



ENHANCING AWARENESS ON MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING

Opening Speech

DIRECTOR, DARBE

18 AUGUST 2021

- ✓ *H.E. the Ambassador Norway Embassy to the African Union or His Representative*
- ✓ *Representatives of RECs and Specialized Regional Institutions*
- ✓ *Representatives from various Blue Economy Themes in African Union member states*
- ✓ *Development partners*
- ✓ *Experts*
- ✓ *Distinguished participants, Ladies and gentlemen*

I am privileged and honoured to give opening remarks at this Awareness Enhancing Workshop on Marine Spatial Planning on behalf of the Hon. Commissioner of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, Water and Environment of the African Union Commission, H.E. Mrs. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko on whose behalf I wish to convey special greetings and appreciation for your presence here this morning not only for your attendance at this very important meeting but also for your continued collaboration with and support to the African Union initiatives in Blue Economy development. In this regard, I wish to sincerely thank and express my gratitude, on behalf of Her Excellency, to the Kingdom of Norway for the commitment and support to implementation of Africa Blue Economy Strategy since its endorsement in 2020 by the AU Executive Council.



The African Union has a primary duty and obligation to provide the necessary environment and the impetus for its Member States to utilize opportunities, wherever these may be, for socio-economic advancement of their citizens. The Union has expressed its vision for this continent through the African Union Agenda 2063. As distinguished colleagues may be aware, a crucial milestone achieved in the course of implementing this long-term vision is the development of blue economy for this continent that leverages on the 'natural assets' in the form of numerous and massive aquatic resources. In this regard, blue economy growth is premised on the recognition that the African continent has a vantage geographical location, evidently adjacent to some of the most productive oceans, seas and is also transverse by network of numerous freshwater bodies, rivers and lakes.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Colleagues

This workshop on marine spatial planning is giant step towards implementation of the Africa Blue Economy. The importance of this workshop cannot be emphasized. In recent years, dozens of AU Member States have initiated the MSP process as part of their national developmental programmes. Thus it is crucially essential to enhance knowledge and demystify concept of marine spatial planning as a tool to balance sustainable use and conservation imperatives and mitigate conflicts and create synergies amongst the users of the blue economy resources, particularly during this time when African Union member states and regional institutions have embarked on various initiatives towards blue growth development. Marine Spatial Planning in transboundary context has potential of increasing knowledge, experience and data sharing among neighbouring countries as well as triggering political cooperation.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Colleagues

Our leaders undoubtedly realized that a key area of potential socio-economic emancipation and renaissance of this continent is effectively harnessing the inherent potential of the continent's naturally endowed aquatic ecosystems towards its blue economy growth. Not surprisingly blue economy development was



identified as a goal towards achieving the Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development of the African Union developmental blue print; Agenda 2063.

This workshop on MSP is a step in the right direction towards sustainable blue growth as MSP can lead to certainty and sustainability of Africa's ocean economies as well as facilitate cross-sector integration. We should be reminded that blue economy underscores a multi-sectoral and integrated approach towards harnessing the aquatic ecosystems towards attaining socioeconomic transformation and sustainable development. Thus it is critical to create continental understanding on an essential tool (MSP) that can support and facilitate the development of these various blue growth vectors in a context of increasing competition for space and limited ecosystem resources, increase the stability, transparency and predictability of the investment climate where they are implemented.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Colleagues

I am delighted to observe the caliber and composition of the speakers on the agenda where external experience is being combined with continental strategy to enhance Africa awareness on MSP. I personally commend this strategy since it would, in my opinion, be comprehensive and hence effective in disseminating lessons and best practices in the implementation and governance MSP. I therefore extend my sincere appreciation for the availability of these distinguished speakers from UK University, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, Abidjan Convention, AU members (Kenya, Seychelles, South Africa and Namibia).

I also wish to thank all the participants from the various blue growth sectors from Regional institutions, AU members (including fisheries, aquaculture, shipping and maritime transportation, environmental, tourism, energy, social welfare and gender etc.). Your support and cooperation since the promulgation of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy has been excellent. I thank you for the cooperation with



AU-IBAR in this endeavour. I also extend special thanks to all partners, Non-state actors, including the private sector, CSOs, women and youth groups. The combination of the participants would ensure inclusive blue economy development.

With these few words, it is my pleasure to declare open this awareness enhancing workshop n marine spatial planning and to wish to good luck in your deliberations.