REPORT

THE EIGTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING OF THE AFRICA PLATFORM FOR REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN FISHERIES, AQUACULTURE AND AQUATIC SYSTEMS (APRIFAAS)



11TH – 13TH NOVEMBER, 2025
ENTEBBE – UGANDA

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I. INTRODUCTION

Under the auspices of the African Fisheries Reform Mechanism (AFRM), the African Platform for Regional Institutions in Fisheries, Aquaculture and Aquatic Systems (APRIFAAS) was established in 2015 to strengthen institutional coordination and collaboration with respect to fisheries and aquaculture matters in Africa. The Platform is an informal and non-decision-making mechanism established in response to specific propositions of The Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (PFRS) to strengthen collaboration and enhance coordination between regional and sub-regional organizations with mandates in sustainable fisheries management and aquaculture development in Africa.

The Continent has several regional fisheries organizations with mandates from respective member states for enhancing regional cooperation in the management and development of fisheries and aquaculture for the benefit of the member states. The establishment of these regional institutions has proved to be highly valuable in the planning and management of the sector. The successes are, however, without challenges, among which are overlap and duplication of activities, principally due to a lack of information sharing, harmonisation of work plans or programmes and projects, as well as coordination between these institutions.

The implementation of the second phase of the EU-funded Fisheries Governance Project (FishGov2) by AU-IBAR, in collaboration with AUDA-NEPAD, intentionally focused on regional-level interventions consistent with the aspirations of the AFRM and PFRS, as well as the recommendations of stakeholders.

The 8th General Assembly Meeting of the APRIFAAS was held in Entebbe, Uganda, in 2025, and generated several valuable outcomes, including the strengthening of inter-institutional collaboration, the consolidation of technical priorities for regional fisheries and aquaculture governance, and the endorsement of key recommendations aimed at enhancing coordination among regional and sub-regional organizations.

Theme: "**The AfCFTA and RECs Instruments to Facilitate Inter- and Intra-Regional Trade in Aquatic Products: Opportunities for Enhancing Regional Cooperation and Coordination**.

The opening session was facilitated by **Mr. Delvis Fortes**.

The following representatives made welcome remarks. **Dr. Bernice McLean**, on behalf of the Chief executive Officer CEO AUDA – NEPAD Ms. Nardos Bekele-Thomas reminded the audience that this is a decade of Collaboration under APRIFAAS since its inception, and stressed the importance of coordination and coherence, and harnessing AfCFTA and the Blue Economy opportunities.

Dr. Diana Akullo Ogwal on behalf of the Secretary General of AfCFTA Secretariat H.E. Wamkele Mene also gave her speech, citing that the objectives of this meeting are well aligned with the objectives of, and ongoing initiatives at the AfCFTA Secretariat which include among others; facilitating exchange of information between regional institutions; strengthening dialogue between stakeholders by bringing them to the same table, and enhancing understanding of the AfCFTA and RECs instruments that can be used to facilitate inter- and Intra-regional trade in aquatic products.

Mrs. Hellen Guebama (Fisheries and Aquaculture Officer and Coordinator of Animal Production Unit-AU-IBAR) on behalf of the Director and Head of Mission of AU-IBAR, Dr. Huyam Salih. Mrs. Guebama started by delivering welcome remarks. She stated this year's theme "The AfCFTA and RECs Instruments to Facilitate Inter and Intra-Regional Trade in Aquatic Products: Opportunities for Enhancing Regional Cooperation and Coordination" underscores the critical importance of trade integration and regional cooperation in transforming Africa's fisheries and aquaculture sectors into engines of food security, job creation, and sustainable blue growth.

Mrs. Providence Mavubi – Director Industry and Agriculture for COMESA as the current chair of APRIFAAS, she emphasized that by promoting value addition, enabling free movement of goods and services, and expanding market access, the instruments, which are the themes of the meeting can elevate fisheries and aquaculture into dynamic engines of trade, jobs, and food security

The Opening Session of the Eight General Assembly of APRIFAAS was made by a **Mr. Bwanika Joseph** on behalf of the Hon Hellen Adoa, Minister of State for Fisheries in the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries.

Mr. Bwanika Joseph reiterated the importance of regional Fish trade and the values of the theme of the Eight General Assembly of APRIFASS and called for fruitful deliberations in the meeting. The Eight General Assembly of APRIFASS was declared open by the Director for Fisheries of the Republic of Uganda on behalf of Hon. Minister of State for Fisheries

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

A presentation on the background, objectives and expected outcome of the meeting was made by **Mr. Delvis FORTES**, Senior Fisheries Officer and Project Coordinator of the FishGov2 project of AU-IBAR which concluded the Opening Ceremony sessions.

The main objective of the meeting; the **AfCFTA** and **RECs** Instruments to facilitate Inter and Intra-regional trade in aquatic products: Opportunity for enhancing regional cooperation and coordination

The specific objectives of the meeting:

1. Review of the status of implementation of the recommendations of the Seventh General Assembly Meeting of APRIFAAS
2. Take stock of ratification, implementation, and awareness status of relevant global instruments in Fisheries management and development, specifically the AfCFTA and that of RECs
3. Validate a developed APRIFAAS Strategic Action Plan (2026-2030)
4. Improving dialogue between stakeholders, and facilitating the development and approval of a harmonized work plan;
5. Update on the membership of APRIFAAS and call for new memberships or observers

Mr Fortes presented the provisional agenda, and it was unanimously adopted as it was without any amendments.

III. PARTICIPANTS

Introductions by participants were done by the delegation, and they are affiliated with the following institutions.

The meeting was attended by **47 participants** mainly representatives from **Member State** - Uganda through the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries; **Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs)**: **Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO)**; **Fisheries Committee for the West Central (FCWC)**; **Sub-regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC)**; **Lake Edwards Fisheries Organization (LEAFO)**; **Economic Commission on Cattle, Meat and Fish resources in CEMAC** (**CEBEVIRHA**), **Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation between African States Bordering the Atlantic Ocean (COMHAFAT)**; **Lake Tanganyika Authority (LTA)**; Large Marine Ecosystem: **Benguela Current Convention (BCC)**, Regional Economic Communities: **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**; **Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)**; **Southern African Development Community (SADC)**; **East African Community (EAC)**; **Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)**; the **Community of Sahel–Saharan States** (**CEN-SAD)** Water Based Commission: **Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC)**; **Zambezi Watercourse Commission (ZAMCOM)**; Technical partners: **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**, EU funded regional project: **The West Africa Sustainable Ocean Programme (WASOP)**; **ECOFISH**; Regional Sea Convention: **The Abidjan Convention**; Continental platforms and Network: **Aquaculture Network for Africa (ANAF)**; Policy Research Network for Fisheries & Aquaculture in Africa (PRNFAA): **African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET**); **FISH INFO Network (INFOPECHE**), AU - Centre of Excellence: **National Fisheries Resources Institute (NAFiRRI**); African Union Commission and Agencies: **African Union Commission (AUC)**, **African Union Development Agency New Partnership Development (AUDA-NEPAD)**, **African Union Inter-Bureau of Animal Resources (AU-IBAR)**, **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**

IV. TECHNICAL SESSION

Technical session 1: Setting the scene

Technical Session 1 was facilitated by Mrs. Hellen Guebama and comprised the following presentations:

i. Update on Progress of Activities of APRIFAAS by Dr. Yoseph Mamo - COMESA. The main highlight of this presentation was the major achievements, which, among other things, included promoting South-South regional cooperation and coordinating and harmonizing regional governance of fisheries and aquaculture, in line with sustainable, integrated, and inclusive development. It also supported the alignment of the national and regional Blue Economy Strategy with the AU Blue Economy Strategy. The challenges included poor attendance of the members of APRIFAAS; Limitation of resources hence the need to institutionalize APRIFAAS funding within the AU Commission budget.

ii. Presentation of the report of the seventh APRIFAAS general assembly and Progress of implementation of recommendations by Mr Rafik NOUAILI - AU-IBAR. This meeting had recommendations for promoting collaboration and enhancing awareness. Part of the progress made includes the establishment of the Biennial Forum on Domestication of Global Instruments and knowledge-sharing events.

Technical session 2: Under the sub-theme "Facilitation of Systematic Information Exchange and Dialogue among Regional Institutions to Develop a Harmonised Work Programme."

The session was facilitated by Mrs. Helen Guebama: Facilitation of the systematic exchange of information between regional institutions:

- Implementation status of FishGov2 project Mr Delvis Fortes, AU-IBAR

- Key achievements in the implementation of the revised AFRM by Mr. Rafik Nouaili, AU-IBAR. The highlight of this presentation was the Knowledge products for action which included AfaData institutionalization; policy briefs on ocean governance, and fisheries access agreements; AfCFTA focused advocacy to empower women and youth in fisheries value chains among others

- Updates on the transition between CAADP Malabo and readiness for CAADP Kampala implementation, by Dr. Bernice Mclean, AUDA-NEPAD. The highlight of this presentation was has happened on the 3 decades of CAADP in Africa when it comes to fisheries and aquaculture. In the CAADP Kampala with an agrifood systems approach, strategic objective 3 (ensuring food security & nutrition), the direction of fisheries and aquaculture in CAADP is becoming visible.

- Update on APRIFAAS Media and Communication Activities presented by Mr. Fahim Kremeier, AU-IBAR. The highlight of this presentation was the key message of APRIFAAS, which its role in advancing African fisheries and aquaculture, aligned with key policy frameworks and the importance of collaboration among regional institutions. Recommendations made, which included resource sharing and partnerships for more streamlined enforcement; Budget allocations for various recommended activities; capacity strengthening on the use of tools and engagement among others.

- Presentation and adoption of the 2025-2026 Work Plan of APRIFAAS members' activities, Ms. Stella Mbabazi, COMESA. The highlight of the strategic plan was the objectives, activities proposed, the timeframe of the activity, the estimated budget of the activity, the responsible partner, and lastly, the collaborators.

Stock take of relevant Global Instruments and trends in the fisheries and Aquaculture sector and level of implementation – Outcomes from the Biennial Forum Dr. Sloans Chimatiro. The highlight of this presentation was the recommendations made on the Biennial Forum which include; There need for an effective continental, regional and national coordination to ensure effective and coherent ratification and implementation of priority Instruments; There need for joint resource mobilisation in order to enhance cooperation for collective delivery of common goals; Put in place deliberate measures to encourage the youth to engage in international, continental and national fisheries and aquaculture policy processes, through mentorship and special training and research programmes among others

Technical Session 3: Facilitating increased investment into Fisheries and Aquaculture - Experiences and opportunities for improved trade, finance and investment

The session was chaired by Dr. Mamo – COMESA project during which the meeting received the following presentations:

1. Efforts to accurately value and promote sustainable trade and investment in Africa's fisheries and aquaculture value chains, Mr. Maxwell Nkambule, - AUDA-NEPAD. The main highlight of this presentation was the selected key intervention areas of AUDA-NEPAD in Fisheries and Aquaculture, and the relevance of the values of the African fisheries study in APRIFAAS
2. Facilitating Intra-African Trade in Fish and Fishery Products under the AfCFTA: Provisions, Progress and Implementation Requirements by Dr. Diana Akullo, AfCFTA Secretariat. The highlight of this presentation was implementing the provisions on the protocols on Trade in Goods concerning Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures to facilitate trade while safeguarding human, animal or plant life or health in the territory of State Parties; Enhance cooperation and transparency in the development and implementation of SPS measures to ensure that they do not become unjustifiable barriers to trade; and enhance technical capacity of State Parties for the implementation and monitoring of SPS measures while encouraging the use of international standards in the elimination of barriers to trade.
3. AU Department of Economic Development, Trade, Industry and Mining (ETTIM): Promoting Intra-African Trade in Fish and Aquatic Products" by the Ms Ronnel Representative of ETTIM. The main highlight of this presentation was the recommendations were; Economic policies & information; Leverage ETTIM's programmes like the AfCFTA-Protocol on Trade Goods; Entrepreneurship & private sector engagement; Explore marine tourism among others

Discussion and recommendations

i. The need for special attention for fisheries and fish products due to the unique nature of fish (perishability). Its SPS measures for fish differ from those of agricultural products, hence the need for technological transfer and innovation to ensure products reach the market, especially in tailoring the

measures by levels, country, and regions.

ii. The need for leveraging infrastructural development (trade corridors and logistics to link with different commodities) and expertise to support MS in building capacity in Fisheries. This should go along with a Blue Economy evaluation, not just fisheries, with the assistance of a toolkit developed by UNECA as a potential solution.
iii. The need for AUC to lead in negotiating with other institutions to reduce procedural barriers in fish imports, even with outside markets like the EU and China.
iv. The need for specific programs to capture and quantify informal trade (production, productivity, and trade), AUC can have a repository for fisheries data.
v. The need for improved private sector engagement in the fish trade sector and data collection.

TECHNICAL SESSION 4: The REC's policies and/or Instruments on facilitation of trade (including best practices): Opportunity for enhancing inter and intra-regional cooperation and coordination – the role that can be played by the RFB, RFMO and by Member States

The Technical Session 4 was moderated by Mr. Delvis Fortes from AU-IBAR under which the following presentations were delivered:

Information Sharing on current status, ongoing or planned activities on value addition, manufacturing and facilitation of trade "RECS"

- **COMESA** - Ms. Stella Mbabazi gave a presentation on ongoing initiatives and planned activities. She noted that COMESA Comprises 21 Member States, and the aim is to promote regional integration through trade and the development of natural and human resources.
- **EAC** – Dr. Balikowa gave a presentation on ongoing initiatives and planned activities. He observed that the role of EAC is to facilitate regional trade and that although they promoted investment into the region, they do not have mandate to negotiate development programs and that, that is the mandate of individual Partner State.
- **ECOWAS** – Dr. Olalekan Paul AKANDE gave a presentation on ongoing initiatives and planned activities. He explained that the main role of ECOWAS was Policy harmonisation and regional governance with Regional and Continental frameworks (CSFS-FAD, ECOWAP, CAADP & Agenda 2063) and that ECOWAS facilitates Trade Liberalisation Schemes
- **IGAD** – Dr. Wassie gave a presentation on ongoing initiatives and planned activities and highlighted that there is a strategy that starts in 2026, and supports Blue Economy
- **SADC** – Dr. Motseki Hlatshwayo gave a presentation on ongoing initiatives and planned activities supporting SMEs to enhance their business development and market access.

Information Sharing on current status, ongoing or planned activities on value addition, manufacturing and facilitation of trade "RFBs" and others

- **Mr. Sadiki Mohamed - COMHAFAT –** presents the ongoing activities and highlighted that COMHAFAT is reinforcing Africa's voice in global fisheries governance by organizing technical and strategic preparatory sessions for key forums like ICCAT, CITES, IWC, COFI, and CBD. This approach encourages full membership, active participation in scientific and decision-making bodies, and the harmonization of African positions, supported by legal and scientific briefings and assistance for delegates.

Given the significant impact of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) on trade in marine species, coordinated preparation and stronger interministerial collaboration—particularly between Fisheries and Environment—are essential to avoid decisions that negatively affect fishermen and stakeholders. Systematic expert consultation, combined with a balanced integration of "sustainable use" and "biodiversity protection" perspectives, is essential for African countries to present informed, aligned, and influential positions that protect their resources, defend their trade interests, particularly for species under listing proposal and enhance Africa's leadership in sustainable ocean governance.

- **Mr Ali Sunday Brian - FCWC -** Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea, Accra Ghana (FCWC) Inter governmental Regional Fisheries Advisory Body created by the Cotonou Convention on 7 November 2007 under FAO support. Comprises 6 Member States: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Togo The Mission Promote and support cooperation among Member States to build a sustainable fisheries sector and derive high levels of social and economic benefits in harmony with the environment and in line with international standards. Vision To work together to achieve an efficient, very dynamic, inclusive and participative organization for the sustainable development of fishing in the central west Gulf of Guinea.

The intervention priorities for FCWC are based on the six areas: Implementation of the Regional Fisheries Resources Management Plan (RFRMP); Consolidation and extension of the achievements of sub-regional cooperation in the fight against IUU fishing and maritime safety; Development of fisheries research and the regional information system to support management measures; Elaboration and implementation of a coordinated aquaculture development policy at the level of FCWC; Reinforcement of the organizational and human capacities of the organs of FCWC; Development of partnerships to support sub regional cooperation and policies of the Member States.

- **Mr Elysee Nzohabonayo - LVFO -** Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) is an institution of EAC mandated to coordinate the management and development of fisheries and aquaculture resources in the EAC region in order to contribute to food security and economic growth. Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) plays a critical role in coordinating regional fisheries management among the riparian States ensuring policies and practices are harmonized to sustain fish stocks and livelihood in the EAC region

- **Mr Kwibisa Liywalii - LTA -** the highlight is to ensure fish stocks are healthy and adequately conserved to prevent future exploitation, in relation to the Lake Tanganyika Fisheries Management Act.

- **Mr. Felix Ngamlagosi - ZAMCOM -** Zambezi Watercourse: has 8 riparian States, supporting over 51 million people through fisheries, aquaculture, agriculture, hydropower, and tourism. ZAMCOM: Established: By the ZAMCOM Agreement of 2004, entered into force in 2011. Mandate: Promote equitable and reasonable utilization, efficient management and sustainable development of water and related resources — ensuring that water remains a driver of economic growth, food security, and regional trade. ZAMCOM remains firmly committed to working with the AU-IBAR, AUDA-NEPAD, SADC, and other regional partners to ensure that the Zambezi Waters serve as a catalyst for regional trade, value addition, and economic resilience.

CSRP

- **Mr Baping Douagu - LCBC -** La Commission du Bassin du Lac Tchad (CBLT) Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) was Created: 22nd May, 1964. Member Countries: include; Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, Libya, the Central African Republic, and Chad. Area: 2.5 million km². Population: over 50 million Headquarters: N'Djamena, Chad. Main areas of intervention Sustainable and equitable management of the lake's water and other transboundary water resources of the Conventional Basin, Preservation and conservation of the Conventional Basin's ecosystems, Promotion of regional integration, preservation of peace and security in the Conventional Basin.

- **Mrs Barbara NANA - CEBEVIRHA -** Economic Commission for Livestock, Meat and Fisheries Ressources. They are a Key Player for an Integrated, Food-Secure, and Resilient Central Africa As a Specialized Institution of CEMAC (Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa), the Economic Commission for Livestock, Meat, and Fisheries Resources serves as the Community Executing Agency mandated to implement the regional policy on livestock, fisheries, and aquaculture. The mission of CEBEVIRHA is to promote the sustainable, harmonized, and competitive development of animal, fisheries, and aquaculture value chains, while addressing the imperatives of food security, rural job creation, and poverty reduction across the six CEMAC Member States.

- **Dr Yacoub Issola - ABDIJAN CONVENTION -** The Abidjan Convention acts on 3 crises: Biodiversity Loss, Climate Change, Pollution. The Convention through MSs moves for Protection of sea turtles, Support the creation of new Marine Protected Areas, Support for capacities building for marine and costal zones governance, and Supports for the validation on the National Action Plan on Plastics Pollution.

- **Mr Paulus KAINGE - BCC -** focuses on ecosystem health, resource management, pollution control, biodiversity conservation, and climate change adaptation. Its key intervention areas includes determining the shared nature/extent of species of commercial importance between Angola & Namibia, and Namibia & South Africa; compiling info on transboundary distribution of adults, spawning areas and nursery grounds, fishing/harvesting activities, national conservation and management measures,

MCS activities; Stock assessments and provide best available scientific advice on shared stocks which supports certification programmes for sustainable food e.g. Hake MSC certification, among other.

- **Mr. Fabris Compaore -** Strengthening coordination and partnership of projects in Africa (WASOP) - The West Africa Sustainable Ocean Program (WASOP) aim at accelerating a sustainable Blue Economy in West Africa. Program start: January, 2025 WASOP is aligned with: - the "African Union Agenda 2063": "The Future of Africa", and therefore with ABES (Sustainable and Inclusive Blue Economy) - the Ocean Pact and the EU's Global Gateway. The program promotes a sustainable Blue Economy as an integrated approach focused on local economic development and Ocean (fisheries) governance, while preserving Marine and Coastal ecosystems.

- **Dr. Sunil Sweenarain - ECOFISH –** gave a presentation on ongoing initiatives and planned activities in relation to stock take of the Eco fish Project

- **Lakes Edward Albert fisheries and aquaculture Organisation (LEAFAO)** / organisation des peches et aquaculture des lacs douard et albert (OPALEA) Secretatiat (LEA-FAO) – Prof. Matunguru the Executive Director for the organization Gave a presentation of the mandate in regards to fisheries and aquaculture development. Presented a request to join the APRIFAAS that was received and granted.

- **Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF)**
  Mr. Omanyi Paul the in-charge of Fish quality Assurance gave a presentation on the advances of fish quality and products handling in Uganda. Most highlight in his presentation was that Uganda through times had faced a number of challenges relating to fish product handling and that these challenges had meticulously handled. Now Uganda is on list one of the 3rd Countries that are allowed to export fish and fishery products to the European Union Market and noted that it is a no mean achievement.

- **Director - Kajjansi Aquaculture Development Center (KARDC)**
  Gave a presentation on interventions that the centre is undertaking. She thanked the AUC for the opportunities of research and consultancies that AU- IBAR has been providing and wished that this should continue. In her presentation of what the centre is undertaking, Key highlights were that the centre is well staffed with able technical staff who are assisting in resource mobilisation. She noted the achievements of the centre and challenges that the centre is facing. She particularly pointed out that research activities consume and require a lot of resources however, the funding by Government is minimal and the centre is depending on sourcing through competitive grants.

- **Mr Houssam Hamza - The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) -** Regional fisheries management organization established under FAO, oversees the sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Its mandate focuses on promoting the long-term conservation of marine living resources, strengthening scientific research, and supporting evidence-based management measures across its Member States. Through its technical work and coordinated regional processes, the GFCM delivers several key outcomes, including the

assessment of fish stocks, the development of multiannual management plans, the identification of priority species and vulnerable ecosystems, and the monitoring of fishing activities to combat IUU fishing. The Commission also advances sustainable aquaculture development, enhances data collection and reporting, and supports capacity-building efforts to improve governance and compliance. Overall, the GFCM plays a central role in ensuring healthy marine ecosystems, responsible resource use, and strengthened cooperation among coastal states in the region

TECHNICAL SESSION 5:

Presentation of the draft Strategic Action Plan and resources mobilisation strategy – Dr. Sloans Chimatiro – AU-IBAR Consultant presented the draft Strategic Plan and Resources Mobilisation Strategy. In his presentation, he noted that the Strategic Plan is aligned with the APRIFAAS Rules of Procedure, but in addition to the 5 Strategic Areas, a 6th Strategic Area (Enhance governance and Institutional sustainability) has been added in order to guide the transformation of APRIFAAS into a modern, results-based and financially sustainable coordination Platform.

In the ensuing discussions, the following recommendations were highlighted:

a. Stakeholder mapping was necessary because it will guide the (i) communication strategy; (ii) stakeholder engagement strategy, and (iii) resource mobilisation strategy. The Strategic Plan recognizes that APRIFAAS is a subsidiary of AFRM and already institutionalized under the AU-IBAR. Therefore, the Strategic Plan and Resource Mobilisation Strategy further reinforces that continuous process of making APRIFAAS a strong and credible Platform.
b. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will be further be updated with indicators.
c. There is a highlight of personalization in the strategic plan that should be eliminated. A neutral approach is encouraged
d. The strategic plan should not promote policy fragmentation, a siloed approach, and inadequate data

The General Assembly expressed their satisfaction with the draft and urged the consultant to finalize and circulate the final draft by Friday, 14th November, 2025. The stakeholders will return their inputs by end of a week, in order for the consultant to produce a final Strategic Plan and Resource Mobilization Plan.

V. MEETING OUTCOMES

The Eight General Assembly of APRIFAAS was successfully conducted and concluded.

In summary, the followings were accomplished

Key outcomes of the meeting include: Review of Progress Since the 7th Assembly: Participants reviewed the status of implementation of previous recommendations, noting significant achievements in strengthening continental coordination, knowledge generation, and visibility of APRIFAAS.

Presentation of the Draft APRIFAAS Strategic Action Plan (2026–2030) and Resource Mobilisation Strategy (RMS): The Assembly received and discussed the draft documents. Members appreciated the improved structure and alignment with AFRM, PFRS, Agenda 2063 and FishGov3. It was agreed that the documents will undergo further refinement and will be formally validated during an online session in early 2026.

Adoption of the APRIFAAS 2025–2026 Joint Work Plan: The Assembly reviewed and adopted the consolidated work plan outlining activities, responsibilities, timeframes and indicative budgets for regional institutions.

Strengthened Dialogue on AfCFTA Opportunities: Members examined provisions, challenges, and opportunities for promoting intra-African trade in aquatic products under the AfCFTA, especially regarding SPS measures, value addition, trade facilitation and harmonised standards.

Knowledge Sharing on Regional Policies and Instruments: RECs, RFBs, and partners presented their ongoing initiatives, showcasing best practices in governance, value addition, trade facilitation, and sustainable resource management.

Agreement on the Need for Greater Coordination and Information Sharing: Delegates underscored the importance of harmonised data systems, regular technical exchanges, and improved communication across institutions.

Membership Update: New organisations expressed interest in joining APRIFAAS (including LEAFAO/OPALEA), and their requests were duly noted and welcomed by the Assembly.

Field Visits Conducted: Delegates undertook field missions to NaFIRRI Aquaculture Research and Development Centre and a fish-processing facility, gaining practical insights into innovations, quality assurance systems and value chain opportunities.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS.

The Assembly made the following key recommendations to strengthen coordination, promote trade, and advance sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development in Africa:

A. Coordination, Collaboration and Governance

- Strengthen collaboration among RECs, RFBs, Regional Seas Conventions and AU institutions through joint planning, information sharing and harmonised work programmes.
- Promote stronger partnerships with development partners to support implementation of regional and continental priorities.
- Ensure that the APRIFAAS Strategic Action Plan emphasises cohesion, avoids fragmentation, and promotes coordinated approaches.

B. Strategic and Technical Guidance

- Undertake comprehensive stakeholder mapping to guide the communication strategy, engagement processes, and resource mobilisation plan.
- Update the membership lists and profile
- Ensure neutrality and institutional tone in the Strategic Action Plan.

C. Trade Facilitation and Value Addition

- Prioritise the unique characteristics of fish and fish products, especially perishability and SPS requirements, by promoting appropriate technologies, cold chain systems and innovations.
- Leverage trade corridors and logistics infrastructure to better connect value chains and support regional trade in aquatic products.
- Strengthen the role of the AU and RECs in addressing procedural and regulatory barriers to African fish exports, including with external markets.

D. Evidence, Data and Informal Trade

- Improve data collection, harmonisation and reporting systems, including mechanisms for capturing **informal cross-border fish trade**, productivity and value chain information.
- Promote the use of continental and regional databases such as AFAData to enhance evidence-based decision-making.

E. Capacity Development and Youth Engagement

- Advocate for increased budget allocations to support recommended activities and capacity development in fisheries and aquaculture.
- Strengthen Member States' ability to implement SPS measures, meet standards, and comply with regional and global trade requirements and encourage youth participation in policy, trade and governance processes through mentorship, training and research programmes.

VII. THE WAY FORWARD AND NEXT STEPS

From the deliberations of this Assembly, it is clear that we must move from coordination in principle to coordination in practice. The next phase of APRIFAAS must therefore prioritise:

- Strengthening **joint programming** between RECs and RFBs;
- **Harmonising data, standards and regulatory frameworks** to facilitate regional and continental trade;
- **Scaling investment** in fisheries and aquaculture through dynamic partnerships;
- And fully integrating the sector within the CAADP–Kampala Declaration food systems transformation framework.

The African Union will continue to work closely with the RECs, COMESA, regional platforms and all development partners to ensure that the new Strategic Action Plan delivers **tangible, measurable impact** for AU Member States.

The APRIFAAS Communiqué will be circulated by email for your inputs and consolidation. In addition, the **Strategic Plan and Resource Mobilization Plan** will be finalised and validated – tentatively in early 2026. AU-IBAR will liaise with the APRIFAAS Chair to agree on the proposed date and ensure all institutions are duly invited.

VIII. CLOSING REMARKS

By. **Dr. Bernice McLean, Senior Programme Officer, AUDA-NEPAD**. On behalf of the African Union allow me first to extend our warm appreciation to the organizers, hosts, and all participants who have made this 8th General Assembly of the African Platform for Regional Institutions in Fisheries, Aquaculture and Aquatic Systems (APRIFAAS) a great success. She thanked KARDC for the work they are doing as a Centre of Excellence. Thanked the Government of Uganda for the warm hospitality and excellent facilities provided she commended COMESA the current chair of APRIFAASS for the able leadership, as well as Regional Economic Communities, Regional Fisheries Bodies, Regional Sea Conventions and to all the members and development partners and requested them to continue to provide support technical and financial to Africa's fisheries and aquaculture agenda. She noted that the three days have helped straighten collaboration and strengthen African voice as well noting progress since the 7th General Assembly.

Based on the theme of the workshop "The AfCFTA and RECs Instruments to facilitate Inter and Intra-regional trade in aquatic products: Opportunity for enhancing regional cooperation and coordination" we explored ways to increase synergies and to advance the African agenda. She observed that we must move to practice while mobilizing and scaling partnerships. She also, committed that the AUC will continue to work along-side other partners. and finally thanked the organizing team, the interpreters and acknowledged that the work shop was a success. She wished the participants safe travel back to their respective destinations.

CLOSING REMARKS by the Director COMESA and Current Chair of APRIFAAS

While reflecting on a Milestone of the meeting, she welcomed the distinguished colleagues, and noted that over the past three days, this Assembly has reaffirmed why APRIFAAS exists — that is to strengthen coordination, build coherence, and amplify Africa's collective voice in fisheries and aquaculture.

Noted that our discussions have illuminated both the progress achieved and the challenges ahead. We took stock of the implementation of recommendations from the last Assembly, reviewed regional initiatives, and provided input into the draft APRIFAAS Strategic Action Plan (2026–2030) — which will guide our collective work in the coming decade.

Based on the theme of the workshop, we examined how the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can be leveraged to enhance intra-African trade in aquatic products and promote value addition, and we explored ways to improve synergies between RECs, RFBs and partners to advance Africa's Blue Economy Agenda under Agenda 2063.

She emphasized that COMESA is banking on the membership of APRIFAAS to enhance resilience to food security and wealth creation. Thanked the people of Uganda, NaFIRRI, AUC, AUDA-NEPAD, the EU and all Regional Economic Communities who were present and finally welcomed the new member the Lake Edward and Lake Albert Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization (LEA-FAO) as well as African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNet) and wished all participants safe travel and prayed that the spirit of collaboration to should continue.

Closing remarks by the Director NafiRRI on behalf of the Government of Uganda the host

Welcomed the visiting team to the Kajjansi Aquaculture Development Centre (KARDC) and noted the it was a great pleasure and honor to receive the visiting team which she termed as the Continental engine of fisheries development in Africa. She requested AUC not to forget the AU CoEs. She was delighted that the APRIFAAS team decided to visit the KARDC centre to know what else the centre can do beyond just consultancies. The emphasized that the Government of Uganda prioritizes aquaculture as one of the engines that will develop the Country. Uganda and KARDC in particular remains open to further collaboration and that the team are individually welcome all back to Uganda for business and that the centre is not limited to all partnerships. She wished delegates journey mercies.

She concluded by thanking all and officially closing the workshop

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Agenda

THE 8TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE AFRICAN PLATFORM FOR REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN FISHERIES, AQUACULTURE AND AQUATIC SYSTEMS (APRIFAAS)

THEME: "The AfCFTA and RECs instruments to facilitate Inter and Intra-regional trade in aquatic products: Opportunity for enhancing regional cooperation and coordination"

11 - 13 November 2025 Entebbe, Uganda

Time	Activities	Facilitator
	FIRST DAY	
8:30 - 9:00	REGISTER	AU-IBAR
	OFFICIAL OPENING SESSION **Moderator:** *Director Providence Mavubi*	
9:00 - 10:00	Welcome statement by AUDA-NEPAD	Representative, AUDA-NEPAD – Dr Bernice McLean
	Welcome statement by AfCFTA	AfCFTA Secretariat - Dr Diana Akullo Ogwal
	Welcome statement by AU-IBAR	Director AU-IBAR – Dr Huyam Salih
	Welcome statement by the Chair of APRIFAAS	Director Industry and Agriculture, COMESA – Mrs Providence Mavubi
	Official Opening Statement by the Hon. Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture of Uganda	Representative of the Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), Republic of Uganda
	Background, Objectives, and Expected Outcomes of the meeting	AU-IBAR - Mr Delvis Fortes
	Self-introductions	All Participants
	FAMILY PHOTO AND COFFEE BREAK	
	TECHNICAL SESSION 1: Setting the scene **Moderator -** *AU-IBAR, Mrs Hellen Guebama*	
10:00 – 10:05	Adoption of Agenda and Program	Facilitator
10:05 – 10:20	Update on Progress of Activities of APRIFAAS	Dr Yoseph Mamo, COMESA

10:20 – 10:30	Presentation of the report of the seventh general assembly and Progress of implementation of recommendations	Mr Abdou Diakhate SRFC and/or Mr Rafik NOUAILI AU-IBAR
TECHNICAL SESSION 2: Facilitation of Systematic Information Exchange and Dialogue among Regional Institutions to Develop a Harmonised Work Programme **Moderator –** *AUDA-NEPAD, Dr Bernice McLean*		
10:30 – 11:45	Facilitation of the systematic exchange of information between regional institutions: ☐ Implementation status of FishGov2 project ☐ Key achievements in the implementation of the revised AFRM ☐ Updates on the transition between CAADP Malabo and readiness for CAADP Kampala implementation ☐ Update on APRIFAAS Media and Communication Activities ☐ Presentation and adoption of the 2025-2026 Work Plan of APRIFAAS members' activities	Mr Delvis Fortes, AU-IBAR Mr Rafik Nouaili, AU-IBAR Dr Bernice Mclean, AUDA-NEPAD Mr Fahim Kremeier, AU-IBAR Ms Stella Mbabazi, COMESA
11:45 – 12:00	Take stock of relevant global instruments and trends in the fisheries and Aquaculture sector and level of implementation – Outcomes from the Biennial Forum	Dr Sloans Chimatiro
12:00 – 13:00	Discussion and recommendations	All
13:00 –14:00	***LUNCH***	All
TECHNICAL SESSION 3: Facilitating increased investment into Fisheries and Aquaculture - Experiences and opportunities for improved trade, finance and investment **Moderator –** *COMESA*		
14:00 – 14:15	Efforts to accurately value and promote sustainable trade and investment in Africa's fisheries and aquaculture value chains	Dr Bernice, Mclean, AUDA-NEPAD
14:15 – 14:30	Facilitating Intra-African Trade in Fish and Fishery Products under the AfCFTA: Provisions, Progress and Implementation Requirements	Dr Diana Akullo, AfCFTA Secretariat
14:30 – 14:45	ARSO's Contribution to Facilitating Trade in Fish and Aquatic Products under the AfCFTA	Representative of ARSO
14:45 – 15:00	AU Department of Economic Development, Trade, Industry and Mining (ETTIM): Promoting Intra-African Trade in Fish and Aquatic Products"	Representative of ETTIM
15:00 – 15:45	Discussions	ALL
15:45-16:00	***COFFEE BREAK***	Organizers
CLOSING OF THE FIRST DAY		

SECOND DAY TECHNICAL SESSION 4 **The REC's policies and/or instruments on facilitation of trade (including best practices): Opportunity for enhancing inter and intra-regional cooperation and coordination – the role that can be played by the RFB, RFMO and by Member States** **Moderator -** *AU-IBAR – Mr Eric Nadiope*		
9:00 - 9:15	Overview of relevant AU-IBAR instruments and achievements of FishGov2 project related to trade and investment in the areas of fisheries and aquaculture value chains	Dr Nelly Isyagi, AU-IBAR
9:15 - 10:15	Information Sharing on current status, ongoing or planned activities on value addition, manufacturing and facilitation of trade **"RECS"** ☐ COMESA ☐ EAC ☐ ECOWAS ☐ IGAD ☐ SADC ☐ UMA ☐ IOC	Around 5 minutes each
10:15 - 10:30	***COFFEE BREAK***	
10:30 - 12:00	**"RFBs" and others** ☐ COMHAFAT ☐ SFRC ☐ LVFO ☐ COREP ☐ FCWC ☐ LTA ☐ ZAMCOM ☐ NBI ☐ CSRP ☐ LCBC ☐ CEBEVIRHA ☐ Nairobi Convention ☐ BCC	Around 5 minutes each
12:00-12:15	Strengthening coordination and partnership of projects in Africa	WASOP
12:15 – 13:00	Discussions and Recommendations	All
13:00 - 14:00	***LUNCH***	
TECHNICAL SESSION 5 **Strengthening APRIFAAS through Strategic Planning and Resource Mobilisation** **Moderator –** *AUDA-NEPAD*		
14:00-14:30	Presentation of the draft Strategic Action Plan and resources mobilisation strategy	AU-IBAR- Consultant TBI
14:30 – 15:00	Discussion	All
15:00 – 15:30	***COFFEE BREAK***	

FINAL SESSION – PLENARY, MEMBERSHIP & CLOSURE **Moderator –** *COMESA*		
15:30 – 15:45	Membership Requests, Presentations and Approvals	All Participants
15:45 – 16:30	General Discussions and Recommendations	Facilitator
16:30 – 17:00	**CLOSING SESSION** Presentation of the Communique Closing remarks by AU- IBAR Closing remarks by COMESA Closing remarks by the country representative	 Eric Nadiope & Dr Nelly Isyagi Representatives of AU-IBAR COMESA – Ms. Providence Mavubi Representative MAAIF
CLOSING OF THE SECOND DAY		
Day 3: Thursday 13 November 2025 **TECHNICAL SESSION 6_** **Experience Sharing and Field Visits** **Theme: "Enhancing Value Addition and Trade in Fish and Aquatic Products: The Ugandan Experience"** Moderator – MAAIF		
09:00 – 13:00	Field Visits to 1. Fish Processing Plant/ factory – Value Addition, Processing and Access to Regional and EU Markets 2. National Fisheries Resources Research Institute-Aquaculture Research and Development Centre on Aquaculture technology, innovations and advancement	Government of Uganda / COMESA / EAC Ms Stella Mbabazi & Mr. Omanyi Paul- Fish Processing Plants Mr Tom Mukasa and Dr. Winnie Nkalubo- Aquaculture Research Centre
13:00 – 13:30	Reflection and Discussion on Field Visits – Key Lessons and Recommendations	All Participants
13:30 – 14:00	Closing and Wrap-up of the Assembly	Representatives of AU-IBAR & COMESA
14:00 – 15:00	***LUNCH***	All
CLOSURE OF THE MEETING		

Annex 2. Speeches

OPENING REMARKS BY THE DIRECTOR OF AU-IBAR
The 8th General Assembly of the African Platform for Regional Institutions in Fisheries, Aquaculture and Aquatic Systems (APRIFAAS)
Entebbe, Uganda | 11–13 November 2025

- Your Excellency, Hon. Frank Tumwebaze, Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries of the Republic of Uganda;
- Distinguished Representatives of the CEO AUDA-NEPAD, AfCFTA Secretariat, Secretary General COMESA;
- Representatives of the FAO Regional Office for Africa and GFCM
- Representatives of Regional Economic Communities, Regional Fisheries Bodies, Regional Sea Conventions, Large Marine Ecosystems, Centres of Excellence, Development and Technical Partners, AWFISHNET and AFRIFISH-NET
- Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen;

On behalf of Dr. Huyam Salih, Director of the African Union – Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), it is a great honour and pleasure to welcome you all to the 8□□ General Assembly of APRIFAAS, here in the beautiful city of Entebbe, Uganda.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Government and people of the Republic of Uganda for their warm hospitality and continued collaboration with the African Union. This year's theme "The AfCFTA and RECs Instruments to Facilitate Inter and Intra-Regional Trade in Aquatic Products: Opportunities for Enhancing Regional Cooperation and Coordination" is both timely and strategic.

It underscores the critical importance of trade integration and regional cooperation in transforming Africa's fisheries and aquaculture sectors into engines of food security, job creation, and sustainable blue growth.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) provides an unprecedented opportunity to unlock the potential of Africa's aquatic resources by improving market access, reducing trade barriers, and stimulating investment and value addition across borders.

AU-IBAR has been at the forefront of promoting the integration of fisheries and aquaculture into continental trade frameworks. Building on the achievements of the FishTrade Project, which laid the groundwork for strengthening intra-African fish trade and improving market linkages, AU-IBAR has continued to advance this agenda through the EU-funded Fisheries Governance Project (FishGov II). The Bureau works closely with AUDA-NEPAD, and Regional Economic Communities to align national and regional policies with the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy (PFRS) and the Africa Blue Economy Strategy (ABES).

These efforts have notably led to the development of trade-related instruments for fish and aquatic products within the AfCFTA framework, the provision of technical support to Member States to enhance compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and quality standards for improved market access, as well as the promotion of regional value chains and investment facilitation mechanisms that connect small-scale actors and enterprises directly to continental markets.

In addition, AU-IBAR, in collaboration with the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), has established the Regional Aquatic Animal Health Network (RAAHN), a significant milestone in strengthening Africa's aquatic biosecurity and sanitary systems. This initiative directly contributes to enhancing intra-African trade by ensuring safer movements of aquatic products and reinforcing the continent's compliance with international SPS standards.

This Assembly therefore represents an important step forward in consolidating these achievements and further deepening regional coordination.

Over the years, APRIFAAS has grown into a recognised continental mechanism that strengthens dialogue, harmonisation, and joint action among Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs), RECs, and Specialised Institutions.

Through the Biennial Forum on the Domestication of Global and Continental Instruments, AU-IBAR and its partners have provided a structured process for Member States to report progress, share experiences, and identify common priorities for collective action.

The deliberations during this Assembly, including the presentation of the draft Strategic Action Plan and the Resource Mobilisation Strategy, will further enhance APRIFAAS's coordination capacity and ensure that it continues to serve as a vital vehicle for implementing Africa's fisheries and trade policy agenda.

On behalf of Dr. Salih, AU-IBAR expresses its sincere gratitude to COMESA for its continued partnership and co-leadership of this event, and to all development partners, regional organisations, and centres of excellence whose collaboration strengthens the continental agenda for sustainable fisheries, aquaculture, and the blue economy.

Special recognition is also extended to AU Department of Economic Development, Trade, Industry and Mining (ETTIM), AUDA-NEPAD, the AfCFTA Secretariat, ARSO, and all other stakeholders actively contributing to the advancement of intra-African trade in fish and aquatic products.

Distinguished participants, the discussions and outcomes of this 8th APRIFAAS Assembly will undoubtedly contribute to accelerating the implementation of the AfCFTA, promoting inclusive trade, and ensuring that Africa's aquatic resources are sustainably managed and equitably shared.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and a highly successful General Assembly. Thank you for your attention.

Annex 3: List of Participants



List of Participants - 8th General Assembly of APRIFAAS

Lake Victoria Granada Hotel - 11-13 November 2025, Entebbe Uganda

	Name of Participant	Position / Title	Organisation/Inst	Email
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