

Concept Note: Oceans Policy Briefs

1.0 Background

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its Sixth Assessment Report highlighted that life in the ocean and along its coasts has been greatly impacted due to exposure of ocean and coastal ecosystems to unprecedented conditions as a result of climate change. The ocean is the world's largest carbon sink absorbing approximately 90% of the excess heat caused by greenhouse gases through key ecosystems such as mangroves, seagrasses and salt marshes as highlighted in the IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (2019). However, warming, acidification and deoxygenation are altering ecological communities and negatively affecting the ocean's health and stability which are critical in mitigating the effects of climate change.

African countries are highly dependent on the ocean with over 30,000 km of coastline and over 1.5 million km² of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). Coastal ecosystems provide crucial services such as tourism and protection from coastal hazards. Shallow water corals for example act as natural breakwaters and can attenuate up to 98% of the incoming wave energy. However, despite the vast resources and potential that Africa's oceans present, the continent is burdened with a lack of data, significant knowledge gaps and as climate change raises temperatures and leads to more unpredictable weather patterns, the delicate balance of marine ecosystems is increasingly at risk.

Coastal and marine ecosystems are some of the most vulnerable to climate change. The effects of record temperature rises are being felt in the global ocean as evidenced by the increasing frequency of mass coral reef bleaching events. These effects have led to significant losses and damages in marine and coastal ecosystems, and infrastructure of coastal cities through sea level rise and coastal erosion. According to the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C (2018), 70-90% of coral reefs would be lost at an increase in temperature of 1.5°C and 99% of corals would be lost under warming of 2°C or more above the pre-industrial period. Further, the degradation of coral reef habitats has led to a sharp decline in catch for artisanal fishers and compromised the livelihoods of fisheries dependent communities. Given the low adaptive capacity of communities and the high sensitivity of ecosystems, African coastal communities are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and require adequate support to combat these challenges.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) and the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) decided to establish a fund for responding to loss and damage whose mandate includes a focus on addressing loss and damage to assist developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in responding to economic and non-economic loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including extreme weather events and slow onset events. With the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund and the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance currently under negotiation, it is crucial to highlight the diverse losses and damages felt by African coastal communities despite the key adaptive roles played by coastal and marine ecosystems.

It is against this backdrop that the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Sub commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States (IOCAFRICA) in collaboration with the African Group of Negotiators Expert Support (AGNES) are facilitating a process for African

experts to develop policy briefs that will highlight key considerations for policy makers and negotiators and provide recommendations for understanding loss and damage in oceans around Africa, and climate finance and oceans.

2.0 Scope of Work

The work will involve the development of two policy briefs with the following topics:

1. Loss and Damage in Oceans
2. Climate Finance and Oceans

The development process will include an initial scoping meeting scheduled for the week of **23rd - 27th September**. This virtual meeting will be focused on developing a preliminary outline and assigning roles and tasks.

This will be followed by a drafting and editing process to be concluded by the **25th of October** prior to publication.