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FOR ANIMAL RESOURCES

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WORKSHOP REPORT

Regional Training Workshop to Strengthen the Regional Capacity for Implementation and Governance of MPAs; Integrating Best Practices and Actions for Aquatic Biodiversity Conservation and Environmental Protection



20-22 APRIL 2026, DAKAR-SENEGAL

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Applications for such permission should be addressed to:-

The Director,
African Union - Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR),
Kenindia Business Park,
Museum Hill, Westlands Road,
P.O. Box 30786,
00100, Nairobi, KENYA.
E-mail to: ibar.office@au-ibar.org

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING AND PARTICIPATION 1

WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS 2
SESSION 1: OPENING CEREMONY 2
SESSION 2: SETTING THE SCENE PRESENTATIONS AND TRAINING 4

EXPERIENCE SHARING ON MPA ISSUES 6

TRAINING AND GROUP WORK SESSIONS 15
SESSION 3: FIELD-BASED LEARNING AND PRACTICAL INSIGHTS 17

KEY FINDINGS FROM ALL THE MEETING SESSIONS 18

RECOMMENDATIONS 20

PROSPECTS 21

MEETING ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES 22
SESSION 4: WRAP-UP, ADOPTION OF THE MEETING COMMUNIQUE AND CLOSING REMARKS 22

REFERENCES 23

ANNEXES 24
Annex 1: List of Participants 24
Annex 2: Final Draft Workshop Agenda 28
Annex 3: Terms of Reference (ToR) for Group Exercise on MPA Governance in the SRFC Region 31
Annex 4: List of group members 33
Annex 5: Approved consolidated findings from the two working groups 34
Annex 6: Some Photos taken during the meeting activities 38

BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING AND PARTICIPATION

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are widely recognized as effective tools for conserving biodiversity and protecting vulnerable living resources in aquatic ecosystems. Their establishment within national Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), along with global commitments to protect critical areas of the high seas (Sumaila et al., 2007), has gained increasing international attention. Across Africa, most of the 38 coastal states have established MPAs to support marine conservation efforts (Maestro et al., 2019).

However, despite this progress, significant technical and institutional challenges continue to affect the effective management and governance of MPAs, particularly in West, Central, and Northern (WCN) Africa.

In response, the African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) commissioned a study titled "Review of existing MPAs, document lessons, best practices, and formulate guidelines for their sustainable implementation and governance in the conservation of aquatic biodiversity resources in WCN Africa." The study identified key governance and management gaps and proposed priority actions to enhance the effectiveness of MPAs in the study regions.

Within the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) zone, several MPAs have been established; however, many remain vulnerable due to governance constraints. Building on these findings, AU-IBAR, in collaboration with the SRFC, has organized a regional training workshop aimed at strengthening the capacity of MPA managers across the seven SRFC member countries.

The overall objective of the regional MPA training workshop was to strengthen the capacity for implementation and governance of MPAs in the SRFC region.

The specific objectives are:

- Increase awareness on the importance of Marine Protected Areas for biodiversity conservation and sustainable fisheries management;
- Share experiences, lessons and best practices from SRFC member states on the establishment and governance of MPAs;
- Develop /strengthen the technical capacity of experts from SRFC member states on MPA establishment, implementation and governance;
- Identify key challenges and priority actions to improve MPA governance in the region;
- Identify elements for strengthening regional cooperation, including transboundary MPAs.

The workshop brought together a wide range of institutional, technical, and partner stakeholders involved in fisheries, environmental management, and marine conservation at national, regional, and international levels.

Participants included:

- Representatives from Member States of the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC), mainly from administrations responsible for fisheries, aquaculture, and environmental management;
- Regional and international institutions, including the African Union through the Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Regional Network of Marine Protected Areas in West Africa (RAMPAO), as well as the Abidjan Convention;
- Technical and financial partners, notably the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);
- Civil society organizations and technical experts involved in marine resource management and the governance of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

This diversity of stakeholders fostered rich, multisectoral exchanges, contributing to a better understanding of key issues and to the identification of coordinated solutions to strengthen MPA governance in the region

WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

The workshop was conducted over three days and was structured around the following four sessions.

SESSION 1: OPENING CEREMONY

The meeting commenced on 20 April 2026 with an opening session moderated by Mr. Abdourahmane BA of the SRFC. The session was attended by representatives of the organizing institutions, technical and financial partners, as well as national authorities. The photo below shows the high table during the opening ceremony.



Plate 1: High table members during the opening ceremony

A total of six speeches were delivered during the opening ceremony.

1. ***AU-IBAR/Mr. Rafik NOUAILI***

Mr. Rafik NOUAILI welcomed participants and conveyed greetings from the Director of AU-IBAR. He emphasized the growing threats to marine biodiversity and the critical role of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in addressing these challenges. He recalled the findings of the 2023 AU-IBAR review study conducted by Dr. Rodrigue PELEBE on MPAs and highlighted the need to strengthen governance and management systems across the region. He further underscored that the workshop aims to build the capacity of SRFC Member States for effective MPA governance and acknowledged the financial support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) under the "Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in the African Blue Economy" project.

2. ***SRFC/Dr. Khady Sane DIOUF***

Dr. Khady Sane DIOUF welcomed participants on behalf of the Permanent Secretary of SRFC and presented apologies for his absence. She commended AU-IBAR and its partners, particularly SIDA, for supporting the initiative. She highlighted MPAs as key tools for fisheries management and reiterated Senegal's commitment to sustainable marine resource use and biodiversity conservation in the region. She also emphasized SRFC's readiness to support Member States in strengthening MPA governance.

3. ***SIDA/ Dr. Beza BERHANU***

Dr. Beza BERHANU thanked AU-IBAR for the invitation and welcomed participants. She stressed the importance of MPAs for ecosystem protection and sustainable development in the SRFC region. She noted that the workshop contributes to improved governance of MPAs and aligns with the objectives of Agenda 2063. She reaffirmed SIDA's continued support for initiatives that strengthen marine environmental protection and deliver benefits to communities.

4. ***FAO/ Dr. Aboubacar SIDIBE***

Dr. Aboubacar SIDIBE conveyed greetings from the FAO Subregional Coordinator for West and Central Africa and the FAO Representative in Senegal. He emphasized that the workshop aligns with FAO's mandate on sustainable fisheries management and the role of MPAs as effective fisheries management tools. He highlighted ongoing governance challenges, particularly in planning and financial sustainability, and underscored the importance of identifying practical actions and recommendations. He also expressed appreciation to partners and experts for their contributions to fisheries development in Africa.

5. ***ECOWAS/ Mr. Olalekan Paul AKANDE***

Mr. Olalekan Paul AKANDE thanked the Government of Senegal for hosting the meeting and appreciated AU-IBAR and participants for their engagement. He highlighted the environmental and human-induced pressures affecting marine ecosystems in West Africa, including in the Canary and Guinea Large Marine Ecosystems. He emphasized the importance of MPAs as key instruments for sustainable fisheries management. He further stressed the need for inclusive governance, resilience, and effective management systems, and called for strengthened transboundary cooperation. ECOWAS reaffirmed its commitment to

supporting regional initiatives and ensuring follow-up on workshop outcomes.

6. ***Government of Senegal/Momar SOW***

Mr. Momar SOW, Director of MPAs in Senegal, welcomed participants to Dakar on behalf of the Government and the Ministry in charge of Environment. He expressed appreciation to AU-IBAR for selecting Senegal as host, considering it recognition of the country's efforts in marine conservation. He stressed that while MPA establishment is important, effective management is even more critical. He highlighted the need for regional cooperation, noting that marine resources are transboundary in nature. He also informed participants about the upcoming IMPAC6 conference to be held in Senegal and officially declared the workshop open.

The session concluded with a presentation of the meeting objectives by Mr. Joel MOKENYE. He also noted that the "Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in the Context of the African Blue Economy" project, originally implemented from 2021 to 2025, has been extended until June 2027 with additional funding. He further recalled the overall objective of the project and outlined its four strategic objectives, under which AU-IBAR has implemented a range of interventions over the past five years to strengthen aquatic biodiversity conservation and promote sustainable blue economy development.

This was followed by the introduction of participants and a group photograph. The meeting then proceeded with technical sessions, working group discussions, and interactive exchanges.

SESSION 2: SETTING THE SCENE PRESENTATIONS AND TRAINING

The session was moderated by Ms. Stephanie ACHIENG. The session began with the adoption of the meeting agenda. It provided a platform for laying the conceptual, strategic, and operational foundations for the governance of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), through presentations delivered by experts, regional institutions, and representatives of Member States. After each presentation, the moderator provided a brief summary to facilitate participants' understanding and discussion.

TECHNICAL PRESENTATIONS

- **Insight in Africa blue economy strategy – a continental framework for sustainable blue growth - By Dr. Mohamed SEISAY (AU-IBAR)**

Dr. Mohamed SEISAY delivered a detailed presentation on the African Blue Economy Strategy (ABES). He noted that AU-IBAR is actively working towards the implementation of the strategy, which has been endorsed at the highest political level by African governments. He also highlighted several key African Union policy instruments that underpin ABES, including Agenda 2063, the Malabo Declaration, the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (PFRS), the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), and the Lomé Charter. In addition, he emphasized that ABES is aligned with global frameworks, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He further explained that Africa is endowed with diverse and rich aquatic ecosystems. Endorsed and launched in 2020, ABES focuses on harnessing these opportunities to promote economic growth and human well-being, with

strong emphasis on sustainability and inclusiveness, including youth and gender considerations. He also underlined the importance of the continent's seven highly productive Large Marine Ecosystems, as well as key inland water resources in landlocked countries, which require effective management and governance to fully realize their potential. The presenter also demonstrated the synergies between ABES and global blue economy priorities, noting that its five thematic areas are coherent with the nine thematic areas identified during the Global Conference in Nairobi. He reaffirmed AU-IBAR's commitment to supporting interventions aimed at achieving sustainable conservation and management of Africa's marine resources. In conclusion, Dr. SEISAY stressed the need to promote harmonized growth across all blue economy sectors in Africa, emphasizing that both technical and governance challenges must be addressed to achieve this objective.

- **Overview of MPA study in WCN, Lessons, Best Practices and Guidelines for Sustainable Implementation and Governance of Marine Protected Areas, with particular reference to national MPAs – as tools for conservation of Aquatic Biodiversity and shared ecosystems and ecosystems - By Dr. Rodrigue PELEBE (Technical Facilitator/Study Consultant)**

Dr. PELEBE structured his presentation around five main points. First, he presented the different types of MPAs and outlined their environmental, social, cultural, and economic roles. Second, he provided an overview of the MPA study in West, Central, and Northern (WCN) Africa. Third, he elaborated on key lessons learned and best practices in MPA management within the WCN region. Fourth, he presented detailed information on national MPAs in Gabon. Finally, he discussed prospects for the sustainable implementation and governance of national MPAs in the SRFC region.

- **Overview of the network of MPAs in the West African region - By Dr. Bara DEME (RAMPAO)**

Dr. Bara DEME, in his presentation, highlighted the rationale for the existence of RAMPAO. He outlined the activities implemented, the approaches used, and the impacts achieved to date. He noted that approximately 70% of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in West Africa do not yet have management plans. He emphasized the importance of assessing MPA effectiveness as a basis for adaptive management and underscored the relevance of the IMET tool, based on RAMPAO's experience, in supporting this process. He further stressed the need for MPAs to develop business plans to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

- **Elaboration of MPA guidelines by the Abidjan Convention - By Dr.Yacoub ISSOLA (Abidjan Convention)**

Dr. Yacoub ISSOLA recalled that the Abidjan Convention has 22 Member States and plays a key role in environmental protection across its area of influence in the marine and coastal environment of West and Central Africa. He noted that two key instruments have recently been drafted: (1) an additional protocol on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) within the Convention area, which is legally binding, and (2) guidelines on MPA management, which are non-binding. He presented the content of the guidelines, which cover

six strategic areas addressing the essential requirements for the successful implementation of MPAs. He concluded that the document is still under finalization and will be shared with relevant institutions upon completion. He encouraged its use once finalized.

- **Insights into lessons and best practices of MPA implementation and governance in Western Indian Ocean region - By Jenny HARTZMAN (Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management)**

The presentation opened with an overview of the main challenges facing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in West Africa, as identified in a study commissioned by AU-IBAR in 2023. These challenges include limited technical and institutional capacity, weak enforcement mechanisms, and insufficient resources for effective management. The presenter placed strong emphasis on capacity development as a critical foundation for improving MPA performance. She also highlighted the co-management approach where responsibilities are shared between governments, local communities, and other stakeholders as a key strategy for ensuring more inclusive, effective, and sustainable governance of MPAs. In addition, she stressed the importance of prioritizing interventions in a context of constrained financial resources. According to her, adopting adaptive management practices is essential to improve efficiency, allowing MPA managers to continuously learn from experience, adjust strategies, and respond more effectively to changing environmental and socio-economic conditions.

EXPERIENCE SHARING ON MPA ISSUES

- **Sharing Tunisian Experience on governance of MPAs - By Mr. Rafik NOUAILI (AU-IBAR)**

Mr. Rafik NOUAILI highlighted the extensive experience of the Mediterranean region in the implementation and governance of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). A regional MPA strategy has been developed and is continuously updated to integrate emerging challenges, and is currently aligned with the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), particularly the 30x30 target. The presenter emphasized the key role of SPA/RAC (Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre) in supporting MPA governance across the Mediterranean region. He also explained the mechanism they used for establishing a regular list of functional and ecologically important MPAs, based on defined criteria. The presenter further highlighted the establishment of regional financing and cooperation mechanisms, including the MedFund and MedPAN networks, which contribute to strengthening MPA management effectiveness. Regarding Tunisia, he noted that the country has successfully used MPAs as tools for both biodiversity conservation and fisheries management. This success is largely attributed to strong stakeholder mapping and the effective and inclusive participation of relevant actors from the early stages of the process.

- **Country Presentations on status of MPA, implementation, co-management and governance; climate governances; lessons and best practices -**

Cape Verde:

Ms Sonia Sofia G, the representative of Cape Verde noted that the country has 47 protected areas, encompassing terrestrial, coastal, and marine zones, legally classified as Natural Parks, National Parks, Nature Reserves, Natural Monuments, Protected Landscapes, and Sites of Scientific Interest. Of these, she indicated that approximately 20 to 22 were Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The legal framework for protected areas is defined by Decree-Law No. 3/2003, of February 24, amended by Decree-Law No. 44/2006, of August 28, which establishes the creation and management of these areas under the responsibility of the government department in the area of the environment, through the National Directorate of the Environment, in collaboration with other institutions, the support of NGOs, and international partners. These areas are fundamental for the conservation of marine biodiversity, support for sustainable fishing, and the development of tourism.



Plate 2. Ms. Sofia, delivering a presentation on status of MPAs in Cape Verde

Secondly, despite the progress achieved, the implementation of protected areas still faces challenges, including the development and implementation of MPA Management Plans, strengthening enforcement, continuous training of stakeholders who use MPAs, mobilizing financial resources, and strengthening human resources. Further, she noted that co-management with local communities has shown positive results, increasing social acceptance and the effectiveness of conservation measures. A relevant example is Baía do Inferno, which integrates marine and terrestrial conservation.

Finally, Ms Sofia informed delegates that MPAs in Cape Verde play important role in responding to climate change, contributing to the protection of vulnerable ecosystems and increasing coastal resilience. Thus, essential to strengthen governance, expand the network of protected areas, and strengthen institutional partnerships and the involvement of local communities.

The Gambia:

The representative of Gambia, Mr. Ebrima Jonga informed the participants that the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management was responsible for the nation's protected areas (PAs) as of 2024, emphasizing marine protected areas (MPAs) within a total land coverage of about 1.13 million ha. He outlined a summary of protected areas as 9 national parks and reserves (e.g., Niumi National Park at 7,758 ha, Kiang West at 29,051 ha), totaling 95,281 ha (8.43% coverage), plus 18 Indigenous Community Conservation Areas (ICCAs) like Berefet (984.9 ha), summing to 14,305 ha (1.3%). An NBR Biosphere Reserve (136,905 ha, 12.1%) bringing overall protected areas representation to 21.81%, with coastal/marine areas at 20.73% including the biosphere.



Plate 3. Mr. EBRIMA JONGA, delivering a presentation on status of MPAs in Gambia

> *The Gambia presented an approach combining state-led management with strong community participation, particularly through the development of community conservation areas, enhancing local ownership of management processes.*

He further noted that excluding the biosphere, 27 protected areas cover 9.7% nationally, with minimal terrestrial/inland protection (1.08%) but strong marine focus (8.61%). Finally, he indicated that expansion of protected areas was coming into existence (e.g., 2023 ICCAs like Sukuta at 2,988 ha) an indication that this was community-driven expansion. He concluded by noting that the MPA governance efforts, were aligning with regional SRFC/AU-IBAR trainings by detailing administrative areas and conservation status for policy and capacity building.

Guinea:

Dr Mariama DIALLO, the representative of Guinea made a presentation noting that Guinea's Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are structured under two main categories: MPAs with formal national legal status and those without formal legal recognition but internationally acknowledged as Ramsar sites. Legally established MPAs include Tristao and Kapatchez (community-managed reserves), Alcatraz (integral reserve), and Îles de Loos (wildlife sanctuary), all supported by legal creation documents and Management and Development Plans (PAG). Other important ecosystems such as Rio Pongo, Delta du Konkouré, and Estuaire de la Méllacoré-Salatougou remain weakly protected nationally despite international recognition.

> *In Guinea, a hybrid governance model involving public institutions, local communities, and technical partners was highlighted, with strong emphasis on the use of scientific data to support decision-making.*

The National Center for Marine Sciences of Boussoura Harbor (CNSHB) plays a strategic scientific and technical role in MPA implementation, particularly in the preparatory work for Tristao and Alcatraz. Its contributions include baseline ecological studies, fisheries resource assessments, mangrove ecosystem analysis, and generating scientific evidence to justify MPA establishment. While CNSHB does not directly manage MPAs, it supports planning, ecological monitoring, and impact assessments of human activities .

Governance follows a hybrid model combining state management, community participation, and support from technical and financial partners. The Office Guinéen des Parcs Nationaux et Réserves de Faune (OGPNRF) serves as the central institution, while co-management strengthens shared decision-making and recognition of traditional resource-use rights. Climate governance projects have improved mangrove restoration, adaptation to climate change, and community involvement, though progress remains constrained by heavy dependence on external funding and limited institutional integration.

Key challenges include; weak institutional capacity, inadequate surveillance against illegal activities, limited scientific data, climate vulnerability, and socio-economic dependence on natural resources. Future priorities focus on sustainable financing through blue carbon and environmental funds, stronger community inclusion, improved scientific integration, digital monitoring systems, and enhanced regional cooperation for coastal and marine conservation

Key Perspectives:

i. Institutional strengthening - Professionalization and clarification of stakeholder roles;
ii. Sustainable financing - development of blue carbon, environmental funds, and innovative mechanisms;
iii. Improved co-management - increased inclusion of communities (women, youth);
iv. Climate change integration - MPAs as adaptation tools (mangrove restoration);
v. Strengthening the scientific role - better data integration (particularly on mangrove soils);
vi. Integrated coastal zone approach - land-sea coordination (ICZM);
vii. Innovation and digitalization - GIS, modern environmental monitoring;
viii. Increased regional cooperation - harmonization and sharing of experiences.

Mauritania:

Dr. Bemba Abdellahi representing Mauritania informed delegates that Mauritania boasts a 754 km Atlantic coastline and an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of over 234,000 km², making it one of the most extensive, productive, and strategic maritime areas in West Africa. Its coastal and marine zones harbor a rich biodiversity, characterized by essential ecosystems such as seagrass beds, mangroves, sandbanks, deep-sea coral reefs, and dune systems. This ecological complex, of major regional importance, plays a crucial role in climate regulation, food security, fisheries conservation, and improving the living conditions of coastal populations.

The biological and ecological value of the Mauritanian coastline, combined with its high vulnerability, argues in favor of establishing Marine Protected Areas. It is in this context that Mauritania has established Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) along its coastline, identified Areas of Biological Interest (ABIs), and progressively designated new sites. The Banc d'Arguin National Park, created in 1976, alone covers more than 12,000 km², representing over 97% of the currently protected areas. In addition to the Banc d'Arguin National Park, which plays a vital role in preserving marine and coastal biodiversity and maintaining the livelihoods of local populations, the network of protected areas also includes the Diawling National Park (established in 1991), the Baie de l'Étoile Nature Reserve (established in 2023), and the Cap Blanc Satellite Reserve. To date, officially designated MPAs cover approximately 5 to 6% of Mauritania's marine and coastal zone.



Plate 4. DR. BEMBA ABDELLAHI, delivering a presentation on status of MPAs in Mauritania

> In Mauritania, the experience of the Banc d'Arguin National Park illustrates the critical role of large protected areas in conserving marine ecosystems and ensuring sustainable fisheries management at national and regional levels. The establishment of a fiduciary fund for this MPA was a key factor in the success achieved.

Dr Bemba noted that More than 200 species of fish, crustaceans, and mollusks,7 marine mammals (dolphins and monk seals), 6 species of sea turtles, primarily the green turtle. More than 2 million migratory birds, and two endemic bird species were key biodiversity of the Mauritania protected areas. He also gave an inventory of other marine biodiversity as 300,000 migratory and resident Waterbirds representing 369

species, 18 of which are protected. 6 species of sea and land turtles, 1 species of crocodile, 17 species of lizards and 39 species of wild mammals

Institutional framework:

- ❖ The General Secretariat of the Government
- ❖ The Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development through the Directorate for Coastal Protection, Wetlands, and Protected Areas

Governance:

MPA governance integrates all stakeholders involved in management through local consultation bodies:

- Board of Directors,
- Scientific Council,
- Technical and Financial Partners,
- Local Communities,
- Local Authorities;
- Civil Society,
- Women's Cooperatives

Classification: Public administrative bodies

Challenges

- o Demographic and economic pressure
- o Biodiversity conservation
- o Conflicts of use and jurisdiction
- o Climate change
- o Restoration of degraded ecosystems
- o Pollution

Perspectives:

- Sustainable resource management
- Developing ecotourism
- Sustainable financing
- Enhanced monitoring
- National Blue Carbon Strategy

Senegal:

Mr Momar Sow, the Director of Environment, DAMCP in the republic of Senegal noted that since the Durban Summit in 2003, Senegal has committed to an ambitious policy of creating and managing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). These MPAs complement the existing conservation mechanisms of marine parks and reserves managed by the Directorate of National Parks and Marine Protected Areas (AMCEZs), under the supervision of the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Infrastructure. These MPAs include Artificial Reef Immersion Zones (ZIRAs) and Protected Fishing Zones (ZPPs). This commitment was further strengthened in 2012 with the establishment of the Directorate of Community Marine Protected Areas (DAMCP), whose primary mission is to implement the State's policy on the conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity. These MPAs, under the supervision of the DAMCP, promote co-management approaches involving local authorities and communities. Despite these advances, the ecological and institutional effectiveness of the MPA network remains largely focused on coastal and community areas, leaving a significant portion of the deep offshore zone unaddressed. Senegal's actions in marine conservation are part of an increasingly structured normative and strategic framework at the global, regional, and national levels, notably through the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Treaty on Marine

Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (MBNJ). This alignment opens new perspectives for the conservation of biodiversity in the high seas and reinforces the need for coherent coordination between coastal, offshore, and high-seas marine protected area (MPA) networks. For a country like Senegal, whose exclusive economic zone covers strategic marine ecosystems of high ecological value, this international framework represents both an opportunity and a responsibility in terms of regional leadership and the coherence of marine policies.



Plate 5. LIEUTENANT-COLONEL, BINTA BA, delivering a presentation on status of MPAs in Senegal

> *In Senegal, the MPA governance system is characterized by a well-structured institutional framework, including dedicated management bodies, updated strategic instruments, and initiatives that integrate climate resilience and local livelihood enhancement.*

These challenges are part of a systemic transformation process that goes beyond simply producing strategic documents, contributing to a sustainable national reform dynamic with the involvement of stakeholders in government action at sea and the establishment of sustainable financing mechanisms for marine biodiversity conservation. These achievements in marine conservation earned Senegal the organization of the 6th World Congress on MPAs (IMPAC6) on behalf of Africa.

Challenges and way forward

- Finalization of the Marine Strategy Framework (MSF) and the Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy
- Strengthening biodiversity conservation, including:
- Effective deployment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the deep offshore zone and the high seas
- Establishment of transboundary MPAs in the Exploration and Protection Zones of the Exploration and Protection Zones (Mauritania, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau)

- Involvement and integration of stakeholders in maritime government action within the governance architecture
- Involvement of the private sector, particularly the oil and gas sector and fishing industries, in the governance architecture of offshore MPAs
- Decarbonization of the maritime sector
- Establishment of sustainable financing mechanisms for MPAs
- Organization of IMPAC6 in March 2027

Sierra Leone:

Ms Kadiatu Seaport Sam Kossaba, the representative of Sierra Leone noted that the country has 15 protected areas, including 8 terrestrial and 7 wetland ecosystems, of which 4 are coastal and marine wetlands: Scarcies River Estuary (SRE), Sierra Leone River Estuary (SLRE – a Ramsar Site), Yawri Bay (a proposed Ramsar Site), and Sherbro River Estuary (also a proposed Ramsar Site). Ms Kadiatu indicated that these coastal MPAs are rich in mangrove ecosystems and marine biodiversity, providing essential ecosystem services such as fisheries, fuelwood, transportation, tourism, and climate regulation. However, these mangroves, which once covered about 240,000 hectares, have experienced significant degradation over the years due to human pressure, climate change, and emerging threats such as oil and gas development.

Kadiatu further noted that due to these pressures, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL), NGOs, and private sector actors have intensified mangrove restoration efforts, particularly for blue carbon initiatives and carbon credit opportunities. Major restoration activities in 2024–2025 included the planting of over 390,000 mangrove propagules across several sites, supported by institutions such as CRS, the World Bank, UNDP, RAMPAO, and Goal Sierra Leone. Communities, especially women and youth, play a leading role in planting, maintenance, and monitoring, while also benefiting from improved livelihoods and increased awareness of mangrove conservation.



Plate 6: Ms. Kadiatu, delivering a presentation on status of MPAs in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone emphasized ongoing challenges related to ecosystem degradation, particularly mangroves, despite the existence of protected areas, underlining the need to strengthen restoration and sustainable management efforts, noting the importance of community participation.

Finally, Ms Kadiatu noted that the Governance of MPAs has been strengthened through the establishment of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, alongside the revised NPAA Act 2022, which enhanced enforcement powers for MPA management. All MPAs have management plans, co-management committees, and community by-laws to support participatory governance. Climate governance is further supported by a national climate change secretariat, legal frameworks, community patrols, and signed MoUs with local communities. Despite progress, challenges remain in enforcement capacity, ranger deployment, and sustaining long-term conservation outcomes, requiring stronger institutional support and continued stakeholder engagement. The representative of GoSL finally demonstrated the overall challenges and way forward in the governance of MPAs in Sierra Leone.

Key Challenges:

a. Inadequate resources (logistics/equipment) for effective management of MPAs
b. Inadequate staff capacity (Technical and Field Staff)
c. Inadequate research and data on MPAs

Way Forward:

i. Seek funds for management effectiveness
ii. Establish public/private partnership for restoration and conservation of mangrove forests ecosystems in the country
iii. Recruit more professionals and rangers
iv. Recruit community eco-guards and reformation of new CMAs executives for surveillance and intelligence
v. Research and effective ecological monitoring and a centralized GIS unit
vi. Collaborate with academic and other institutions for research and publications

Overall, national experiences identified key success factors, including:

- Strengthening institutional and legal frameworks;
- Effective involvement of local communities;
- Development of multi-stakeholder partnerships;
- Integration of scientific knowledge into decision-making;
- Consideration of linkages between conservation, economic development, and climate resilience.

These exchanges also underscored the need to strengthen regional cooperation mechanisms and capitalize on best practices in order to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of MPAs across the region.

Each slide presentation delivered during Session 2 is available at AU-IBAR and has been shared with all participants.

- **Questions and Responses**
  During this session, questions were raised on the process of MPA establishment, effective approaches to conflict management within MPA governance, and clarifications regarding delegated management of MPAs. Participants also inquired about the economic valuation of ecosystem services provided by MPAs. The presenters responded to the various questions, and participants expressed satisfaction with the explanations provided. As no further questions were raised, the session was subsequently closed.

TRAINING AND GROUP WORK SESSIONS

The training six modules were designed by the Consultant, Dr. Rodrigue PELEBE to strengthen technical competencies and skills for effective Marine Protected Area (MPA) implementation, management, and governance. The modules include:

- Module 1: MPA Identification, Design, and Regulatory Frameworks
- Module 2: Effective MPA Management, Planning and Implementation
- Module 3: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Effectiveness of MPAs
- Module 4: Integrating Fisheries into MPA Planning and Management
- Module 5: Sustainable Financing Mechanisms for MPAs
- Module 6: Climate-Resilient MPAs



Plate 7: The consultant presenting an overview of the training content at the beginning of the training session

This approach facilitated interactive learning, allowing participants to actively contribute to discussions, share field experiences, and seek clarifications on key concepts. There were interactive exchanges between the facilitator and participants, which strengthened understanding of the technical content and promoted the practical application of the knowledge shared.

As part of the training, group work sessions were organized. The facilitator outlined the expectations and terms of reference for the exercise and presented the data collection template, which was subsequently reviewed and validated by participants. Two working groups were then established: one composed of fisheries stakeholders and the other of environmental stakeholders (See photos below). The groups discussed key aspects related to MPA governance in the region, including relevant stakeholders, major threats, existing collaboration frameworks, governance challenges, and priority actions to strengthen the management and governance of MPAs in the SRFC region.



Plate 8: Group composed of fisheries sector representatives during the working group sessions



Plate 9: Group composed of environment sector representatives during the working group sessions

Throughout the sessions, the technical facilitator provided continuous guidance and clarifications. The outputs of the group work were subsequently presented and discussed in plenary.

SESSION 3: FIELD-BASED LEARNING AND PRACTICAL INSIGHTS

As part of the workshop, a field visite was organized to the Somone Marine Protected Area in Senegal (See photos below). On site, the MPA manager delivered a presentation on the area's biodiversity, functioning, key successes, and ongoing challenges. Participants then undertook a guided tour of the lagoon, where they observed various ecotourism activities that generate revenue for the MPA. The visit provided concrete illustrations of Marine Protected Area management and governance in practice, including community participation, surveillance mechanisms, and sustainability approaches. Participants reflected on their field observations and expressed commitments to apply the lessons learned in their respective countries.



Plate 10: Meeting held at the office of the management committee for the Somone Marine Protected Area



Plate 11:Participants during a field visit to the lagoon within the Somone Marine Protected Area

KEY FINDINGS FROM ALL THE MEETING SESSIONS

At the end of the technical sessions, group work, and plenary discussions, participants identified a set of key findings related to the governance and management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the SRFC region.

1. **Fragmented governance with insufficient coordination MPA management is characterized by multiple actors operating at different levels**, with overlapping mandates and limited coordination between the fisheries, environment sectors, and other stakeholders, affecting the overall effectiveness of governance systems.
2. **Existing but insufficiently harmonized and implemented legal frameworks Although several States have established legal frameworks for MPAs**, their implementation remains uneven and poorly harmonized at the regional level, limiting their effectiveness, particularly for the management of shared resources and transboundary ecosystems.
3. **Structural deficit in sustainable financing MPAs remain heavily dependent on external funding**, with insufficient national and innovative sustainable financing mechanisms. This compromises the effective implementation of management plans and the long-term sustainability of conservation efforts.

4. **Limited technical, human, and material capacities Shortages in qualified human resources**, equipment, and infrastructure limit States' ability to ensure effective management, rigorous monitoring, and adequate surveillance of MPAs.
5. **Underdeveloped monitoring, control**, and surveillance (MCS) systems MCS systems remain generally weak, with gaps in technological tools, data collection and sharing, and operational coordination at both national and regional levels.
6. **Limited involvement of local communities and vulnerable groups** The participation of local communities in MPA governance remains limited in several contexts, with insufficient inclusion of women and youth, affecting local ownership and the sustainability of initiatives.
7. **Increasing pressures on marine and coastal ecosystems** MPAs are subject to multiple pressures, including:
    - Overexploitation of fishery resources;
    - Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing;
    - Climate change impacts (sea level rise, habitat degradation);
    - Pollution and coastal urbanization pressures.
8. **Insufficient integration of scientific and local knowledge** The use of scientific data and traditional knowledge in planning and management processes remains limited, reducing the effectiveness of evidence-based and adaptive management approaches.
9. **Need for stronger regional cooperation and transboundary management** Participants emphasized the need to strengthen regional cooperation mechanisms, particularly for the management of shared ecosystems, and to develop transboundary MPA initiatives to ensure a coherent and effective regional approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, participants formulated the following recommendations to strengthen the governance and effectiveness of MPAs in the SRFC region:

At the level of Member States

- Strengthen and harmonize legal and institutional frameworks for MPAs, ensuring effective implementation and alignment with sub-regional and international instruments;
- Promote integrated and multisectoral governance mechanisms, ensuring better coordination among fisheries, environment, and other relevant sectors;
- Strengthen technical, human, and material capacities of MPA management institutions, particularly in planning, monitoring and evaluation, and surveillance;
- Develop and operationalize sustainable financing mechanisms, including innovative approaches to reduce dependence on external funding;
- Strengthen monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) systems, including the use of technological tools and improved data collection and management systems;
- Promote co-management and active participation of local communities, ensuring greater inclusion of women and youth in governance processes;
- Integrate MPAs into national climate change strategies, particularly regarding ecosystem and community resilience and adaptation.

At the sub-regional level (SRFC and partner institutions)

- Strengthen sub-regional coordination and harmonization of MPA policies, building on existing frameworks such as the Abidjan Convention;
- Promote the development of transboundary MPA initiatives, adapted to shared marine and coastal ecosystems;
- Strengthen networking and cooperation mechanisms, particularly through RAMPAO, to enhance experience sharing and knowledge capitalisation;
- Develop harmonized sub-regional systems for monitoring, data management, and information sharing to support decision-making and improve MPA management;
- Support Member States in developing and implementing strategic and operational frameworks through technical tools, guidelines, and tailored assistance.

At the level of technical and financial partners

- Increase technical and financial support to MPAs in line with Member States' priorities;
- Support institutional and technical capacity building, particularly in governance, monitoring and evaluation, and data management;
- Promote integrated and innovative approaches combining biodiversity conservation, local economic development, and climate resilience;
- Facilitate experience sharing, best practice documentation, and knowledge dissemination at regional and international levels.

PROSPECTS

Participants expressed their commitment to continuing efforts to strengthen the governance and effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the SRFC region.

In this regard, they highlighted the need to:

- Translate workshop recommendations into concrete and operational actions;
- Strengthen regional cooperation;
- Continue capacity-building efforts;
- Mobilize sustainable financial resources;
- Promote an integrated and inclusive approach.

Participants also encouraged sub-regional institutions, particularly the SRFC, to play a leading role in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of priority actions identified.

These prospects are part of a sub-regional dynamic contributing to continental and international objectives for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

MEETING ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

In relation to the objectives, all participants agreed that the meeting yielded the following achievements and outcomes:

- Awareness of the importance of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) for biodiversity conservation and sustainable fisheries management was increased;
- Experiences, lessons learned, and best practices among SRFC Member States on the establishment and governance of MPAs were shared;
- Technical capacity of experts from SRFC Member States on MPA establishment, implementation, and governance was strengthened;
- Key challenges and priority actions to improve MPA governance in the region were identified;
- Opportunities for strengthening regional cooperation, including the development and promotion of transboundary MPAs, were identified.

SESSION 4: WRAP-UP, ADOPTION OF THE MEETING COMMUNIQUE AND CLOSING REMARKS

The workshop was considered successful as all its objectives were achieved. The actions and recommendations developed, along with their proposed implementation plan, constitute important instruments for improving MPA governance in the SRFC region. Stakeholders are encouraged to take the necessary steps to ensure the effective implementation of these recommendations. The meeting also urges the SRFC to take the necessary lead in coordinating and facilitating follow-up actions. A vote of thanks was delivered by the representative of Guinea. The meeting communiqué was presented by AU-IBAR and adopted by all participants, following a proposal by Guinea and a secondment by Mauritania.



Plate 12: High during the closing ceremony. The permanent Secretary of SRFC, Mr. Khallahi Brahim, was present; seated second from far left.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: List of Participants

DONOR

1. BEZA BERHANU (MS)

Programme Officer for Environment and Climate Cluster
Regional Development Cooperation Africa
Ph: +251 11 518 00 00
Mobile: +251 935 401 478
E-mail: beza.berhanu@gov.se
www.swedenabroad.se/addisabeba

CABO VERDE

2. MS. SÓNIA SOFIA GONÇALVES DA VEIGA

Inspectrice des pêches
Inspection Générale des Pêches / Ministère de la Mer
Edifício Instituto Marítimo e Portuário, Achada Grande Frente, Praia, Santiago
Praia, Cabo Verde
Sonia.Veiga@mm.gov.cv
+238 516 26 39

3. MS. MARAIKA DOS REIS CARDOSO

Bióloga - Técnica na Direção Nacional de Pesca e Aquacultura
Ministério do Mar - Ilha de Santiago - Achada Santo António
Praia, Cabo Verde
Maraika.Cardoso@dgpescas.gov.cv
+238 9363982 / +238 5162634

GUINÉE

4. DR. MARIAMA DIALLO

Directrice Générale
Centre national des sciences halieutiques de Boussoura (CNSHB), Ministère de la Pêche et de l'Economie Maritime
B.P. 3738 – Conakry, République de Guinée
mariama.dial99@gmail.com; dgcnshb@peches.gov.gn
+224 621310001

MAURITANIE

5. DR. BEMBA ABDELLAH

Directeur Adjoint du Littoral, des Zones Humides et des Aires Protégées
Ministère de l'Environment et du Dévelopment Durable
Nouakchott- Mauritanie
bembasidimohamed@yahoo.fr
+ 222 32220020

GAMBIA

6. MR. MOMODOU SIDIBEH

Ag. Director of Fisheries
Department of Fisheries
6, Marina Parade, Department of Fisheries, Banjul, Gambia
mbailo85@hotmail.com
+220 7721004

7. MR. EBRIMA JONGA

Wildlife Conservation Officer
Department Of Parks and Wildlife Management, Under The Ministry Of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources
Brikama Jalamba, The Gambia
ebrimajonga1@gmail.com
+220 5149502

SIERRA LEONE

8. MR. HASSAN ROGERS
Geographic Information System Officer (GIS)
National Protected Area Authority (NPAA)
SIERRA LEONE
hasrog87@gmail.com
+32377213761 or +23276306538

9. MS. KADIATU SEAPORT SAM KOSSABA
Ag. Head, Marine Artisanal Fisheries Management Division
Ministry Of Fisheries and Marine Resources
Freetown, Sierra Leone
Kkamara7@yahoo.com
+232 78928713

UNEP ABIDJAN CONVENTION

10. DR. YACOUB ISSOLA
CONSULTANT
UNEP ABIDJAN CONVENTION
Street J8, II Plateaux Vallons, Abidjan
ABIDJAN, COTE D'IVOIRE
yacoub.issola@un.org
+225 0103343488

ECOWAS

11. MR. OLALEKAN PAUL AKANDE
Programme Officer, Aquaculture Development
ECOWAS
101 Yakubu Gowon Crescent, Asokoro District, Abuja
ABUJA, NIGERIA
opakande@ecowas.int
+234 8105775299

FAO

12. ABOUBACAR SIDIBÉ, PHD
FAO-SFW Blue Transformation Specialist
Bureau sous-régional de la FAO pour l'Afrique l'Ouest (FAO-SFW)
Dakar, Sénégal
aboubacar.sidibe@fao.org;asidibeguinee@gmail.com
Mobile: +224 628040105 or +221 778820913

SENEGAL

13. MR. AMADOU ALY MBAYE
Juriste chargé de la Gouvernance et du Contentieux
Ministere de l'Environnement et de la Transition écologique
Dakar, Sénégal
sonymbaye@yahoo.fr
amadoualy.mbaye@environnement.gouv.sn
221 77513 76 09/ 221 76169 49 75

14. LIEUTENANT-COLONEL BINTA BA
Cheffe de la Division Formation et Valorisation / DAMCP
Ministere de l'Environnement et de la Transition écologique
Dakar, Sénégal
bintadialloba@gmail.com
221 656 40 32/ 221 70405 40 75

15. COLONEL MOMAR SOW
DAMCP
Ministere de l'Environnement et de la Transition écologique
Dakar, Sénégal
momarsow15@gmail.com

SRFC/CSRP

16. DR. KHADY SANÉ DIOUF
Coordonnatrice Aménagement des pêches et Aquaculture (CSRP)
Commission Sous-Régionale des Pêches
BP: 25485 DAKAR-SENEGAL
khady.sane@spcsrp.org
Tél:+221 338640475
+221 77 654 77 17

17. MR. MAMADOU MOUSTAPHA CAMARA
Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission
mm.camara@spcsrp.org

18. DR MIKA DIOP
Consultant
Coordonnatrice Aménagement des pêches et Aquaculture (CSRP)
Senegal, Dakar
Mika_sfr@yahoo.fr; ika.diop@spcsrp.org
+221 776448218

RAMPAO

19. MS. MATHILDE FLORENCE PREIRA
Technical assistant
Réseau régional d'aires marines protégées en Afrique de l'Ouest (RAMPAO)
Dakar, Senegal
thildaflorence@gmail.com
+221 771210933

20. MR. BARA DÈME
Réseau régional d'aires marines protégées en Afrique de l'Ouest (RAMPAO)
Dakar, Senegal
barademe@rampao.org

AWFISHNET

21. MS. DIABA DIOP
Vice President - AWFISHNET
Réseau des Femmes Actives dans le Secteur de la Pêche Artisanale au Sénégal (REFEPAS)
diaba14@hotmail.fr

CONSULTANT

22. DR. PELEBE EDÉYA OROBIYI RODRIGUE
Executive President
Nature Ecologique (ECO-NATURE ONG)
Benin
peleberodrigue@yahoo.fr
+229 96 97 57 62

23. MASSAER DIA
Journaliste / Spécialiste en communication
Tél : 775337560 / 778698936
Email : massaerdia@yahoo.fr

AU-IBAR

24. DR. MOHAMED SEISAY
Substainable Blue Economy Expert,
AU-IBAR
P.O Box 30786 – 00100
Tel : 254203674000
Email: mohamed.seisay@au-ibar.org

25. MR. RAFIK NOUAILI
Fisheries and Aquaculture Resource Management Expert,
AU-IBAR
P.O Box 30786 – 00100
Tel: 254203674000
Email : rafik.nouaili@au-ibar.org

26. MS. STEPHANIE ACHIENG
Gender Policy and Strategy Expert,
AU-IBAR
P.O Box 30786 – 00100
Tel : 254203674000
Email : stephanie.achieng@au-ibar.org

27. MR. JOEL MOKENYE
Aquatic Biodiversity Specialist,
AU-IBAR
P.O Box 30786 – 00100
Tel : 254203674000
Email: joel.mokenye@au-ibar.org

28. MS. ANNE KISEMBA
Administrative Assistant
AU-IBAR
P.O Box 30786 – 00100
Tel : 254203674000
Email: anne.kisemba@au-ibar.org

29. MS. YVONNE NASHIPAE
Assistant Finance Officer
AU-IBAR
P.O Box 30786 – 00100
Tel : 254203674000
Email: yvonne.nashipae@au-ibar.org

Annex 2: Final Draft Workshop Agenda

Draft AGENDA

Regional Training Workshop on the Implementation and Governance of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) for Member States of the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC), West Africa, on the 20-22nd April 2026, Dakar, Senegal

Day 1 – Monday 20th April 2026		
Time	**Topic**	**Responsibility**
08:00 – 09:00	Registration and Welcome	AU-IBAR
09:00 – 10:00	Opening Session: Moderator – TBD	
	Welcome Remarks by AU – IBAR	AU–IBAR Director
	Statement by IGAD SRFC Secretariat	Permanent Secretary, SRFC
	Statement by representative of Swedish Embassy to Embassy / SIDA	Madam Beza Berhanu, Programme Manager, SIDA
	Statement by FAO	Rep. of FAO
	Remarks by ECOWAS	Rep of ECOWAS
	Opening by Government of Senegal	His Excellency, Minister in Charge of Environment, Senegal
	Objectives of the training workshop	Mr. Joel Mokenye, AU-IBAR
	Introduction	All participants
10:0-10:15	***Group Photo, Coffee Break and Media briefing***	
SETTING THE SCENE Presentations Moderator: TBD Moderator:		
10:15-10:45	African Blue Economy Strategy and SIDA funded Project 'Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in African Blue Economy'	Dr. Mohamed Seisay, AU-IBAR
10:45 -11:15	Outcome of the study on assessment of status of MPAs in West, Central and Northern Africa	Dr Rodrigue Pelebe, Consultant
11:15 -11:45	Overview of the network of MPAs in the West African region	Rep. of RAMPAO
11:45 -12:15	Elaboration of MPA guidelines by the Abidjan Convention	Dr. ISSOLA Yacoub, Abidjan Convention
12:15 – 12:30	Partners Presentation – Insight into lessons and best practices of MPA implementation and Governance (External Experience)	Swedish Agency for Marine and water Management (SWAM)
12:30 -13:00	Discussion	All
13:00 -14:00	***Lunch***	
TECHNICAL PRESENTATIONS: Exchange of Experiences on MPAs Issues Moderator: Dr. Mohamed Seisay, AU-IBAR		
14:00 -14:20	Sharing Tunisian Experience on governance of MPAs	Mr. Rafik Nouaili, AU-IBAR

14:20 -15:30	Country Presentations on status of MPA, implementation, co-management and governance; climate governances; lessons and best practices	Reps of SRFC member states (10-min each). N/B. The institution in charge of MPAs should do the presentation
15:30 -15:40	***Tea break***	
15:40-16:00	Discussion	All
16:00 - 17:00	MPA Identification, Design, and Regulatory Frameworks Effective MPA Management, Planning and Implementation	Consultant/Dr Rodrigue Pelebe
17:00-17:30	Discussion	All
17:30-17:40	Closure for the day	All
Day 2 – Tuesday 21st April 2026		
TECHNICAL PRESENTATIONS/TRAINING ON MPA IMPLEMENTATION AND GOVERNANCE Moderator: SRFC/TBD		
09:00 – 09:10	Recap of Day 1	Rep of Gambia
09:10 – 10:00	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Effectiveness of MPAs	Consultant/Dr Rodrigue Pelebe
10:00 -10:15	***Tea break***	
10:15 – 12:30	Integrating Fisheries into MPA Planning and Management Sustainable Financing Mechanisms for MPAs Climate-Resilient MPAs	
12:30-13: 00	Discussion	All
13:00 – 14:00	***Lunch Break***	All
14:00 – 14:10	Presentation of Terms of Reference and Group Work Sessions on Marine Protected Area Governance in the SRFC Region for Two Groups TWO WORKING GROUPS	All, led by Consultant
14:10 – 16:00	GROUP WORK SESSION	Consultant/Dr Rodrigue Pelebe
16:00-16:15	***Coffee Break***	All
16:15 – 17:15	Plenary/Interactive Session - Discussion, Q&A	All, led by Consultant
17:15-17:30	End of Day 2	All
Day 3 – Wednesday 22nd April 2026		
	Field Visit to Somone Marine Protected Area for practical Orientation	Responsibility
09:00-19:10	Recap of Day 2	Rep. of Cape Verde
09:10-09:45	Presentation on Theoretical framework on the field visit site by Director of DAMCP on established MPAs i.e. Somone	Director of DAMCP
09:45 – 10:00	***Coffee Break***	All
10:00 – 14:00	Visit to (i) SOMONE MPA Provisional program for the visit at site Welcome remarks by the Somone MPA Head Remarks by host Ministry of Environment - Director of DAMCP Presentation by SOMONE MPA team; management measures, community roles, sustainability and sustainable financing; monitoring and surveillance Visit to other areas within Somone MPA	Dr Khady & Director of DAMCP
14:30 – 15:20	***Lunch Break***	All

15:20-15:40	Reflections from the field visit	All, led by the Director of DAMCP, Consultant and Dr. Khady
15:40 -16:30	***Tea-Break and Development of Communique***	Dr Khady & Consultant supported AU-IBAR and SRFC staff
16:30-16:40	Plenary- adoption of the Communique	All
16:40-17:00	Workshop Closing session; Moderator SRFC/DAMCP Vote of thanks from a participant Remarks from AU – IBAR Director Remarks by SIDA Remarks by SRFC Secretariat Remarks by ECOWAS Official closure by Government of Senegal	 TBD AU–IBAR Director Rep. of SIDA Permanent Secretary, SRFC ECOWAS Rep His Excellency, Minister in Charge of Environment, Senegal

Annex 3:Terms of Reference (ToR) for Group Exercise on MPA Governance in the SRFC Region

Regional Training Workshop on the Implementation and Governance of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) for Member States of the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC), West Africa, on the 20-22nd April 2026, Dakar, Senegal

TASK A: Group Formation and ToR Presentation (15 minutes)

Participants will be divided into two groups:

- Group 1: Fisheries representatives of Member States and other participants from the fisheries sector
- Group 2: Environment representatives of Member States and other participants from the environmental sector

Each group will:

- Review the Terms of Reference (ToR)
- Designate a facilitator and a rapporteur/presenter
- Clarify the expected outputs of the exercise

TASK B: Group Work and Preparation of Findings (45 minutes)

Each group will discuss and prepare responses to the following:

Guiding Questions

1. Stakeholder Mapping Map the key stakeholders involved in the governance of MPAs in the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission region.
2. Collaboration Frameworks Are there any formal collaboration frameworks among national MPAs in the region? Provide examples where possible.
3. Key Threats What are the main threats affecting MPAs in the region?
4. Governance and management challenges

Table 1: Governance and Management Challenges

Identify and describe key challenges/issues affecting MPA governance and management

Area	Is this a challenge? (Yes/No)	If yes, provide description of Challenges/Issues	If yes, identify the priority level (High/Medium/Low)
Institutional Arrangements			
Legal & Regulatory Frameworks			
Financing & Funding Sustainability			
Human Resources / Personnel Capacity			
Infrastructure & Equipment			
Monitoring, Control & Surveillance (MCS)			
Gender & Social Inclusion			

Partnerships & Stakeholder Collaboration			
Community Engagement & Participation			
Environmental Protection & Conservation			
Data Collection & Management			
Decision-Making Processes			
Accountability & Transparency			
Research & Knowledge Management			

NB: Guide for Priority Levels

- High: Urgent and critical for effective MPA management; requires immediate attention.
- Medium: Important and should be addressed, but not immediately critical.
- Low: Less urgent; mainly long-term considerations.

Table 2: Priority Challenges, Recommendations, and Implementation Timeline

Identify challenges that are medium to high priority and propose appropriate actions and recommendations

Challenge/Issue	Priority (Medium/ High)	Action/Recommendation	Responsible Institutions	Timeline	Indicators
…					

NB: Timeline to each recommendation (Consider available resources, institutional capacity, and level of collaboration required)

- Short-term (0–1 year): Quick and achievable actions
- Medium-term (1–3 years): Actions requiring planning, coordination, or capacity building
- Long-term (3–5+ years): Structural reforms, policy changes, or major investments

TASK C: Plenary and Interactive Session (60 minutes)

- Presentation: 20 minutes per group
- Discussion and Q&A: 10 minutes per group

Expected outputs from each group

- Responses to questions 1 to 3 (stakeholder map, list of key threats and existing collaboration frameworks)
- Completed Tables 1 and 2

Annex 4: List of group members

Group 1: Environment

- Amadou Aly MBAYE
- Ebrima JONGA
- Bemba ABDELLAHI
- Hassan ROGERS
- Sonia VEIGA
- Binta BA

Group 2 : Fisheries

- Mica DIOP
- Mamadou Moustapha CAMARA
- Maraika DOS REIS CARDOSO
- Momadou SIDIBEH
- Kadiatou S. SAU KOSSABA
- Mariama DIALLO
- Diaba DIOP
- Mathilde Florence PREIRA

Annex 5: Approved consolidated findings from the two working groups

Key Stakeholders Involved in MPA Governance in the SRFC Region

The governance of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the SRFC region involves a diverse set of regional, international, and national actors, including:

Regional and Sub-Regional Organizations

- Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC);
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS);
- African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) ;
- Abidjan Convention (Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region); and
- West Africa Regional Maritime Security Centre (CRESMAO).

Regional Conservation Networks and Initiatives

- Regional Partnership for Coastal and Marine Conservation (PRCM); and
- Regional Network of Marine Protected Areas in West Africa (RAMPAO)

International Organizations

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

NGOs and Foundations

- Blue Ventures
- MAVA Foundation / Fondation Internationale du Banc d'Arguin (FIBA)

National Institutions

- Ministries in charge of Fisheries
- Ministries in charge of Environment

Key Threats to Marine Protected Areas in the SRFC Region

The main threats affecting Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the region include:

- Overexploitation of marine resources, often linked to limited alternative livelihoods ;
- Climate change impacts;
- Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing ;
- Pollution (including oil and gas activities and other marine pollutants);
- Urbanization and coastal development pressures;
- Agricultural expansion and deforestation;
- Socio-economic pressures on coastal communities.

These pressures collectively undermine the ecological integrity of MPAs and reduce their effectiveness in delivering conservation and sustainable development outcomes.

Priority management and governance challenges, recommendations and implementation plan

MPAs in the SRFC region face complex and interrelated governance, institutional, financial, and ecological challenges. These are compounded by weak coordination, insufficient financing, limited enforcement capacity, inadequate infrastructure, weak monitoring systems, and insufficient integration of scientific and indigenous knowledge. Social challenges, including limited community participation and weak inclusion of women and youth, further constrain effective governance.

In response, the following table summarizes the key governance and management issues, priority actions, responsible institutions, timelines, and measurable indicators, as proposed by the Workshop, to guide implementation and strengthen MPA effectiveness in the region.

Challenge / Issue	Priority	Strategic Action / Recommendation	Responsible Institutions	Timeline	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
Lack of management plans for MPAs or outdated management plans in many countries	High	Develop, update, and operationalize MPA management plans with clear monitoring and evaluation for all the MPAs at national level	Line ministries, Governments, RAMPAO, SRFC, development partners	Short to medium term	% of MPAs with updated and approved management plans; number of operational management plans implemented; frequency of management plan reviews
Non-sustainable financing and weak resource mobilization	High	Establish resilient and diversified MPA financing systems (trust funds, blue economy financing, blended finance, donor coordination platforms); develop business plans for MPAs	Governments, development partners, regional bodies	Short to Medium term	Operational financing mechanism; % increase in predictable MPA funding; number of countries with dedicated MPA funding lines; % of MPAs with business plan per country
Weak institutional coordination, overlapping mandates, and fragmented governance	High	Establish legally binding inter-agency coordination frameworks and harmonized governance structures across sectors	Governments, SRFC, line ministries	Medium term	Number of formal established MoUs; functioning inter-institutional coordination platform; % reduction in mandate overlaps
Inadequate infrastructure and surveillance equipment	High	Modernize MPA infrastructure and operational capacity (patrol vessels, drones, ICT and monitoring systems)	Governments, development partners	Short to Long term	% of MPAs with operational infrastructure; number of surveillance assets deployed; operational readiness rate

Weak Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) and poor data integration/sharing	High	Deploy technology-driven MCS systems; establish interoperable regional data-sharing platforms based on standardized data-sharing protocols	Fisheries ministries, SRFC, development partners	Medium term	Reduction in illegal fishing incidents; number of joint patrols; functional regional data platform
Weak community engagement and limited co-management	High	Institutionalize co-management models at national level; strengthen community-based governance and awareness raising systems	Governments, communities, NGOs, RAMPAO	Medium term	% increase in community participation; number of co-managed MPAs; frequency of stakeholder engagement sessions
Biodiversity loss, habitat degradation, and climate change impacts	High	Implement ecosystem-based management, large-scale habitat restoration; develop climate adaptation plan for MPAs	Environment ministries, research institutions, regional bodies	Long term	Hectares of ecosystems restored; improvement in ecosystem health index; number of MPAs with climate adaptation plans
Weak integration of scientific evidence in decision-making	High	Institutionalize science-policy interfaces and promote data-driven decision-making in MPA governance	Governments, research institutions, donors	Medium term	Number of documented evidence-based reports; number of policies informed by scientific evidence
Weak integration of indigenous knowledge in management	Medium	Strengthen research ecosystems on indigenous knowledge; integrate indigenous knowledge in MPA management	Research institutions, universities, SRFC, line ministries	Immediate- to Medium term	Number of studies produced; number of management measures based on indigenous knowledge
Limited human resources and technical capacity	Medium	Scale up targeted capacity development and regional exchange mechanisms	Governments, technical partners	Short to Medium term	Number of trained MPA professionals; number of study tours and exchange visits conducted
Low participation of women and youth in governance structures	Medium	Mainstream gender equality and youth inclusion in MPA governance frameworks and leadership structures	Ministries, NGOs	Short term	% representation of women and youth in decision-making bodies
Weak cross-sectoral coordination	Medium	Establish formal collaboration network through MoUs	Ministries, institutions	Short term	Number of MoUs signed, Number if operational MoUs
Weak transparency and accountability in MPA governance	Medium	Strengthen MPA governance transparency through digital M&E systems and public reporting; Initiate regular report production on the state and effectiveness of MPAs at national and regional level	Governments, Ministries, RAMPAO, SRFC	Short term	% of MPAs with annual public reports; functional M&E system; audit compliance rate

Lack of formal initiatives for the development of transboundary Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)	High	Establish formal regional initiatives to promote the design and implementation of transboundary MPAs, including policy harmonization, joint planning mechanisms, and cross-border coordination platforms	SRFC, ECOWAS, AU-IBAR, Abidjan Convention, Governments	Medium term	Number of formal transboundary MPA initiatives established; number of bilateral/ multilateral agreements signed

Annex 6: Some Photos taken during the meeting activities



Photo showing Dr. Rodrigue PELEBE, the Technical Facilitator of the meeting, delivering his presentation on the overview of MPAs in WCN Africa



Photo showing Dr.Yacoub ISSOLA from the Abidjan Convention delivering his presentation



Photo showing the meeting room on the first day of the meeting



Photo of the information board showing the access fees for tourist visits to the MPA



African Union
Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR)
Kenindia Business Park
Museum Hill, Westlands Road
P.O. Box 30786
00100, Nairobi, KENYA
Telephone: +254 (20) 3674 000 / 201
Fax: +254 (20) 3674 341 / 342
Website: www.au.ibar.org
Email address: ibar.office@au-ibar.org