

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION

Webinar

Unlocking the Value of Blue Resources in Africa and the Indian Ocean

Insights from the UNECA Blue Economy
Valuation Toolkit

Event Report

DATE:

Wednesday
5 March 2025

TIME:

10:00 - 12:00 GMT+1 (Yaoundé)
11:00 - 13:00 GMT+2 (Kigali)
12:00 - 14:00 GMT+3 (Dar es Salaam)
13:00 - 15:00 GMT+4 (Port Louis)
15:00 - 17:00 GMT+6 (Dhaka)

1. Background

The Blue Economy promotes the sustainable, fair, and circular use of aquatic resources while safeguarding ecosystems. In Africa, it includes oceans, coasts, rivers, lakes, and groundwater, playing a key role in the continent's sustainable development, as emphasized in Agenda 2063 and the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy. Since 2014, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) has supported Blue Economy development through its Working Group on Blue Economy and the IORA Blue Carbon Hub, focusing on fisheries, seaports, coastal tourism, renewable energy, marine biotechnology, and seabed exploration. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) has also played a key role, introducing the 2016 Blue Economy Policy Handbook, contributing to national and subregional strategies, and supporting improved financial access for MSMEs. In October 2024, the UNECA Sub-Regional Offices for Central Africa (SRO-CA) and Eastern Africa (SRO-EA) organized a virtual expert group meeting on [Innovations for a Climate-Resilient Blue Economy Transition](#).

Despite progress, the socio-economic and ecological value of blue resources remains under-quantified. To address this, UNECA developed the Blue Economy Valuation Toolkit (BEVTK), applied in Djibouti, Tanzania, Seychelles, and other countries. Under their Memorandum of Understanding, to collaborate on research and capacity building on the Blue Economy, IORA and UNECA co-hosted a webinar on 5 March 2025, titled [Unlocking the Value of Blue Resources in Africa and the Indian Ocean: Insights from the UNECA Blue Economy Toolkit](#), to introduce the BEVTK, demonstrate its application, and promote its adoption for evidence-based policymaking across Africa and the Indian Ocean region. A recording of the webinar (original language) is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdDnQpnsKF4>

2. Participation

Over 100 participants from 43 countries joined the two-hour virtual event, with strong representation from EAC and IORA Member States, with more modest participation from ECCAS countries. Women accounted for 45% of speakers and approximately 54% of participants, reflecting a balanced and inclusive discussion. To facilitate the participation of all Member States, there was simultaneous interpretation between English-French-Portuguese-Spanish.

Some key institutions represented on the webinar included:

Government Ministries & Agencies:

- Ministries of Fisheries, Blue Economy, and Maritime Affairs from Tanzania (Zanzibar), Kenya, Madagascar, Somalia, South Africa, Mauritius, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, Morocco, Comoros, and others
- Ministries of Foreign Affairs from Bangladesh, Somalia, Indonesia, United Arab Emirates, and Ethiopia
- Ministries of Planning & Economic Development from Angola, Cameroon, and Côte d'Ivoire
- Maritime and Port Authorities from Congo, Madagascar, Gabon, Benin, Senegal, Liberia, Cameroon, and Comoros

International & Regional Organizations:

- UNECA, IORA, and Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)
- African Union Commission (AUC), AU-IBAR, AUDA-NEPAD
- FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization)
- COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa)
- AfDB (African Development Bank)
- GIZ, The Nature Conservancy, IDDRI, Fair Carbon
- Global Ocean Accounts Partnership

Academic & Research Institutions:

- Universities & Research Centers from Kenya, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Morocco, Ghana, South Africa, Indonesia, Hungary, Tunisia, and the United Kingdom
- Centre de Droit Maritime et Océanique (CDMO), University of Nantes, Chinese Academy of Sciences

Private Sector & Civil Society Organizations:

- Blue Women Africa, WIMAFRICA, WIMAMOZ, SWIOTUNA Forum
- Port Management Association of Eastern and Southern Africa Secretariat
- Pangea Accelerator, Sealink Promotional Shipping Company
- South African Sustainable Seas Trust, SmartLab Limited (Tanzania), CORDIO East Africa
- Our Blue Future Consortium, African Boating Conference

Participants represented 43 countries from Africa, the Indian Ocean, and beyond, including Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, China, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Fiji, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States.

This broad participation reflects the growing global interest in Blue Economy development, regional cooperation, and sustainable ocean governance.

3. Presentations

The virtual meeting was convened under the leadership of **Mr. Jean-Luc Mastaki**, Director of UNECA SRO-CA, **Mr. Andrew Mold**, Officer-in-Charge of UNECA SRO-EA, and **Ms. Melyne Tarer**, Acting Director of the Blue Economy and Fisheries Management Programme at IORA Secretariat. The discussions were moderated by **Ms. Honita Cowaloosur**, Economic Affairs Officer at UNECA SRO-EA.

1. Opening

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Tarer** highlighted the joint commitment of IORA and UNECA to advancing the Blue Economy for sustainable development. She emphasized the ocean's economic and ecological importance, the role of the BEVTK in data-driven decision-making, and the need for collaboration to address ocean challenges, enhance resilience, and drive inclusive growth.

On his part, **Mr. Mastaki** welcomed the deepening UNECA-IORA collaboration in advancing the Blue Economy. He emphasized the Douala Consensus as key to industrialization and economic diversification in Central Africa, stressing that growth must prioritize social inclusion and environmental sustainability. He highlighted the urgency of harnessing water resources, achieving SDG-14, and using BEVTK for evidence-based policymaking and to facilitate investments. Finally, he called for regional cooperation and strategic alignment to ensure impactful, sustainable Blue Economy development across Africa.

2. Contextualization

Representing Indonesia as Chair of IORA's Working Group on the Blue Economy (WGBE), **Mr. Budi Kurniawan Supangat** emphasized the Blue Economy as a cross-cutting priority under the IORA Action Plan 2022-2027, covering fisheries, shipping, coastal tourism, renewable energy, marine biotechnology, and seabed exploration.

He highlighted past ministerial conferences in Mauritius (2015), Indonesia (2017), and Bangladesh (2019), which shaped regional cooperation. Indonesia is leading capacity-building efforts, including marine debris management and partnerships with GIZ and the International Seabed Authority. He stressed the need for better valuation tools, referencing Indonesia's Blue Economy Index, which aligns with several SDGs. Finally, he called for greater collaboration among IORA Member States to support sustainable ocean management, economic growth, and environmental preservation.

Ms. Raquel Frederick, Economic Affairs Officer with UNECA SRO-CA highlighted UNECA's ongoing efforts to support African countries in developing their Blue Economies, projecting that the sector could generate \$576 billion and create 78 million jobs by 2063. She emphasized that beyond economic growth, the Blue Economy must be inclusive, sustainable, and resilient. A major challenge is the lack of reliable data, which led to the development of the BEVTK. Already applied in Seychelles, Djibouti, and Tanzania, it could expand into Central Africa if there is interest.

She outlined key opportunities in Central Africa, including fisheries, aquaculture, sustainable energy, maritime transport, and tourism. While port modernization is improving trade connectivity, inland water transport and hydropower remain underutilized. The BEVTK aims to address data gaps and support policy development, including marine spatial planning, blue financing, and blue accounting, which remain underused in many African countries.

3. Blue Economy Valuation Toolkit (BEVTK)

Mr. Yebeltal Abebe, Senior Software Developer at UNECA, showcased the upcoming online version of the BEVTK, which will eventually replace the Excel-based model. The new platform improves accessibility, real-time updates, user experience, data visualization, customization, and seamless navigation, offering a more interactive and country-specific tool for assessing economic, social, and environmental dimensions of the Blue Economy. The online platform is still under development and testing but is tentatively planned for roll-out in late-2025.

Ms. Asiya Maskaeva, Senior Lecturer at the University of Dodoma and Economic Advisor to the President's Office Planning Commission, Tanzania, presented on the successful application of the BEVTK in Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar. The toolkit assesses the economic, social, and environmental contributions of the Blue Economy through:

1. Economic Models – Evaluating impacts on GDP and employment.
2. Social Models – Analyzing indicators like access to credit and health services.
3. Ecosystem Service Models – Assessing natural systems' role in economic sustainability.

Findings based on 2015 data show the Blue Economy contributes 5% to Tanzania's GDP and 22% to employment. The social composite index highlights positive impacts on the business environment and access to services. These insights support sustainable development, demonstrating the Blue Economy's potential to drive growth, enhance social welfare, and protect ecosystems.

In her presentation, Ms. Maskaeva recommended identifying and training a dedicated entity to manage the BEVTK, ensuring effective implementation and sustainability. She also stressed the importance of verifying data reliability, as inaccurate or inconsistent sources could lead to miscalculations in valuing Tanzania's Blue Economy. Additionally, she underscored the need for strong stakeholder engagement,

ensuring active participation in updating and using the toolkit for policy decisions. Lastly, she urged the Tanzanian government to establish a research agenda to address critical data gaps and improve the BEVTK's effectiveness in guiding sustainable Blue Economy strategies.

4. Closing

In summary **Ms. Tarer** reiterated that the Blue Economy offers significant opportunities for sustainable economic growth, particularly for coastal communities. However, unlocking its full potential requires security, digitalization, and inclusive participation, especially for women and local communities. The BEVTK is a crucial step forward, but its success depends on ongoing training for key stakeholders and continued regional collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

In closing the webinar, **Mr. Mold**, acknowledged the valuable partnerships supporting the Blue Economy, including IORA, the AU, IOC, and regional economic communities. He highlighted Eastern Africa's untapped water resources, such as Lake Victoria, and Somalia's fisheries, which could yield 500,000 metric tons of fish annually. The Blue Economy contributes an estimated \$300 billion to Africa's GDP, yet its true potential is much greater. Strengthening data collection and integrating the Blue Economy into national policy and budgeting is essential for securing investments. Moving forward, continued collaboration and capacity-building will be key to advancing SDG 14 and enhancing regional economic resilience.

4. Open Discussions

Participants actively engaged through chat and oral interventions, raising key issues and recommendations:

- **Ms. Yvonne Moyu' Tange**, Co-founder, Blue Women Africa: Introduced Blue Women Africa, a platform supporting women's participation in the Blue Economy through leadership, resource mobilization, and advocacy at both professional and community levels. She expressed interest in collaborating with stakeholders, including contributing to the BEVTK.
- **Dr. Phillip James**, Director, UNSW Centre for Sustainable Development: Emphasized the need to align efforts, recognize natural assets as infrastructure, and integrate comprehensive ecosystem and social data into Blue Economy planning. He called for including local knowledge, including gender, nutrition, and cultural values, as well as integrating indigenous knowledge. He further called for institutionalizing these processes to ensure replicability to support Blue Bonds and other financing mechanisms.

- **Mr. Bernardino Neto**, Ministry of Planning, Angola: Highlighted concerns over foreign vessel dominance in Africa's shipping and fishing industries, advocating for policy reforms to ensure that the Blue Economy serves African interests, and to enhance local employment, resource management, and national benefits.
- **Ms. Simone Assah Kuete**, UNECA SRO-EA: Provided insights into AfCFTA provisions on fisheries and maritime trade, outlining rules on crew composition, vessel ownership, and flag states aimed at protecting African maritime interests. Specific annexures on these provisions are available for further review. She referenced Ethiopia's efforts to develop a regional shipping line and train local crews to enhance African participation in maritime trade.
- **Mr. Mohamed Seisay**, Senior Fisheries Officer, AU-IBAR: Discussed the implementation of the African Blue Economy Strategy, emphasizing the need for alignment between national and partner-led efforts to maximize impact. He noted UNECA's support for 15 countries in developing strategies and raising awareness, including EAC and COMESA.
- **Mr. Martin Ndende**, Director, Center for Maritime and Oceanic Law, University of Nantes: Clarified that coastal states govern their EEZs, not external partners. He commended the Blue Economy pillars, while stressing the need to elevate the security pillar to address piracy, terrorism, and cybercrime, essential for protecting maritime assets.
- **Mr. Georges Asseko**, Head, Blue Economy Division, AUC: Highlighted the European Economic Commission's work on revenue-related aspects of the Blue Economy, aligning with UNECA's efforts. He welcomed partnerships to enhance resource management and maximise economic benefits from the Blue Economy.
- **Ms. Liliane Mouan**, Human Rights & Sustainable Development Expert: Reinforced the need to include indigenous and local people and their knowledge into Blue Economy policies and processes.
- **Mr. Mubarak Sodha**, PMAESA Secretariat: Noted that most Blue Economy resources are transboundary, advocating for flexible subregional assessments within the BEVTK. He also referenced Our Blue Future, a public-private consortium promoting Integrated and Sustainable Blue Economy (ISBE).

Senior representatives from **AU-NEPAD**, **WIMAFRICA**, the **Tunisian Society for Sustainable Fisheries**, the **Autonomous Port of Kribi** (PAK Cameroon), and other key institutions reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation and advancing Blue Economy development in the region.

5. Recommendations

Across presentations and audience interventions, there were several recommendations to strengthen the Blue Economy in Africa and the Indian Ocean by improving governance, investment, security, data reliability, and regional collaboration, ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth.

1. Improving Data Collection, Research, and Valuation of Blue Resources

- Enhance national data collection systems and expand the use of the BEVTK to support evidence-based policymaking.
- Governments should establish research agendas to fill critical data gaps, ensuring long-term sustainability and informed decision-making.

2. Strengthening Local Governance, Sovereignty, and Employment in the Blue Economy

- Prioritize policies that empower local communities and reduce dependence on foreign vessels in fisheries and maritime industries.
- Enforce sovereign rights over Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) to ensure national control over resources and fair economic benefits.
- Align AfCFTA provisions with blue economy priorities, ensuring fair participation of African workers and monitoring fish product origins for trade compliance.

3. Enhancing Maritime Security and Sustainable Resource Management

- Make security a core pillar of the Blue Economy, addressing threats like piracy, terrorism, cybercrime, and illegal fishing.
- Strengthen regional coordination and surveillance systems to protect marine resources and ensure sustainable development.

4. Developing a Holistic Policy and Investment Framework

- Integrate economic growth, environmental sustainability, and security into national and regional Blue Economy strategies.
- Promote Blue Bonds, marine spatial planning, and innovative financing mechanisms to attract sustainable investments.

5. Fostering Regional Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing

- Strengthen partnerships between UNECA, IORA, AU, and development partners to align efforts and avoid duplication.
- Institutionalize knowledge-sharing platforms and incorporate indigenous and local knowledge into policymaking for sustainable resource management.