



WIO Stocktaking Meeting

*Towards an Ecosystem-Based Management Programme
For the western Indian Ocean Region*



CONTEXT:

The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) is recognized globally for its unique biological richness and natural beauty and is indeed of high ecological and socio-economic value. The region is one of the least ecologically disturbed areas of the global oceans with diverse ecosystems that provide invaluable goods and services to the growing population of the region. The economic value of the goods and services provided by these ecosystems is estimated to be over 25 billion US dollars on an annual basis, with fisheries and tourism being the two main direct contributors to the economies of the countries in the region.

Over 60 million people inhabit the coastal areas of the WIO region, most of them dependent on the exploitation of coastal and marine natural resources for their livelihood. The rapidly growing population is exerting large pressure on the marine environment, causing pollution, degradation of critical coastal habitats and changes in the freshwater flow and sediment loads from rivers draining into the western Indian Ocean. There are also other pressures, associated with high volume tourism and unsustainable inshore and offshore fishing, activities that have increased considerably in the recent past. Climate change effects are also making their mark on the region, manifesting in an increase in extreme weather events, flooding, sea level rise resulting in coastal erosion, as well as sea water temperature rise resulting in the destruction of sensitive habitats such as coral reefs.

In search for solutions to these challenges, the Western Indian Ocean region is currently hosting a portfolio of different projects funded by the Global Environment Facility, including in particular:

- the project “Addressing Land-based Activities in the Western Indian Ocean” (WIO-LaB);
- the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Project (SWIOFP); and
- the Agulhas and Somali Currents Large Marine Ecosystem Programme (ASCLMEs).

Moreover, there are a number of other important global, regional and national GEF projects that are active in the region such as the project “Strategic Partnership for a Sustainable Fisheries Investment Fund in the Large Marine Ecosystems of Sub-Saharan Africa”, the project “Reduction of Environmental Impact from Coastal Tourism”, the “Marine Highway Development and Coastal and Marine Contamination Prevention Project”, as well as large-scale country programmes such as the “Marine and Coastal Environment Management Programme” (MACEMP) in Tanzania, the replication of which is currently being scheduled in Kenya and Mozambique. Apart from these, a number of large-scale non-GEF projects with similar focus and objectives are ongoing, such as the “Regional Programme for the Sustainable Management of the Coastal Zones of the Indian Ocean Countries” (ReCoMaP) implemented by the Indian Ocean Commission.

The ASCLMEs, SWIOFP and WIO-LaB Projects have agreed on a common coordination framework, leading among others to the joint development of a comprehensive Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) and Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for the region. In this regard, the three projects are intended to jointly contribute towards a single objective: the sustainable management of the WIO environmental resources for the benefits of the people inhabiting the region. The SAPs will provide an important step forward towards a comprehensive and synergistic programme of intervention for the WIO region, based upon the principles of ecosystem-based management. The intention is that GEF-support would be sought for the implementation of such programme, but further financing would be sourced from other financial partners.



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OBJECTIVES:

The overall objective of the stocktaking meeting is to discuss the roadmap towards the development and implementation of a synergistic GEF programme for the WIO region based on the principles of ecosystem-based management. In this regard, the meeting will address a number of key issues:

1. The benefits of applying an ecosystem-based management approaches to addressing the challenges related to the coastal and marine environment of the Western Indian Ocean, including the management of its resources;
2. The current status of the GEF-supported and other interventions in the WIO region geared at addressing the challenges of the region;
3. The roadmap towards a synergistic ecosystem-based management approach for the WIO region.

PARTICIPANTS:

The Target audience for stocktaking meeting is high-level policy makers representing the Ministries of Environment, Tourism and Fisheries in each of the ten countries sharing the Western Indian Ocean: Comoros, France (La Reunion), Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa and Tanzania. Furthermore, a selected number of representatives in inter-governmental organizations (AU, COMESA, EAC, IOC and IOTC) as well as observers from several key development partners (FAO/Nansen, IUCN, NOAA, WIOMSA, WWF).

LOGISTICS AND LOCATION:

The regional stocktaking will be kindly hosted by the Government of Kenya, the Nairobi Convention Secretariat and the South Western Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission, back-to-back with the Conference of Parties to the Nairobi Convention, on 29th March 2010.

The venue of the meeting will be the United Nations complex in Gigiri, Nairobi.

Details for arrangement of travel and accommodation will be made available at a later stage.