

Regional State of the Coast Report

Western Indian Ocean

A SUMMARY FOR POLICY MAKERS



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FOREWORD

The complex archipelagic system of 115 islands, of which 41 are granitic and 74 are coralline in nature, within an exclusive economic zone of about 1.44 million km², of the Seychelles, is representative of a truly unique Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region. A region that is world-renown for the vast array of habitats with remarkable natural beauty, spectacular biodiversity and rich natural resources. In the WIO region, we are proud of our leadership and history in the management of the marine environment. Our marine protected areas are among the oldest eg Malindi Marine Park in Kenya, established in 1968, and the Aldabra Atoll in the Seychelles, that was established in 1981 and declared as a World Heritage site in 1982. The Primeiras and Segundas Archipelago in Mozambique is among largest protected area in Africa, covering more than 4020 square miles. The region continues to explore new and innovative options for managing oceans and coasts. We also recognise the transboundary nature of shared ocean resources, and our governments have signed the Nairobi Convention and its protocols as the framework for collaboration in the management of our oceans to sustain cultural and economic opportunities that the marine resources presents to the region as a whole.

The coastal area in the WIO region is home for over 60 million people, with long and rich cultural traditions on the management of the coastal and marine resources. The Seychelles is a microcosm of our Western Indian Oceans cultural diversity. People with African, Asian and European origin, have brought with them their traditions and cus-

toms, contributing to the existing vibrant Seychellois maritime culture.

Seychelles has been in the forefront at regional and global level in promoting a Blue Economy pathway for sustainable growth. We strongly believe that we can reconcile fast economic growth with climate resilience development by harnessing the full array of ocean wealth to accelerate our countries' abilities to produce more goods including food and energy.

Our success in developing a Blue Economy is equally dependent on effective management of the coastal and marine environment. The production of this first Regional State of the Coast Report for the Western Indian Ocean Region, which describes the status of the environment and our ocean's vast array of untapped or under developed resources, is the first step in our efforts to establish a common understanding that will be used as the baseline for future reports, scenario building and forecasting.

This report is also a reflection of our collaborative efforts under the Nairobi Convention to create a link between science and policy making at the regional scale. May I commend all those who have made the production of this report possible for their worthy contribution to the body of knowledge on the coastal and marine environment of the WIO region.

It is my hope that this report will inspire our countries in our pursuit to take more concrete actions towards turning our dreams of developing Blue Economy for our countries into reality.



Didier Dogley
Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Change
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PREFACE

The Western Indian Ocean Region – Taking the lead!

The Regional State of Coast Report for the western Indian Ocean (WIO) is the first comprehensive regional synthesis to provide insights into the enormous economic potential around the WIO, the consequential demand for marine ecosystem goods and services to match the increasing human population, the pace and scale of environmental changes taking place in the region and the opportunities to avoid serious degradation in one of the world's unique and highly biodiverse oceans. The report goes a step further and presents exploratory scenarios and policy analysis to better inform anticipatory planning and management of coastal and marine resources.

Thirty years after the Nairobi Convention was enacted, there is no better way to mark this major milestone than launching this report in 2015 - a report which amongst others, will provide the Convention with the basis for reflection on where it is coming from and where it would wish to be in another thirty years from now. For the Convention to successfully mobilize experts from a range of disciplines, decision-makers at different levels, various UN organizations, partners and donors from within and outside the region, to contribute in meaningful and concrete ways towards the production of this report, is testimony to the recognition of the important role the Convention has played as a regional platform for cooperation in the protection, management and development of the region's marine and coastal environment. We at UNEP, as the hosts to the Convention, are very proud to be associated with this landmark document, not only since different sections of the

organization have played an active role in its production, but more importantly, this region has become the first Regional Seas Programme to produce its Regional State of Coast Report, based on the format and structure of the UN-coordinated World Oceans Assessment. This is setting the standard for other Regional Seas Programmes to follow.

Further, by linking the production of this report with the Eighth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention, a new dimension is added to the Convention's efforts to bridge the science-to-policy interface. In addition to providing the basis for some of the key decisions of the Meeting, the report will contribute to the Convention's Work Programme for 2018-2022 and follow-up interventions to be developed.

This report highlights the enormous economic potential and development needs of countries around the WIO and, at the same time, points out the growing natural and anthropogenic pressure imposed on the region coastal and marine environment, and the opportunities to avoid them. It is evident from the report that countries and the region as a whole have placed a high priority on the coastal and marine environment. Nationally and regionally, actions are being taken at different levels to sustainably manage the coastal and marine environment, however, more needs to be done. This report highlights the perils of continued delay on addressing some of the major challenges and also how critical it is to balance economic, social and environmental needs, if the countries are to continue to benefit from the diverse and life-sustaining goods and services provided by the coastal and marine environment for many years to come.



Achim Steiner
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