator and promoter, founding Coordinator</i></p>

				<p>Topic: Implementation of the Results and Recommendations of the African Conference on Priority Setting and Partnership Development for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, Cairo, Egypt, 10-12 May 2022.</p> <p>Dr Ahmed Khan Topic: The AfDB support to Blue Economy initiatives and programmes in Africa</p>	
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch Break	Networking lunch	-	-	-
14:00 – 15:30	Session 3A – Thematic	Science, Technology, and Innovation for Blue Economy (Part 1 – In situ observations: Cruises)	6	<p>Keynote: Dr. Edem Mahu, <i>Senior Lecturer, Department of Marine and Fisheries Sciences, College of Basic and Applied Sciences, University of Ghana (TBD)</i></p> <p>Prof. Peter Haugan, (TBC) Topic: Global and Regional Trends in Marine Governance and Sustainability</p> <p>Dr. Arthur Tuda, <i>Executive Director of the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association</i> Topic: The Role of Science and Innovations in Advancing the Blue Economy</p>	<p>Prof Amr Hamouda, <i>Professor at National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries and Co-Chair, IOC/Dr Kwame Kourateng</i></p>

Dr. Gilbert Siko, *Director of Marine & Polar Research, South African Department of Science and Innovation*
Topic: Cruise around Southern Africa)

Dr. Suzan Elgharabawy, *Lecturer of Marine Geology and Geophysics, National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries/Co-Chair, IOCAFRICA*
Topic: Cruise around the Mediterranean and Red Seas

Dr. Juliet Igbo Kelechi, *Assistant Director, Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research*
Topic: Cruise Around the Gulf of Guinea),

Dr. Charles Magori, *Research Scientist at Kenya Marine & Fisheries Research Institute*
Topic: Cruise around the Eastern Africa.

Aileen Bohan, *Chair of GEBCO's Sub-Committee on Regional Undersea Mapping*
Topic: Seabed mapping around the world and Africa

15:30 – 16:00	Coffee Break	Informal discussions and networking	-	-	-
16:00 – 17:00	Session 3B – Thematic	Science, Technology, and Innovation for Blue Economy (Part 2 –	4	Keynote: Prof Kaudio AFFIAN, <i>Chair IOCAFRICA and GOOS-Africa</i>	Ms. Aarti Holla-Maini, <i>Director of United Nations Office for Outer Space</i>

Remote sensing and
space applications);

Prof Ojigi Mustapha Lazarus, *Executive
Director - African Regional Institute for
Geospatial Information Science and
Technology (AFRIGIST)*

Topic: TBC

Affairs (TBC)/ Prof. Sias
Mostert, CEO, *Space
Commercial Services,
Stellenbosch, South Africa*

Dr. Emmanuel Nkurunziza, *Director
General of the Regional Centre for
Mapping of Resources for Development
(RCMRD), Nairobi Kenya*

Topic: TBC

Prof. Anas Emran, Director, African
Regional Centre for Space Science and
Technology Education

Topic: TBC

Dr Kan Jean KOUAME, *Directeur, Centre
Universitaire de Recherche et
d'Application en Télédétection,
Université Felix Houphouet Boigny
d'Abidjan*

Topic: TBC

Dr. Kwame Adu Agyekum
*Provost of the College Of Basic And
Applied Sciences (CBAS)/Director of the
GMES and Africa Project at the University
of Ghana*

Topic: The MarCNoWA Project



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KMFRI
Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute

Christo Whitle, Senior Scientific Officer ·
University of Cape Town
Topic: The MaRCoSIO Project

Day 2: Science, Governance, and Strategic Actions

09:00 –	Recap of Day 1			Edwin Mwashinga, <i>Project Officer</i> IOCAFRICA
09:15 –				
09:15 –	Session 3C – Recap & Presentations	Science, Technology, and Innovation for Blue Economy C'td. (Part 3 – High Performance Computers and ocean modelling)	3–4	Keynote: Prof Abiodun Babatunde Professor and Director, <i>Nansen-Tutu Centre for Marine Environmental Research, University of Cape Town</i>
10:30				Prof Juliet Hermes, Manager South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON)
				Dr. Happy Sithole is the Center Manager of South Africa's National Integrated Cyberinfrastructure System (NICIS)
				Dr. Enrique Alvarez Fanju, Technical Coordinator of the OceanPrediction Decade Collaborative Center, Mercator Ocean International Topic: Ocean Prediction Enhancement in the Regions of Africa
10:20 –	Coffee Break	Interactive discussions and networking	-	-
10:50				



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11:50

Session 4 –
Thematic

Climate Change, Ocean
Health, and Resource
Management and Finance
in Africa

3–4

Keynote: Dr David Obura, CORDIO

Dr Jacqueline Uku, Chief
Research Scientist,
Kenya Marine and
Fisheries Research
Institute

Thomas Sberna, IUCN
Great Blue Wall initiative

Dr David Awolala, Director of Policy,
African Group of Negotiators Expert
Support (AGNES)
Topic: Advancing Ocean Climate
Action in Africa

Jeff. Ardron, Africa Oceans *Director,*
The Nature Conservancy
Topic: Exploring innovative business
models, financing mechanisms, and
sustainable investment strategies and
prospects for ocean conservation and
development

Arlette Schramm, *Global Ocean*
Accounts Partnership
Unlocking Finance for the Sustainable
Sustainable Ocean Economy

Dr. Margareth Kyewalyanga, *Senior*
Lecturer at Institute of Marine
Sciences, University of Dar es Salaam
Topic: TBC

12:20

12:20

Lunch Break

Networking lunch

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14:00



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14:00

Session 5 –
Thematic

Governance, Policy, and
Regional Cooperation for
the Blue Economy

3–4

Keynote:

Jared Bosire, Goerge
Mba (TBC)

15:30

Rep from Abidjan Convention,
Nairobi Convention, Bengual Current
Covention,

Strengthening institutional
frameworks, transboundary
collaboration, and policy alignment

Madaleine Nyiratuza, *Regional
Technical Advisor for Water, Ocean
Governance, Ecosystems and
Biodiversity (Africa), UNDP*
Topic: UNDP Ocean and Coastal
Governance Programme

Pierre Failler, *Centre for Ocean
Governance, UK*
Topic: Africa Regional Ocean
Governance Framework: Yesterday,
today and tomorrow

Q&A

15:30

Coffee Break &
Networking

Informal discussions

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16:00

16:00

Closing Plenary

Summary, way forward,
and funding opportunities

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Dr Arthur Tuda, *Executive Director of
the Western Indian Ocean Marine
Science Association*

Ibukun Adewumi
(IOCAFRICA)

17:30



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Dr Ahmed Khan, *Chief Fisheries
Officer and Coordinator of the Blue
Economy*

Laurent Bernadou, *Belmont Forum
Secretariat*

Jeff. Ardron, *Africa Oceans Director,
The Nature Conservancy*

Herland CERVEAUX, *Managing
Director OceanHub Africa*

17:30
—
19:00

Networking
Reception

Closing and informal
engagement

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