

# Leveraging Africa's leadership on Ocean Governance and Blue Economy: Fostering a strengthened Africa-Europe Ocean Partnership

Co-hosts:



Government of Comoros



Government of Seychelles



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*"We know that restoring harmony with nature through a healthy, productive, sustainable, and resilient ocean is critical for our planet, our lives, and our future. We call upon all stakeholders to urgently take ambitious and concerted action to accelerate implementation to achieve Goal 14 as soon as possible without undue delay." (Lisbon Declaration)*

*"We reaffirm our will to promote blue economy at continental and regional levels and to accelerate the Great Blue Wall initiative to drive nature-based blue recovery efforts, enhance socio-ecological resilience, and foster a regenerative blue economy on the African continent and in support of African Island and Coastal States." (Moroni Declaration)*

The high-level event, to be co-hosted in the sidelines of the African Union Executive Council as an **Africa-Europe High-Level Policy Dialogue on Ocean Governance and Blue Economy**, will build on the progress under the leadership of the current AU Presidency and beyond.

This activity will be jointly organized by the **Governments of Comoros, Seychelles, Portugal**, as well as the **Africa-Europe Foundation (AEF)**, with the support of the **African Union Commission** and the **European Union**. It will take place on February 15 from 07.30 to 10.00 am at the Hyatt Regency Addis Ababa Hotel.

## Context

As a fundamental part to life on the planet, the Ocean plays a multifaceted role. It acts as a sink and reservoir of greenhouse gases, as well as a climate regulator, while also contributing to greater food security, more decent jobs, and new professional opportunities (blue careers), greater biodiversity, and more global trade linkages.

Yet, the Ocean is facing a global emergency, as a result of increased ocean temperatures and acidification, sea level rising, overexploitation of marine resources, Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, as well as growing coastal erosion and more frequent extreme weather events, among others.

Africa has demonstrated unique leadership on ocean and the blue economy. It is fundamental to acknowledge the Comoros-led June 2023 [Moroni Declaration for Ocean and Climate Action in](#)

[Africa](#), the September 2023 [Nairobi Declaration on Climate Change and Call to Action](#), an outcome of the inaugural Africa Climate Summit (ACS), as well as COP28 in Dubai. Such leadership must be understood and matched by the international community to elevate and strengthen cooperation and realize African's aspirations, as enshrined in the Africa Blue Economy Strategy (ABES).

The nature-based blue economy in Africa, emphasizing sustainable practices and ecosystem management, offers a valuable opportunity for sustainable development, shared prosperity, and reinforced multilateralism. The blue economy, focusing on sustainable practices, research, innovation, and ecosystem management, has the potential to create 127 million jobs and generate 576 billion USD annually by 2063.

The high-level side event will contribute to advancing a mutually beneficial vision and set of common priorities for Africa and Europe on ocean policy and action, including on the international stage at the 2024 African Union Summit, and towards 2024, a key year for International Treaties, and revised AU programming. The event will also pave the way for a collective sustainable future as Africa moves into the second decade of its Agenda 2063, Europe enters in a new political and policy cycle, and we start preparing the third UN Ocean Conference in 2025, following up on the work since the last edition in 2022 in Lisbon, Portugal.

It will also contribute to the call for the swift ratification and entry into force of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (the BBNJ Agreement), a key instrument for the good governance of the ocean.

The shared ocean seascapes between and around Africa and Europe provide a strong basis for the development of a coordinated strategy across the two continents in advance of the 7th AU-EU Summit, to take place in early 2025. That is true for a number of reasons, but especially given that not only 39 out of 55 AU Member States have access to the sea and 22 out of 27 EU Member States are coastal nations, but also because, taken together, Africa and Europe have close to 40 million square kilometers of Exclusive Economic Zones, are home to ports and other maritime infrastructures that play a key role in the international maritime transport chain, and over 50 million jobs and 1 trillion Euros of revenue generated by the so-called blue economy.

It is, therefore, time to elevate the ocean and blue economy politically and financially, as this sector represents a strategic domain of cooperation, which is not yet central to the AU-EU dialogue, but which offers immense potential.

The establishment, by the African Union and the European Commission, of an Africa-Europe Strategy Group on Ocean Governance, with experts from both continents, is a valuable opportunity to take this mutually beneficial agenda forward with the advancement of a clear roadmap for joint action, aimed at strengthening the Africa-Europe Ocean Partnership.

### Objectives of the event

As the African Union gets ready to announce its 5-Year Priority Report and the European Union wraps a 5-year institutional cycle, the High-Level Policy Dialogue on Ocean Governance and Blue Economy will aim to:

1. Acknowledge African leadership on ocean and blue economy, under the leadership of Comoros as the 2023 AU Presidency and the AU Commission;

2. Highlight opportunities for maintaining ocean governance and blue economy high on the agenda for the two continents, especially in view of the 2024 AU Presidency and the 7th AU-EU Summit;
3. Provide a platform to advance a mutually beneficial vision and a set of common priorities for Africa and Europe on ocean policy and blue economy action, including on the global stage, towards strengthened cooperation and greater mutual understanding;
4. Serve as an incubator for new strategic and concrete initiatives and priorities, innovative practices, and to leverage mutual interest around ocean and blue economy for the benefit of the Africa-Europe partnership;
5. Stimulate joint work intended at strengthening Africa's leadership on blue economy, nature conservation and restoration, as a fundamental component of climate resilience in Africa and greater cooperation with Europe;
6. Present the preliminary outcomes of the work conducted by the Africa-Europe Strategy Group on Ocean Governance, an initiative led by the European Commission together with and in partnership with the African Union Commission, which is facilitated by the Africa-Europe Foundation.

### Draft Programme

#### 07.30 – 08.00 | *Arrival of participants*

#### 08.00 – 08.30 | *Welcome remarks*

- **Dhoahir Dhoulkamal**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Union of the Comoros
- **Ambassador Conrad Mederic**, Ambassador of the Republic of Seychelles to the African Union
- **Ambassador Nancy Karigithu**, Kenya's Ambassador and Special Envoy for Maritime and Blue Economy, former Principal Secretary for Shipping and Maritime Affairs for the Government of Kenya, and Co-chair of Africa-Europe Strategy Group on Ocean Governance
- **Ambassador Josefa Sacko**, African Union Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment

#### 08.30 – 09.30 | *Panel discussion*

- **Daniel Ali Bandar**, Secretary-General of the Government of the Union of the Comoros
- **Ambassador Josefa Sacko**, African Union Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment
- **João Gomes Cravinho**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Portugal
- **Ambassador Nancy Karigithu**, Kenya's Ambassador and Special Envoy for Maritime and Blue Economy, former Principal Secretary for Shipping and Maritime Affairs for the Government of Kenya, and Co-chair of Africa-Europe Strategy Group on Ocean Governance
- **Ambassador Javier Niño Perez**, Head of the European Union Delegation to the African Union
- **Chrissant Barbe**, Director General, Blue Economy Department, Republic of Seychelles

**Moderation:** Nassim Oulmane, Acting Director, Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management Division at UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

#### 09.30 – 09.50 | *Interventions from high-level attendees and Q&A session*

#### 09.30 – 09.50 | *Wrap-up*

### Guiding questions of the event

- What has been the progress around Africa-led initiatives and current AU Presidency agenda in this domain?

- How can Africa and Europe work jointly to co-define a roadmap to drive a just and equitable blue economy partnership?
- What are areas of critical importance that require Africa and Europe to work better together to address both the climate and biodiversity crisis, whilst answering to the needs of coastal communities?
- How can Africa and Europe work jointly to untap investment opportunities associated with the ocean and the blue economy, as well as to promote and incubate projects and businesses linked to the blue economy?