



AFRICAN UNION

LUANDA DECLARATION ON THE AFRICAN BLUE ECONOMY

From Strategy to Action: Political Leadership for Africa's Blue Economy Transformation

Preamble-

1. We, Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the Member States of the African Union, gathered in Luanda, Republic of Angola, from 22 to 25 July 2026 on the occasion of the Third Africa Blue Economy Week, convened under the High Patronage of H.E João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola;
2. And at the invitation of H.E Carmen do Carmo do Sacramento Neto dos Santos, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources of the Republic of Angola, and H.E Moses Vilakati, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment of the African Union Commission, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme;
3. **Welcoming** the decision of the 39th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union designating “Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063,” as the AU Theme of the Year 2026;
4. **Recognising** that Africa's aquatic systems, including oceans, seas, rivers, constitute a strategic opportunity for the prosperity, food security, decent employment, structured transformation, sustainable economic growth and climate resilience of the continent, and a shared heritage to be governed in a holistic and responsible manner;
5. **Recalling** that thirty-eight of the fifty-four Member States are coastal, that seven Large Marine Ecosystems border the continent, that its inland water systems span approximately 305,000 square kilometres and its transboundary river basins cover almost 64 per cent of Africa's land area, conferring an aquatic endowment of exceptional magnitude and inherently shared nature;

6. *Reaffirming* the African Union Agenda 2063, the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy), the African Union Blue Economy Strategy (AU-BES) and its Continental Blue Economy Programme 2025–2029, and Sustainable Development Goal 14 on life below water;
7. *Recalling further* the Lomé Declaration (2016) and the Nairobi Statement (2018), the outcomes of the African Decade of Seas and Oceans (2015–2025), and the successive decisions of the deliberative organs of the Union on the blue economy;
8. *Mindful* of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ);
9. *Noting* that the blue economy constitutes a major engine of economic activity across the continent and that it is expected to expand and grow significantly as the AfCFTA deepens regional integration;
10. *Conscious* that more than 200 million Africans depend on fish for their food and nutrition security and that close to 10 million derive their livelihoods directly from the sector;
11. *Noting with satisfaction* that Member States are actively embedding the blue economy within their national development or climate frameworks;
12. *Cognizant* that political commitment and policy adoption have outpaced delivery, and that the sector remains undercapitalised, fragmented and unevenly implemented;
13. *Concerned* that the continent is rapidly facing a worsening nutrient and plastic pollution crisis and, absent decisive action, the risk of mismanaged plastic waste needs emerging actions by the middle of the century;
14. *Deeply concerned* that illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing persists on a grave scale in African waters;
15. *Concerned further* that women and youth continue to represent only a fraction of the maritime and freshwater workforce and remain under-represented in decision-making, finance and skilled employment;
16. *Aware* that the era of general commitments has ended, and that the present phase demands political decision, predictable financing, credible institutions and measurable delivery;
17. *Determined* to move decisively from strategy to action;

I. Guiding Principles

We affirm that Africa's blue economy transformation shall be guided by the following principles:

1. **Sovereignty and solidarity:** respect for the sovereign rights of coastal, riparian and island States over their aquatic resources, exercised in a spirit of continental solidarity and cooperation over shared waters. (reservation from Ethiopia)
2. The rights of all states for secure access to the sea conducive to their economic growth, trade, and overall national prosperity (proposal from Ethiopia). The

desire for all AU member states to be allowed access to use sea routes on mutually agreed terms for economic growth and overall prosperity (proposal from Nigeria)

3. **Sustainability and science:** the use of aquatic resources within safe ecological limits, grounded in the best available science, the ecosystem approach and the precautionary principle.
4. **Equity and inclusion:** the full and effective participation of women, youth, coastal and riparian communities, small-scale fishers and indigenous peoples, and the equitable distribution of benefits.
5. **Regional integration:** the harmonisation of policies, standards, data and markets through the Regional Economic Communities and the African Continental Free Trade Area.
6. **Shared responsibility and accountability:** partnership among States, the private sector, academia, civil society, local communities, and international partners, underpinned by transparency and mutual accountability.

II. Ministerial Commitments

We, Ministers, resolve and commit to:

1. **Domesticate the AU-BES.** Accelerate the domestication of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy into national and regional strategies, legislation and plans by 2028, each supported by verifiable targets, baselines and allocated budgets, and harmonise governance across sectors through marine and freshwater spatial planning and ecosystem-based management and ratify international and regional agreements and strengthened the AU Division on the Blue Economy to ensure a robust mechanism in driving the agenda.
2. **Establish sustainable blue financing.** Put in place, by 2027, national and regional sustainable-financing mechanisms for the blue economy, including national blue funds, blue bonds, blue insurance, debt-for-nature instruments and blended-finance vehicles, as well as innovative instruments such as biodiversity credits, and progressively increase the domestic share of blue-economy financing so as to reduce dependence on external resources.
3. **Build blue accounting and data systems.** Institute standardized national blue-economy accounting to strengthen ocean and freshwater data collection, and monitoring, and develop a national database for blue economy GDP in addition to a regional knowledge exchange platform that includes African countries to share best practices and success stories
4. **Reduce marine pollution at source.** Enact harmonised policies and invest in wastewater treatment, solid-waste management, the circular economy and oil-spill preparedness, so as to measurably prevent mismanaged plastic waste from source and turning it into valuable economic resource that support green jobs and innovative manufacturing.
5. **End IUU fishing.** Combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing through coordinated maritime surveillance, vessel monitoring and data-sharing and the effective enforcement of Port State Measures, and the rebuilding of depleted

stocks, so as to recover the value lost to the continent and restore the productivity of its Large Marine Ecosystems.

6. **Protect and restore ecosystems.** Expand marine protected areas and restored ecosystems, with effective management to at least 30 per cent of the aquatic spaces under and beyond national jurisdiction, in coherence with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and BBNJ Agreement, and safeguard mangroves, seagrasses, coral reefs and wetlands for their biodiversity, coastal-protection and blue-carbon value.
7. **Strengthen priority blue value chains.** Develop and add value to sustainable fisheries, aquaculture, green ports and shipping, sustainable coastal tourism, offshore renewable energy, blue biotechnology and the circular economy, reducing post-harvest losses and expanding decent employment.
8. **Advance inclusion, equity and skills.** Institutionalise the participation of women, youth and local communities in blue-economy governance and finance, with a minimum target of 40 per cent representation in advisory bodies and financing programmes, and expand maritime and freshwater education and training.
9. **Harness the AfCFTA.** Leverage the African Continental Free Trade Area to expand intra-African trade in blue goods and services.
10. **Deepen South–South cooperation as well as science innovation and optimize South-North cooperation.** Promote South–South and triangular cooperation and establish an African Blue Economy Scientific Panel, articulated with the African Union Commission (AUC-ARBE), regional centres of excellence and multilateral platforms or initiatives such as IPBES and IPOS, to guide evidence-based decision-making.

III. Calls

1. We call upon our partners, development financial institutions, the private sector, academia, and civil society to:
2. Align their technical and financial support behind the national, regional and continental priorities of the AU-BES, within African-owned and African-led frameworks;
3. Encourage all member states to ratify the African Charter on Maritime Security, Safety and Development in Africa (Lomé Charter). (reservation from Ethiopia)
4. Mobilise concessional finance, risk guarantees, first-loss capital and technology transfer at the scale of the ambition here declared, and support the development of Africa's blue-finance markets;
1. Invest in climate-resilient coastal infrastructure, the gradual decarbonisation of ports and shipping based on the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities with Respective Capability (CBDR-RC), and marine, offshore renewable energy, marine protected areas and marine pollution;
5. Support long-term partnerships and innovative technologies;
6. Strengthen African institutions, science and human capital, so that capabilities and value are retained on the continent.

IV. Decision

We decide to:

1. Mandate the African Union Commission with the support of partners to develop a Continental Implementation Roadmap 2026–2030, with annual indicators, costed actions and biennial reports to the Assembly of African Union Heads of State and Government.;
2. Establish a Permanent Ministerial Platform on the African Blue Economy, with technical secretariat provided by the AUC Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (ARBE); (reservation from Ethiopia)
3. Convene the Africa Blue Economy Week every two years on a rotational basis to all AU member states;
4. Task the African Blue Economy Scientific Panel with periodic assessments to inform the roadmap and measure delivery;
5. Undertake a mid-term review in 2028 and a comprehensive stocktake in 2030, aligned with the review cycles of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

V. Final Clause

We, Ministers assembled in Luanda, adopt the present Luanda Declaration on the African Blue Economy as the expression of our collective political will to move from strategy to action, and mandate the Republic of Angola to transmit it to the summit of African Union Heads of State and Government through the relevant African Union organs. Finally, we commend the Republic of Angola for successfully hosting the 3rd Africa Blue Economy Week.

Done in Luanda, Republic of Angola, on the twenty-fourth day of July 2026.