UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE NICE, FRANCE 2025

UNOC3 Conference Side Event

Accelerating Action to meet Africa's Sustainable Blue Economy Aspirations

12 June 2025, 12h15 – 13h30
Room 5 (Blue Zone)

Organized by:
African Union Commission (AUC), & African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), in collaboration with Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and Inter-African Bureau on Animal Resources (AU-IBAR)

Background on the event (one paragraph)

The side event convened major stakeholders driving continental, regional and national action in Africa to discuss Africa's sustainable blue economy development needs, aspirations and achievements, and identified areas of intervention and partnerships that can be accelerated through tangible ocean actions. The event sounded a Call for Action (see below), that articulates Africa's collective commitment to developing her blue economy in a sustainable and equitable way.

Key Issues discussed (5-8 bullet points)

This session provided a platform to discuss how stakeholders from multiple sectors can contribute to harnessing Africa's aquatic potential and building momentum towards Africa's blue economy agenda, while placing its people and environment at the heart of blue economy policies, projects and value chains. This was achieved by:

- Showcasing Africa's achievements & aspirations in sustainable ocean & coastal governance
- Presenting thematic insights on key areas: governance, finance, innovation, inclusion, & biodiversity
- Highlighting leadership commitment through a high-level roundtable discussing scalable approaches for accelerating action
- Mobilizing partnerships & mobilizing resources for purpose-led innovation & inclusive blue economy project implementation across & within the continent;
- Establishing a network of purpose around Africa's oceans which rests on the principles of sustainability, inclusiveness & impact;
- Issuing a Call to Action for strengthened global, regional & continental cooperation & sustainable investment.

Key recommendations for action / voluntary commitments (5-6 bullet points)

In addition to the below "*Call to Action*", the following voluntary commitments were noted:

- Commitment to ongoing implementation of the continental African Blue Economy Strategy by the AU (AU-IBAR & AUDA-NEPAD), Member States & Regional Economic Communities;
- Implementation of the Sustainable Inclusive Blue Economy Programme (2025–2029), launched by the African Union Commission (AUC) and supported by UNDP
- Implementation of the "AFRICA BLUE"– **A**ccelerated **F**ramework for **R**egional **I**ntegration and **C**ontinental **A**ction in the **Blue** Economy initiative -- A comprehensive Blue Economy Programme for Africa, launched by the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD);
- Prioritisation of three key accelerators:
  - Strengthening Governance & Institutional Capacity through the Africa Ocean Governance Strategy,
  - Financing the Blue Economy by organising a Blue Economy Investment Roundtable,
  - Regional Cooperation & Global Solidarity through engagement in global processes & instruments.

We issue this Call to Action, urging African and global partners to:

1. **Defend Africa's ocean, coastal and aquatic ecosystems** through strengthened application of ecosystem-based and nature-based solutions in planning and development processes and in restoring and sustainably managing the health of mangroves, seaweeds, seagrasses, coral reefs, deep sea, wetlands, and other critical aquatic habitats.
2. **Scale up investments and support private sector development** in Africa's blue economy sectors, with a focus on climate adaptation, community resilience and the development of Africa's blue economy-based micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through enabling policies and financial tools.
3. **Ensure inclusive governance**, by embedding women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, and local communities in decision-making and benefit-sharing mechanisms, with specific support for small-scale and informal blue economy actors.
4. **Strengthen implementation capacity** for evidence-based decision-making by prioritizing African-led, coordinated governance, research, innovation, technology transfer, innovation and ocean literacy, and supporting the development of integrated management frameworks reflecting local & regional contexts.
5. **Mobilize and operationalize innovative financing mechanisms**, including blue bonds, blue carbon markets, blended finance, and payment for ecosystem services, that are fit-for-purpose, to unlock the full potential of Africa's ocean wealth for sustainable development.
6. **Champion African governance and regional and continental cooperation**, through strengthened AU, REC and other Regional institutions and coordination mechanisms, to support Member States' to implement their Blue Economy aspirations; and to align existing and emerging global agreements, such as the WTO 2022 Fisheries Subsidies Agreement and the BBNJ Treaty, with Africa's blue economy governance frameworks.
7. **Advance equity in ocean action**, by aligning conservation targets with socioeconomic realities, and ensuring that global commitments do not displace African development priorities but rather enhance ocean-based prosperity.
8. **Commit to voluntary actions and partnerships**, including new or renewed Voluntary Commitments that support Africa's implementation of SDG 14, and other blue economy-related global goals.

Let this be Africa's moment to lead—to transform its vast aquatic endowments into engines of sustainable and inclusive development. Let the world join hands with Africa not in charity, but in solidarity, science, innovation, and partnership. The time to act is now—united for our ocean, united for Africa's blue future.