



THE **BLUE** ECONOMY

A NEW FRONTIER FOR AFRICA



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa



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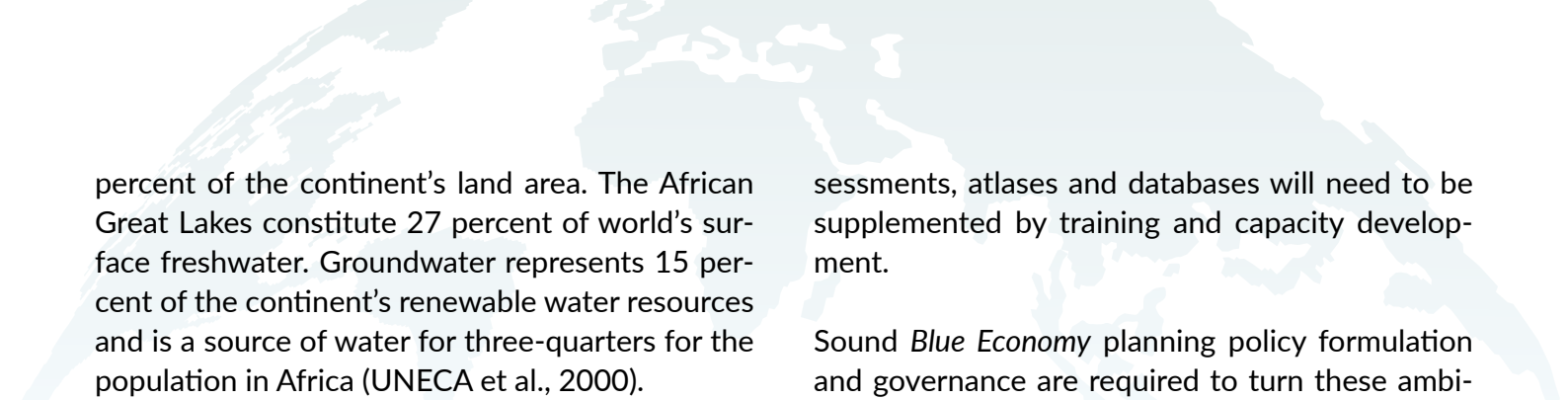
The “*Blue Economy*” integrates all activities and resources derived from marine and aquatic ecosystems, including oceans, seas, coasts, rivers, lakes and groundwater. The *Blue Economy* concept recognises the crucial importance of productive and healthy freshwater and ocean ecosystems, as a pathway for economic development. This is encapsulated in the African Union’s 250 Africa’s Integrated Maritime Strategy (AU 2050 AIMS), which describes the *Blue Economy* as the “new frontier of African Renaissance.”

Aquatic and marine resources are central to the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A sustainable *Blue Economy* seeks to promote economic growth, responsible production and consumption, social inclusion, and the preservation or improvement of livelihoods and the environment of the ocean and coastal areas. For instance, beyond SDG 14 on *the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources*, the *Blue Economy* provides an array of opportunities to contribute to ending poverty (SDG 1), improving food security and eliminating hunger (SDG 2), providing decent job opportunities (SDG 8) and to accessing clean water (SDG 6). Figure 3 offers a non-exhaustive list of linkages between the *Blue Economy* development and the 17 SDGs.

AN INCOMPARABLE WEALTH

Africa is endowed with an enormous variety of natural – living and nonliving – resources, such as water; diverse flora and fauna, including fish stocks; minerals and hydrocarbons. The annual value of the African maritime industry is estimated to have reached around USD 1 trillion. The *Blue Economy* has the potential to create wealth, promote sustainable trade, economic growth and transform the lives of Africa’s citizens.

Africa’s aquatic resources are immense. With an area of approximately 30 million km², Africa is the second-largest continent in the world (behind only Asia). It is surrounded by two oceans (Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean), and by two strategic seas for the international trade and maritime transport: the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. A total of 38 out of Africa’s 54 countries are coastal and island States. The Territorial Seas and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) under the jurisdiction of African Coastal States are extensive, measuring around 13 million km², and their outer continental shelves around 6.5 million km². Africa is also home to the second- and third-longest rivers in the world (the Nile and the Congo). There are 63 international river basins covering approximately 64



percent of the continent's land area. The African Great Lakes constitute 27 percent of world's surface freshwater. Groundwater represents 15 percent of the continent's renewable water resources and is a source of water for three-quarters for the population in Africa (UNECA et al., 2000).

Tapping the resources of the Blue Economy in a sustainable manner will yield benefits for Africa that include new and improved incomes, jobs and increased trade opportunities generated from water-related activities such as mining, transportation, fishing, sports, marine biotechnology, renewable energy and tourism. Fisheries are an important source of employment and fish constitutes the major source of protein for most African countries and contributes significantly to food security. As petroleum production on land declines, new technologies have made possible the exploration and exploitation of offshore resources. Many of the new finds are off the African coast. While the world is rapidly moving towards a fossil-free future, it is envisaged that natural gas will become a major component of energy mix, contributing significantly towards closing Africa's energy gap to power the 600 million people without access to electricity. However, the harnessing of the blue economy rests on adequately mapping, valuing, monitoring and protecting maritime resources, and requires investments in maritime security to prevent illegal pillaging of such resources.

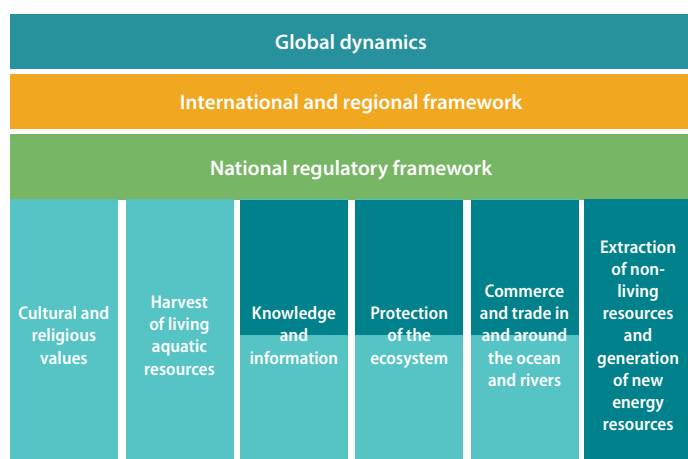
A PARADIGM SHIFT

We propose a paradigm shift for the *Blue Economy* in Africa, in terms of both the conceptual and institutional approaches. The potential of aquatic and marine ecosystems and associated resources is still barely known. As an example, more than 80 percent of the oceans remain completely unmapped, rendering any action on that front very complex. It is therefore of strategic importance to put a strong emphasis on building the knowledge of key stakeholders on the *Blue Economy* to support policymaking. Knowledge generation through continental, sub-regional and national in-depth as-

sessments, atlases and databases will need to be supplemented by training and capacity development.

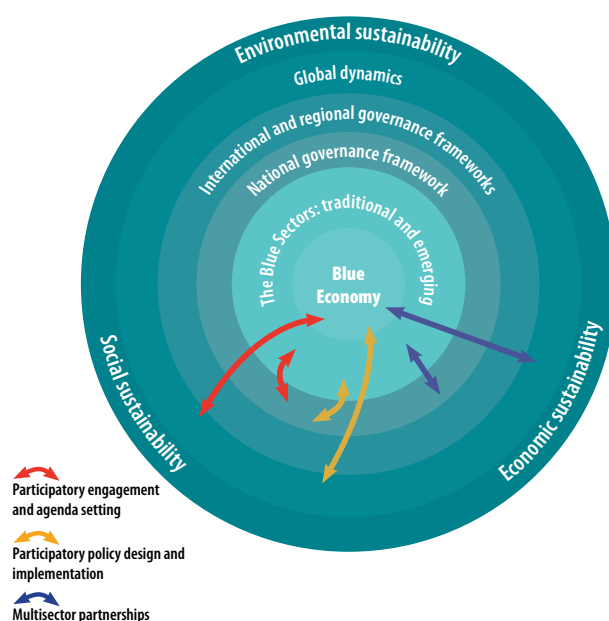
Sound *Blue Economy* planning policy formulation and governance are required to turn these ambitious goals into reality. The current approach to the *Blue Economy* is excessively linear and compartmentalized (Figure 1), with weak connections and linkages between various levels of intervention (global, regional, and national). The proposed *Blue Economy* framework adopts a multisectoral approach, in which environmental, social and economic dimensions are intertwined and synergies strengthened between the different *Blue Economy* sectors (Figure 2). The ECA Africa *Blue Economy* Policy Handbook includes a step-by-step methodology using such a multisectoral approach. Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Seychelles, Morocco as well as the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa, have already embarked on *Blue Economy* policy development. In Southern Africa, countries such as Mauritius and the Republic of South Africa have earmarked the blue economy as pillars for their future development. Mauritius has earmarked the blue economy as an avenue of future export growth in the medium to long-term in its Vision 2030 while South Africa through "Operation Phakisa" aims at tapping into the potential of its oceans. The 24th ICE Meeting of ECA suboffice for Southern Africa, held in Mauritius in 2018 centered on the theme of "Blue economy, inclusive industrialization and economic development". The African Union is also developing its continental strategy. There is a need for further alignment and synergies between these strategic policy frameworks at all levels to ensure smooth implementation. The forging of partnerships with a wide array of stakeholders, including UN Agencies, continental, sub-regional and national institutions, the private sector, the academia and civil society is likewise key to prevent duplication and wastage of resources.

FIGURE 1
The current Blue Economy Sector Framework



Source: ECA, Africa's Blue Economy: A Policy Handbook

FIGURE 2
The Desirable Blue Economy Framework

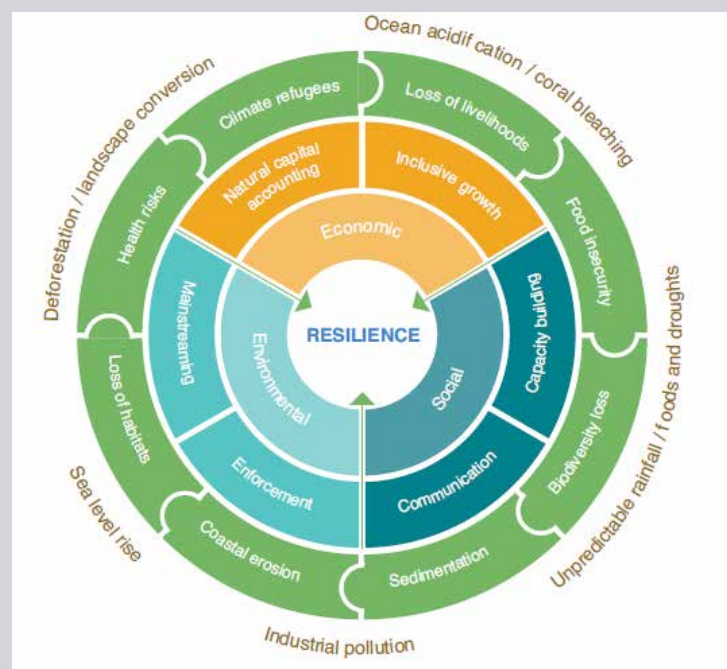


Source: ECA, Africa's Blue Economy: A Policy Handbook

THE BLUE ECONOMY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Africa - in particular, its island States - are highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of human-induced climate change. Accelerated climate change and environmental mismanagement are growing threats to the integrity, condition and sustainability of the aquatic and marine resources on which the *Blue Economy* is based (see Figure 3). Although subject to local variations, wide areas of Africa have suffered the consequences of global warming, including more frequent floods and droughts, erratic and extreme weather, seasonal changes, sea-level rise, coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion, warming sea waters, ocean acidification, coral bleaching and an upsurge of invasive species. These impacts are expected to worsen and are already having negative effects on livelihoods, causing internal migration, as well as putting at risk critical infrastructure and transportation systems.

FIGURE 3
Climate and environmental threats, impacts, and responses for resilience



Source: ECA, Africa's Blue Economy: A Policy Handbook

The mainstreaming of climate change and environmental sustainability into *Blue Economy* sub-regional and national policies would facilitate the strategic transitioning to low carbon development while strengthening resilience to the effects of climate change. The *Blue Economy* offers opportunities for disaster risk and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Addressing these vulnerabilities and building resilience requires the appropriate information and data, alongside the development of the appropriate adaptation strategies. To this end, Article 7.7 of the Paris Agreement sets out clear guidance for parties to develop, share, manage and deliver climate change knowledge, information and data. Adaptation strategies should include the conduct of in-depth studies on biophysical and socio-economic impacts and reviewing best practices in other countries¹.

The 25th Session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that will be held in Santiago, Chile, on 2-13 December 2019 offers a unique opportunity to showcase on-going *Blue Economy* policy development experiences in Africa, aimed at conserving and sustaining marine and aquatic ecosystems and associated resources.

AN APPEAL FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE BLUE ECONOMY CONCEPT AND MULTISECTORAL APPROACH IN THE SAMOA PATHWAY

On 27th September 2019, the General Assembly will hold a one-day high-level review of the progress made in addressing the priorities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) through the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A. Pathway) adopted in 2014. The objective is to reach “a concise action-oriented and inter-governmentally agreed political declaration”.

The SAMOA Pathway focuses on a series of sustainable development aspirations and priorities for the period 2015-2025: inclusive and equitable economic growth; climate change; disaster risk reduction; sustainable energy; oceans and seas; food security and nutrition; water and sanitation;

sustainable transportation; sustainable consumption and production; management of chemicals and waste, including hazardous waste; health and non-communicable diseases; gender equality and women’s empowerment; social development; culture and sport; promoting peaceful societies and safe communities; social security; education; biodiversity; desertification, land degradation and drought; forests; invasive alien species; means of implementation including partnerships; financing; capacity-building; technology; data and statistics.

The *Blue Economy*, sustained by a multisectoral approach, could boost the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway by linking-up interventions related to the sustainable management and use of marine and aquatic ecosystems. Further consideration to include it as part of the High-Level Political Declaration could represent a key achievement and major accelerator for the implementation of the SIDS development agenda.

1 Adaptation contributions include, ecosystem based adaptation (EBA) initiatives e.g. the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) pilot projects in Seychelles- the EBA South project restoring essential ecosystems within Seychelles’ coastal wetlands to buffer against flooding and enhance the security of coastal livelihoods.





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