



AFRICAN UNION  
INTERAFRICAN BUREAU  
FOR ANIMAL RESOURCES



## ADVOCACY NOTE

MECHANISMS FOR ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVE ROLE AND PARTICIPATION OF AFRICAN UNION MEMBER STATES IN REGIONAL, CONTINENTAL, AND GLOBAL AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT RELATED FORA OR REGIMES FOR (NORTH, WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA)



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## Background

Africa is high in native and endemic biodiversity that has potential to drive socio-economic development if conserved. Many Countries on the Continent have ratified Conventions and are Party to several Regional and International Conventions, Fora, and Regimes. However, despite ratification, most of the African Union Member States (AU-MS) struggle to comply with the requirements of the Fora or Regimes and do not always participate in these Fora effectively. Moreover, implementation, surveillance, monitoring, tracking, and scientific research is limited in some Countries, making it challenging to make evidence-based decisions for negotiations in relevant meetings. Despite these challenges, some Conventions (secretariats) and AU Agencies have been making strides in supporting AU Member States agree on common positions before a meeting and this has proved fruitful in negotiating Agreements such as the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA).

African Union Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) under a project on “Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in African Blue Economy supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) commissioned a studies to develop mechanisms for enhancing the effective role and participation of African Union Member States in Continental and Global aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental

management related Fora or Regimes in the North, West and Central Africa. To develop the mechanisms, several methods were employed including: (i) desktop studies, (ii) online surveys, (iii) online meetings with focal points, relevant Government Department representatives, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), researchers, etc., (iv) online meetings with relevant International Fora or Regime secretariat representatives, (v) validation visits in Nigeria and Egypt, (vi) a validation workshop by Member States from the three Regions.

### Main findings

Several fora and regimes are of importance to the Continent as they address pertinent issues in biodiversity conservation, environment and on climate change. Some of the key Fora that require Regional or Continental integration include:

### *Fora and regime on aquatic biodiversity*

1. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of Party (COP) meetings;
2. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) COP meetings;
3. The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals COP meetings;
4. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands COP meetings;
5. The World Heritage Committee meetings;

6. Meeting of the Parties (MOP) of the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing;
7. ICCAT - International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, regular meeting of the Commission;
8. Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABJN);
9. International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling Commission Meetings;
10. Committee on Fisheries (COFI), a subsidiary body of the FAO Council; and,
11. Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) meetings

*Fora and regime on aquatic environment including pollution issues*

1. Meeting of State Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (SPLoS) covering four conventions and an optional protocol: The convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone (CTS); the Convention on the High Seas (CHS); the Convention on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources of the High Seas (CFCLR); the Convention on the Continental Shelf (CCS) and the Protocol of Signature concerning the Compulsory Settlements of Disputes (OPSD);
2. IMO Council, Assembly and Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) meetings on various Conventions e.g., International Convention Relating to Intervention on the High Seas in Cases of Oil Pollution Casualties; Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter; International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-fouling Systems on Ships; International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL 1973) as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto (MARPOL 73/78); International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation, etc;
3. Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Triple COP for the Rotterdam Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Rotterdam Convention on Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade such as DDT and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal;
4. Minamata Convention on Mercury COP meetings;
5. IOPC Fund - the 1969 International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage (1969 Civil Liability Convention) and the 1971 International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for

- Oil Pollution (1971 Fund Convention), regular meeting of governing bodies;
- 6. Sessions of the International Sea Bed Authority; and,
- 7. Barcelona Convention COP meetings.

### *Fora and regime on climate change*

1. Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Vienna Convention and the Meeting of Parties (MOP) to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer;
2. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) including Paris Agreement COP meetings; and,
3. UN Convention to Combat Desertification COP meetings.

While it is generally acknowledged that these Fora are relevant for the Continent, very few have resulted in strategic groupings for negotiation purposes such as has been done for the UNFCCC and in part CBD. This is because AU-MS experience several challenges in participating and implementing the requirements of these Fora. Some challenges highlighted by Regional stakeholders, fora secretariats and Regional bodies include:

#### **Awareness:**

- Lack of awareness of the relevant fora meetings which results in delays in obtaining approvals at National level for attending the meetings.

- Lack of information dissemination of key decisions taken during Global meetings.
- Lack of awareness of relevant tiers of society (Government at decision and Policy making level, civil society, NGOs, private sector, researchers, etc.) on the important of the Global Fora/Regimes.

#### **Capacity and Skills:**

- Low scientific research skills resulting in a lack of data for evidence based decision making.
- Lack of multidisciplinary teams in implementing the requirements of the relevant Fora and when negotiating a common position for the Continent/ Country.
- Lack of involvement of key experts in meetings and decision making processes.
- Limited negotiation skills.
- Inadequate human resources to support implementation and reporting for the Fora due to the need for focal points to prioritise other National duties and interests.
- High staff turnover resulting in discontinuity of activities and information gaps when new staff take over.
- Language barriers particularly technical meetings were only one language is used.

#### **Coordination:**

- Lack of coordination at National, Regional and Continental level to ensure all relevant stakeholders are consulted before a

- meeting.
- A need for harmonisation of some legislation on biodiversity conservation affecting migratory species and shared resources at a Regional and or Continental level.
- Implementation:
- Lack of funding to travel to relevant meetings.
- Lack of connectivity to participate in virtual meetings.
- Limited resources for teams to engage in preparatory meetings at National, Regional and Continental level to define a common position for key strategic issues relevant for the Continent.
- Lack of funding to implement programs in line with the Agreements made during the fora meetings.
- Significant struggles to obtain visa to attend meetings.

## Strategies and mechanisms to enhance effective participation of AU-MS

To address the current challenges faced by AU-MS in effectively participating in relevant Fora and Regimes, four strategic goals and eighteen mechanisms are suggested as follows:

**Strategic Goal I:** *Increase awareness of relevant Fora and Regimes on climate change, environment, and aquatic biodiversity in the context of the Blue Economy. Mechanisms to increase awareness that should be implemented include:*

1. Creation of a platform for AU-MS to obtain information on relevant Fora and their benefits in a summarized manner and in English, French and Arabic. The platform can be linked to relevant Fora/Regime websites for more details;
2. Conducting regular awareness raising meetings/workshops;
3. Coordinating a network of experts from existing rosters and in line with the coordination structure of the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa in each Region to provide insights, data, and models on key pertinent issues on aquatic biodiversity, climate change and environment;
4. Creating partnerships with relevant Fora secretariats to enhance coordination of AU-MS to participate in different meetings/



- workshops; and,
5. Conducting high level meetings with relevant decision makers (Ministerial level) to highlight the importance of the Fora and their benefits.

**Strategic Goal 2:** *Improve capacity and skills of Member States through training, technology, and advanced research.* Mechanisms for capacity building and skills development include:

1. Enhancing negotiation skills through training workshops on an annual or bi-annual basis;
2. Improving technical capabilities through short-term or long-term technical training in specific fields;
3. Leveraging technology through technology transfer and technology localization from developed States;
4. Enhancing research and data collection by acquiring equipment and capabilities to support Regional research initiatives; and,
5. Augment existing knowledge repository for information and data sharing to enhance reporting and strengthen institutional memory on relevant Fora.

**Strategic Goal 3:** *Enhancing coordination of AU-MS to effectively participate in relevant fora.* Mechanisms to enhance coordination include:

1. Strengthening local coordination by supporting relevant National institutions to develop systems and tools for coordination and reporting;

2. Strengthening Regional coordination by supporting Regional Economic Communities (RECs), commissions, and authorities to coordinate Regional workshop/meeting relevant to the Fora or Regimes;
3. Strengthening Continental coordination by conducting preparatory meetings where AU-MS can flesh-out a common position for negotiation on key strategic issues in Fora meetings. This may include appointing a speaker on behalf of the Continent and should be done collaboratively with existing platforms/groupings that are coordinating Member States before meetings; and,
4. Supporting the harmonization of legislation on biodiversity, climate change and environmental issues across transboundary areas to enable effective implementation of Fora and Regime requirements, including, monitoring, and surveillance.

**Strategic Goal 4:** *Enhancing implementation of Fora or Regimes at a local level through strategic programs.*

Mechanisms for enhancing implementation include:

1. Establishing partnerships on behalf of AU-MS with International organizations to develop Regional multi-year, multi-disciplinary programs;
2. Establishing a resource mobilization team and conducting proposal writing

- workshops to support various institutions, Governments, and organizations on the Continent;
3. Support the establishment of an Africa Blue Economy trust fund with support from funders such as development banks, developed Countries, foundations, UN Agencies and other International organizations. Currently, the Intergovernmental Authority (IGAD) for East Africa is coordinating efforts for the establishment of the Blue Economy trust fund; and,
  4. Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework with indicators, baseline, and targets to monitor implementation progress.

## Recommendations

The importance of one coordinated voice at International and Global Fora for Africa cannot be understated. Africa has 55 Countries which provides significant leverage when voting in negotiations during International Fora or Regimes. By strategically grouping relevant AU-MS for important Regime or Fora meetings, the Continent can gain significantly. Moreover, creating such groupings lowers administrative costs and resources while enhancing support for multidisciplinary teams to engage in relevant meetings and negotiations. Such a strategy is being used by the European Union and serves as a potentially good model to follow. It is therefore imperative that AU-MS

align themselves to allow for one coordination body (potentially from African Union and its Agencies), one speaker and a centralised unit to address relevant administrative requirements on behalf of the AU-MS. By so doing, the Continent stands a much better chance to drive decisions in its favour on key strategic issues during International Fora meetings and Regimes.

In addition, the establishment of a Blue Economy Trust Fund for Africa to support the implementation of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy will enable relevant resources to be channelled for implementation or relevant programs at National, Regional and Continental levels. Such a fund can also address skills development and capacity building and mobility support for Member States to attend meetings as and when needed. At present, IGAD, AU-NEPAD, WWF have formed a task force to establish such a Trust Fund together with the Africa Development Bank and this platform can be leveraged to support the broader Continental initiative. It is recommended that AU-IBAR engages with IGAD to ensure participation of the Agency in the Blue Economy Trust Fund meetings.

Furthermore, capacity building and skills development needs urgent attention, particularly on negotiation skills and some technical skills that enable data collection relevant for decision making and negotiations. A capacity and skills needs assessment at a Continental level would be a good starting

point to ensure targeted programs and initiatives to enhance capacity and skills for each Region in line with its needs. Within this framework should be the involvement of youth and women to ensure succession for future generations.

Lastly, strategic engagements to create awareness and for advocacy are needed to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are aware of the Fora and Regimes and the benefits and implications for participation. Activities that enhance awareness of civil society including the use of relevant technologies such as social

media platforms should be implemented in the immediate term while high-level meetings at Ministerial level are held in line with relevant structures such as REC meetings. This will ensure that inputs are obtained from relevant stakeholders before meetings to support negotiations.

Based on the suggested strategies and mechanisms, it is recommended that the following actions are taken to enhance effective participation of AU-MS in relevant Regional and Continental Regimes and Fora.



## Way forward

Priority actions can be drawn for implementation within the short term (1-2 years) while other actions can be implemented in the medium to long-term (3-5 years).

Activities that can be prioritized in the short term include:

### 1. Awareness raising activities such as:

- Engaging civil society using a variety of mediums such as social media, newsletters and Blogs on specific subject matter. Several of the Fora and

- Regime Secretariats have videos that can be cross shared to broaden reach;
- Conducting training and knowledge exchange workshops that could cluster environmental, biodiversity and climate change issues and the supporting frameworks, Fora and Regimes that support International and Regional collaboration;
  - Sharing of opinion pieces highlighting key issues being addressed by different Countries and featuring some of the success stories on the Continent that other Countries may learn from;
  - Developing and implementing a communication and visibility plan; and,
  - Conducting a stakeholder mapping exercise and analysis to ensure there is no duplication of efforts by various stakeholders.

Translations should be done to English, French and Arabic (possibly Portuguese/ Spanish as well) when conducting the various awareness raising campaigns to cover all the Member States in North, West and Central Africa.

## 2. **Capacity building activities such as:**

- Training in negotiation skills for relevant focal points and delegates. This can be done by conducting Regional workshops with relevant Country representatives on agreed upon timelines;
- Technical training in species

- identification and MSE, MRV systems;
- Developing a systems for data collection at a Continental level using National and Regional frameworks currently in place;
- Conducting proposal writing workshops; and,
- Develop training manuals.

Technical training can cover more fields than what is currently stated and AU-IBAR can on an annual basis engaged relevant focal points in the different Countries to define priority technical training needs. In addition, AU-IBAR can engage with relevant Secretariat to support AU-MS with training material that is readily available while other training opportunities are considered for the medium to long-term.

## 3. **Coordination activities such as:**

- Supporting RECs, commission and other Regional bodies to effectively engage and coordinate AU-MS in their Regions on, fora or regime issues;
- Conducting planning workshops with AU-MS representatives before meetings to agree on specific decisions and ensure one African Voice during relevant Fora or Regimes. Currently various AU Organs/Agencies are supporting different initiatives, e.g. CITES preparatory meeting and CBD meetings supported by AUC and AUDA NEPAD, respectively. A consolidated

coordination effort at the AU level is needed to maximise resources available.

Furthermore, other Regional bodies such as ATLAFCO have been supporting countries along the Atlantic Ocean with funding to engage Regionally before the relevant Global meeting and at times fund participants to take part in International Fora or Regimes;

- Sharing of Agreements with relevant authorities to draft legislation for their local context;
- Augment existing rosters of experts on the Continent to cover various sectors and ensure data and information for decision making is provided timeously for negotiation in relevant Fora;
- In line with the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa, establish a working group that covers aquatic biodiversity and links to the established Africa think tank to advise and support negotiations on key issues in aquatic biodiversity, environment and climate change; and,
- AU ratifying some Conventions and actively participating in some Fora and Regimes on behalf of Member States. In this case, AU can consider appointing speakers on behalf of the AU-MS in relevant meetings who articulate and negotiate Africa's position on certain issues.

#### **4. Medium to long-term priorities would include:**

- Facilitation of technology localisations in key areas of interest on the Continent;
- Supporting long-term training such as PhD and Post-Doc studies;
- AU-IBAR to engaged with IGAD, AU-NEPAD, WWF etc. on the establishment of the Africa Blue Economy Trust Fund supported by relevant resource mobilisation efforts and mechanisms for operationalising the fund;
- Enhance existing knowledge repository and data sharing platforms;
- Institutional support and institutional reform at local and Regional levels to ensure inputs is provided by various tiers of society including private sector, civil society, Government, NGOs, etc;
- Implementation of anchor programs to drive Africa's Blue Economy in line with the relevant Fora or Regimes;
- Enhance female participation in relevant Fora, targeting at least 50% participation; and,
- Enhancing youth participation in the relevant platforms to ensure succession.

By implementing these actions, the Continent can effectively participate in relevant Fora with one voice and achieve some of the set targets in Africa's Agenda 2063 while building the Africa we want!.



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