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**High-level panel on the challenges and opportunities arising
in achieving inclusive growth and prosperity for all**

Background paper on conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Using the two seas and two oceans of Africa to promote the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want

I. Introduction

1. Oceans are the earth's largest resource and cover more than 70 per cent of its surface area. According to the World Wildlife Fund report entitled, *Reviving the Ocean Economy: The Case for Action - 2015*, global ocean assets are valued at approximately \$24 trillion. Furthermore, according to *Africa's Blue Economy: a policy handbook*, published by the Economic Commission for Africa, some 50 per cent of the world's population lives within 60 kilometres of an ocean or sea, and over 90 per cent of international trade is dependent on those bodies of water. Hundreds of millions of people depend on oceans, which are a key source of food, energy, minerals, and health-related and leisure resources, and are crossed by major transport routes. Historically, Africa has exploited the oceans for shipping, fishing and offshore drilling for oil and gas. However, the maritime industry landscape is poised to undergo a profound transition, and new phenomena and technologies are profoundly reshaping maritime industries on a global scale. New "ocean economies" are emerging as a consequence of population growth, rising incomes, dwindling natural resources, responses to climate change and the development of innovative technologies.

2. African coasts and marine areas face a decline in the health and productivity of their ecosystems as a result of a growing demand for living and non-living resources, the development of new technologies, declining fish stocks, climate change, biodiversity and habitat loss, as well as weak ocean governance.

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II. Ocean Governance

3. In 2014, the Global Ocean Commission concluded that numerous risks and uncertainties are undermining ocean governance, including gaps in governance frameworks, the fact that numerous agencies oversee different sector-based activities, weak compliance with laws and regulations, a lack of standards or poor enforcement thereof, new and emerging uses, including ocean-based industries such as energy production, and the absence of an equitable framework for the exploitation of genetic resources. Other challenges include inconsistencies in international law on activities such as trade, environmental protection and scientific and technological cooperation. The resulting sector-based development had led to a perception of weak international governance mechanisms, further undermining ocean governance in Africa.

4. Furthermore, the hierarchical application of the legal frameworks applicable in the oceans, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and national frameworks governing States' territorial waters, is likely to encourage further exploitation of the oceans along sectoral lines in the short to medium term. However, numerous recent initiatives promoting an ecosystem-based approach in the management of exclusive economic zones and the high seas suggests that there is now a trend towards more comprehensive exclusive economic zone oversight.

5. Africa's marine and coastal resources, which include minerals, oil and gas, and rich biodiversity, are all exploited within a weak ocean governance framework. If Africa's marine and coastal areas are to be exploited efficiently with a view to creating jobs, fostering prosperity and promoting sustainable development, an integrated approach to the management of oceans and seas that takes into consideration stakeholders' concerns at the national, subregional and regional levels is required. Indeed, an integrated ocean management approach is crucial if States are to implement the 2030 Agenda and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 14.

6. The African continent is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean and the Indian Ocean. There are 45,649 kilometres of coastline, 38 coastal and island States, extensive exclusive economic zones, and six significant marine ecosystems that contribute vast quantities of goods and services to the economy. Africa's coastal areas comprise a wide range of habitats, including mangroves, rocky shores, sandy beaches, deltas, estuaries and coastal wetlands, coral reefs and lagoons. Furthermore, African waters support rich fisheries, and it is estimated that the annual "gross marine product" of the Western Indian Ocean region is at least \$20.8 billion, while the total "ocean asset base" of that region is estimated to be at least \$333.8 billion. The value added by the fishing sector as a whole in 2011 was estimated at more than \$24 billion – 1.26 per cent of the gross national product of all the countries in Africa. It has, moreover, recently been estimated that the fishing sector as a whole employs 12.3 million full-time fishermen and full-time or part-time processors, comprising 2.1 per cent of Africa's population between the ages of 15 and 64 years.¹

III. Regional Ocean Governance Frameworks

7. Ocean management governance in Africa is provided by the African Union, primarily by its regional economic communities, as well as by the four Regional Sea Conventions and Action Plans,² and more than ten regional fisheries bodies. A

¹ *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture*, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Rome, 2014. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3720e.pdf>.

² Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Western Indian Ocean (Nairobi Convention), The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention), Abidjan Convention for Cooperation in the protection and development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and

number of large marine ecosystem projects have also been implemented, leading to the creation of the Banguela Current Commission as an additional governance framework. Other sectoral organizations have been established and many governments have formulated innovative, integrated ocean policies. Generally, there are three main governance gaps:

- (a) A lack of integrated frameworks that can deliver collective outcomes;
- (b) Inadequate understanding of the value and potential of marine and coastal resources;
- (c) Sectoral approaches to the management of marine resources and inadequate cooperation among sectors.

IV. Blue Economy or Ocean Economy – An Opportunity

8. African States have an opportunity to harness the significant marine and coastal resources of oceans in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and meet the needs of Africans. Ocean-based economic sectors have undergone a profound transition from traditional areas, such as shipping, shipbuilding, fishing and offshore oil and gas exploitation, to new and emerging activities such as wind, tidal and wave energy, offshore aquaculture, seabed mining and marine biotechnology. All these activities have enormous growth potential in Africa and have the potential to reshape and diversify the maritime economy of the continent, while becoming increasingly interrelated and integrated with traditional maritime economic sectors.

9. A number of countries in Africa, notably Mauritius, Seychelles and South Africa, have established blue/ocean economy ministries and departments.

(a) Status of marine and coastal environments in Africa

10. A large proportion of the urban population of Africa lives in coastal cities. As a result of major urban centre development, coastal environments face significant challenges due to the overharvesting of resources, pollution, the threat of erosion and the potential impact of climate change, which is associated with extreme weather phenomena, including rising sea levels, ocean circulation changes, and changes in sediment dynamics and ocean acidification.

11. **Losses from fisheries:** According to the Africa Progress Report 2014, published by the Africa Progress Panel, the rapid depletion of Africa's coastal fisheries is the result of a global crisis in fishery management. Overexploitation lies at the centre of that crisis and illegal, unreported and unregulated activity is one of the primary drivers of overexploitation. The United Nations reports that, due to illegal fisheries, sub-Saharan Africa loses over \$1 billion in revenue annually. In addition, illegal fisheries and illegal logging together cost sub-Saharan Africa up to \$20 billion every year.

12. **Piracy and armed robbery at sea:** Piracy and armed robbery at sea, phenomena previously unknown in Africa, have become common in East Africa and the Gulf of Guinea. Fishing vessels are frequently attacked and robbed, and such attacks often result in the fatalities of impoverished fishermen. Although piracy has declined in the Indian Ocean off the East African coast due to international efforts to protect shipping, the Gulf of Guinea is experiencing a rise in piracy and is becoming increasingly more dangerous. In 2015 alone, 306 seafarers were attacked, 108 were kidnapped and held hostage for ransom, and 23 lost their lives at the hands of pirates. Oceans Beyond Piracy estimates that the annual economic cost of piracy in this region is \$719.6 million. Combating piracy in Africa is economically challenging for

individual countries due to a lack of funds, insufficient technical and human capacity, and a lack of appropriate tools to combat the phenomenon.

(b) Management of marine and coastal environments in Africa

13. There are numerous management systems for coastal and marine resources. The governance of Africa's marine areas, coasts and oceans is guided by Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, particularly paragraph 15, which states that, "Africa's Blue/ocean economy, which is three times the size of its landmass, shall be a major contributor to continental transformation and growth, through knowledge on marine and aquatic biotechnology, the growth of an Africa-wide shipping industry, the development of sea, river and lake transport and fishing; and exploitation and beneficiation of deep sea mineral and other resources".

14. Agenda 2063 is also underpinned by the vision enshrined in the African Union 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy, which aims to foster greater wealth creation from Africa's oceans, seas and inland waterways by developing a thriving maritime economy and realizing the full potential of sea-based activities in an environmentally sustainable manner.³ African countries are also implementing the 1995 Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities.

15. Existing ocean governance frameworks in Africa are characterized by insufficient regional cooperation between governments, civil society, the private sector, and various regional and subregional bodies. Cooperation takes place, primarily, at the subregional institutional or convention levels, and there are no integrated regional coordination mechanisms.

16. These regional institutions and conventions on marine and coastal issues have no collective, normative relationship and no clear common coordination and implementation strategies. Furthermore, global marine resource governance frameworks, including those established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and other bodies promote differing approaches, in accordance with those bodies' mandates, and have not consolidated support for efforts to address marine and coastal environment challenges at the regional level.

17. *Poor governance of oceans in Africa has resulted in the under-utilization of environmental assets, and limited dialogue regarding an effective mechanism for harnessing and consolidating their importance, especially in the context of Africa's development agenda.*

(c) Status of Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals – Challenges and Opportunities

18. Sustainable Development Goal 14 recognizes the environmental and social benefits that healthy oceans provide, as well as the fact that their resources and assets are being eroded by a range of man-made actions that are, nonetheless, both manageable and within the scope of Goal 14. That Goal sets forth seven targets and three means of implementation in order to respond to an urgent need to modify human behaviour and establish more sustainable practices. To promote sustainability, countries within Africa need to develop and monitor key indicators for those targets.

19. A focus on all the three pillars of sustainable development is needed in order to achieve the Goals and their associated targets. In particular, sustained action to achieve the Goals on poverty eradication, food security, health, water and sanitation, and climate change will be critical if Africa is to promote inclusive sustainable development.

20. To promote the achievement of target 14.A, a scientific understanding of the oceans is vital, so that relevant stakeholders can respond appropriately to challenges

³ 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIM), African Union, 2014.

and develop sustainable management frameworks. Ocean research is also necessary in order to predict the consequences of change, design mitigation strategies and guide adaptation, and assess the many ways in which the ocean affects human lives and infrastructure. As yet, insufficient data on the oceans are available and data gathering and research capacities remain woefully inadequate. It is also clear that further management data are needed. In many countries in Africa, more than 50 per cent of fish are caught by small-scale fishermen; target 14.B was formulated in recognition of the fact that, while small-scale artisanal fisheries are too big to ignore, they are at a disadvantage when it comes to trade.

21. Target 14.1 focuses on marine and land-based pollution, and on the major global concerns of nutrient and plastic pollution in particular. Pollution is often transboundary and can often have impacts that are far from its source. The decline in the health of marine ecosystems (addressed in target 14.2) is already affecting the millions of people who depend on these ecosystems for food, coastal protection and other services. Marine ecosystems in general, and coastal ecosystems in particular, are experiencing a wide range of stressors as a result of human activity. West Africa is considered one of the region's most vulnerable areas in terms of the impacts of climate change on fisheries, which threaten the livelihood and well-being of communities that depend on those fisheries. Model-based estimates indicate a 21 per cent drop in land value and a 50 per cent loss in jobs related to fisheries.⁴ In terms of climate change (addressed in target 14.3), ocean acidity levels are rising as a result of increasing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere; a deeper understanding of changes, impacts and potential management responses to address medium to long-term challenges are needed.

22. In the light of the growing pressures on marine and coastal environments and ecosystems, the 15th session of African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (ACMEN), held in Cairo from 2 to 6 March 2015, called for the development of an ocean governance strategy in Africa, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy and Agenda 2063. Additionally, at the sixth special session of AMCEN, held in Cairo on 18 and 19 April 2016, participants agreed to strengthen existing regional institutional mechanisms in Africa to promote the ecosystem-based management of oceans and coastal zones, and called on the United Nations Environment Programme and its partners to organize a conference on oceans with a view to identifying how the natural capital of oceans and seas can be used to support Africa's sustainable development agenda.

V. Recommendations

A. Science to Policy Discourse

23. Enhancement of the science and policy discourse and incorporating scientific research outcomes into policy frameworks to create informed decision-making, scientific-based findings and political premises is needed. Bringing scientists and policy leaders together to find ways to ensure that Africa can sustainably harness its blue capital will facilitate the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063. In that regard, a Regional State of the Coast Report for the Western Indian Ocean has already been prepared to serve as input in the formulation of a Western Indian Ocean Region and Climate Change Strategy.

24. In 2012, the United Nations Environment Programme concluded that reconnecting science and policy was the fourth most pressing issue that must be addressed with a view to achieving sustainable development, and noted that critical scientific knowledge was not being effectively communicated to audiences that

⁴ Lam and others, 2012.

ranged from decision makers to the general public. Many governance arrangements emphasize the “best use of scientific information available” as a fundamental principle. That principle can only be upheld, however, if there are clearly identifiable mechanisms for the transformation of available science into policy and management advice that can be used by decision makers.

B. Ocean Governance Framework for Africa

25. There is a pressing need for a common regional vision and a regional cooperation framework that can facilitate collective action to harness Africa’s natural blue capital, reverse the loss of environmental goods and services, and identify effective ways to implement African Union strategies and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

C. Synergistic Implementation and National Sustainable Development Agendas

26. The integrated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is critical for Africa’s sustainable development and States must therefore draw up integrated ocean policies to that end. Certain countries, including South Africa, have already adopted such ocean policies. Use must be made of relevant tools, including marine spatial planning and ecosystem services valuation tools, in order to improve planning and decision-making with regard to the blue economy. In that regard, Seychelles has already developed marine spatial planning systems. Better inter-sectoral coordination of activities and improved ocean governance is needed to enhance the blue economy at the national and regional level.

D. Regional and Subregional Frameworks as Tools for Advancing Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

27. Given Africa’s ecological and political diversity, regional economic communities and platforms on marine and coastal environments can facilitate progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is well understood that local environmental problems, including deforestation, loss of mangroves or coral reefs and the degradation of national coastlines, require local solutions. Furthermore, certain local cumulative and transboundary challenges, such as inland sea pollution, or the pollution of river basins can only be addressed effectively by the concerned countries themselves.

28. *A regional approach to marine environmental protection provides an appropriate scale for the implementation of an ecosystem approach to conservation, and often allows for political consensus among a limited numbers of parties that share similar history, culture and interests in the region⁵.*

29. The Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans are already facilitating implementation of Goal 14. In that regard, the Nairobi Convention is serving as a basis for the formulation of an integrated coastal zones management protocol, while the proposed marine transboundary conservation area in Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, and the proposed integrated ocean management framework for the Northern Mozambique Channel would also facilitate implementation of Goal 14.

⁵ 2014 Potsdam Ocean Governance Workshop - Background Document 2, Rochette J., Unger S. and Wright G., 2014. Available at: http://www.iddri.org/Evenements/Ateliers/potsdam_annex%202.pdf.

E. Blue/Ocean Economy

30. Factors that are impeding the development of the blue or ocean economy in Africa include weak governance, including weak coordination mechanisms and insufficient understanding of the benefits of a blue economy at the national and regional levels, policy gaps due to insufficient knowledge regarding the true potential of ocean resources and capital, and a lack of scientifically-based decision making tools in the marine and coastal sector. Some countries in Africa, including Mauritius, Seychelles and South Africa, have already formulated plans for a blue economy as part of their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

31. More coastal countries need to develop blue economy policies, tools and methodologies to strengthen national economies, and must seek to raise awareness of the benefits derived from ocean resources.

F. International Waters and Africa's Sustainable Development

32. Efforts must be made to raise awareness regarding the importance of conserving marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdictions, and to develop scientific knowledge and management tools on how best to use those resources to promote development in Africa. This is especially the case in the areas of fishing, navigation, seabed mining, genetic resources and renewable energy.

IV. Key Messages

33. **Harness natural capital:** Achieving long-term sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Africa will depend on the sustainable and optimal management of its natural capital to facilitate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063.

34. **Reverse environmental losses:** Combating illicit financial flows and recouping illicit finances, and implementing sound social, environmental and economic policies are crucial steps that must be taken with a view to unlocking domestic resources for investment. It is also important to adopt sound policies to manage and utilize natural capital effectively with a view to leveraging that natural capital as a critical domestic resource.

35. **Promote effective ocean governance:** Effective governance of the oceans is a key factor that could spur a paradigm shift in sustainable development in Africa. There is a concern that exploitation of Africa's natural resources and biodiversity does not completely translate into value adding activities, adequate employment opportunities, food security, poverty reduction and enhanced economic returns for the continent. Indeed, negative trends characterized by illicit commercial activity and loss of natural capital are apparent. Environmental loss due to illicit commercial activity must be reversed in order to maximize domestic resources.

36. **Promote shared seas approaches:** Transboundary approaches to the management of shared marine resources enhance national and regional efforts to address marine and coastal environmental challenges, and promote implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The world is transitioning to an inclusive green economy and is seeking to exploit the oceans and their natural capital in a sustainable manner. In line with the 2030 Agenda, countries must continue to adopt "shared seas" approaches to restore the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems and maintain their biodiversity.

37. **Promote regional approaches:** A regional approach to marine environmental protection provides an appropriate scale for the implementation of ecosystem-based conservation initiatives, and builds political consensus among stakeholders with similar histories, cultures and interests. Additionally, a number of transboundary and

local cumulative challenges, including marine pollution, unplanned urbanization and poverty in coastal cities, overfishing, climate change, the impact of oil and gas exploration, and the illegal trade in flora and fauna, can be most effectively addressed at regional or sub-regional levels. Regional approaches can identify best practices and appropriate actions to maintain and restore the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems, which will in turn support the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy.

38. **Combat piracy in Africa:** Regional and international cooperation to combat piracy and the illicit trade in pirated goods is crucial. Countries must share information on vessel registration and licensing in order to minimize the cost of vessel identification and stop and search inspections, and should take action to prevent pirates from obtaining falsified flags for their vessels. Sharing intelligence, conducting joint naval patrols, and collaborating on the formulation of piracy laws and the prosecution of pirates could do much to mitigate the problem of piracy.

39. **Leverage funds for nationally determined contributions:** Integrate blue carbon into global climate action activities in recognition of the fact that oceans and coastal ecosystems are important carbon sinks, with a view to leveraging funds for nationally determined contributions.

40. **Strengthen the capacity of least developed countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS):** Support investment in initiatives to enhance the understanding of relevant stakeholders in LDCs and SIDS of the interplay among the climate, oceans and marine resources, and strengthen their marine observation capacity. The creation of a platform for SIDS will facilitate the achievement in those States of the Sustainable Development Goals and related targets.
