



**WELCOME SPEECH BY AU-IBAR ACTING DIRECTOR, DR NICK NWANKPA DURING
ENHANCING AWARENESS WORKSHOP ON MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING
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*

Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning to all of you. It gives me a great pleasure to welcome you this morning to the virtual workshop on enhancing awareness on Marine Spatial Planning. Before I commence with my remarks, it's always a pleasure to introduce AU-IBAR to all of you. AU-IBAR is a specialized technical office of the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) of the African Union Commission (AUC) and we are mandated to support and coordinate the utilization of livestock, fisheries, aquaculture, bee and wildlife as resources for both human wellbeing and economic development in the Member States of the African Union.

Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen,

We are pleased to implement the recently adopted Africa Blue Economy Strategy whose vision is an inclusive and sustainable blue economy that significantly contributes to Africa's transformation and growth. I would also like to appreciate the Kingdom of Norway for supporting and kick-starting the first implementation of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy. Through their support we have created a continental awareness on the strategy and its policy direction for harnessing Africa Blue resources for the emancipation of its citizens.

The Africa Blue Economy Strategy emphasis the need to embrace marine spatial planning (MSP) as a practical way of organizing the use of the ocean space, and the interactions among human uses and between uses and the marine environment particularly during this time of the Blue Economy initiative. In other words, it's a tool for creating better coordination and synergy. The Africa Blue Economy Strategy urges the Member States to institutionalise MSP and allocate specific spaces for Blue Economy activities and Blue ecosystems conservation to secure long term private and public investments.



Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen, The Africa Blue Economy Strategy identified Marine Spatial Planning as key strategic activity to also ensure conservation of aquatic biodiversity. MSP is building upon the key approaches of integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) and solely based on the key principles of Ecosystem Approach or Ecosystem based management.

A number of African countries have started implementing the MSP concept through implementing marine conservation planning in the past. Of course there are technical challenges towards its implementation within the AU MS such as the long bureaucratic processes, funding and political commitment to fully deliver.

Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen, The Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa also advocates for the Ecosystem Approach to fisheries and Aquaculture development for responsibly and sustainably managed fisheries resources. It is important to pursue ecosystem-based approaches and co-management practices in small scale fisheries planning and management. There is still a lot of advocacy and political buy-in required to implement this principles. Furthermore, it is important to include all stakeholders' particularly small scale fishing communities in the processes of designing, planning and implementing marine spatial planning.

Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen, The AU Centers of Excellence were established for the sole purpose of undertaking timely research and one of the topics that requires attention is to publish success stories on MSP for dissemination in order to encourage other countries to follow the suit. We are gathered here today to learn and share experiences on the process of establishing MSP as well as fisheries management benefits emanating from utilising this tool.

Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen, In closing I would like to appreciate the Kingdom of Norway for making this workshop a reality. I would like also to thank my Director, Dr Bahiigwa Director DARBE for his leadership and my staff at AU-IBAR for organizing such an important event..

I thank you all

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