

**SPONSORED BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO AND THE
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION**



AFRICA WEEK OF UNESCO
2021 Edition
(Phase One from 25 to 29 May 2021)

CONCEPT NOTE

"Africa Week", which has, over the years, become an institutional tradition in the life of UNESCO, has, since its inception, been an event encompassing three main dimensions:

- **Emblematic:** *with the display, at UNESCO, of the socio-cultural diversity of the Member States through their different stands;*
- **Reflective:** *through the holding of conferences and debates on the main theme, collectively validated by States and linked to the strategic concerns of the African Union, so as to clarify and investigate the stakes of the issues that are dear to the continent;*
- **Festive:** *through a variety of cultural and artistic encounters, the cornerstone of which is the **closing gala**, the perfect occasion to celebrate the creativity and originality of the craftsmen, artists and professionals ensuring the presence and promotion of African unity beyond its geographic and linguistic diversity.*

The main theme chosen for 2020 was:

"OCEANS, PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA".

The 2020 edition could not be held due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the health restrictions imposed in 2020, which persist to this day.

*Consequently, despite the continuing health restrictions, the Africa Group was determined to hold Africa Week at UNESCO this year, in 2021, maintaining the vital theme of **"Ocean, peace and sustainable development in Africa"**. This theme is in line with the African Union's theme for this year: **"Arts, Culture and Heritage"**.*

*The 2021 edition is thus special in two regards, as not only does it unite both of the African Union's main themes for 2020 and 2021, it will be held online, similarly to all global events since March 2020. This goes to show the resilience and vibrancy of UNESCO's Africa Week, reflecting the continent itself, an **Africa that innovates and moves forward!***

The major reason for the thematic choice of the ocean is that the 2020 edition of Africa Week at UNESCO was planned when the Decade of African Seas and Oceans (2015-2025) was at its half-way point, while UNESCO and its Member States were readying the preparatory phase of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

Moreover, in 2021, 1 January marked the launch of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

This coincidence thus offers UNESCO the major opportunity of inviting the most eminent African specialists in the field of ocean science, technology and innovation to an in-depth, evolving reflection that should make it possible, beyond providing an overview of the issue, to theoretically, conceptually and scientifically review Africa's ongoing initiatives, to fuel new plans of action promoting peace and sustainable development on the basis of Africa's cultural values and heritage.

Reflection on this main theme at UNESCO and by UNESCO, on the initiative of the permanent delegations of the Africa Group, is all the more urgent as African States, gathered within the African Union, are at the forefront of major initiatives including:

- *the Decade of African Seas and Oceans (2015-2025),*
- *the proclamation of the African Day of Seas and Oceans on 25 July each year,*
- *Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050,*
- *Africa's Blue Economy strategy,*
- *the Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa - "Lomé Charter",*
- *the Global Ocean Observing System in Africa (GOOS-AFRICA) as a Pan-African model for scientific integration,*
- *African policy dialogues on infrastructure, including maritime infrastructure, and many other noteworthy initiatives.*

Moreover, Africa, which has 38 coastal and island States out of 54 and 47,000 km of the planet's coastlines, is currently a pivotal continent in geostrategic terms, at the centre of desires and diversified conflicts, whose main goal is to control its wealth and preserve peace in accordance with UNESCO's doctrinal credo.

The following sub-themes have been chosen to address the content of this theme in a multidisciplinary and cross-cutting approach.

Sub-themes

- **Sub-theme 1:** - **Part I: Critical and forward-looking assessment of the African Union’s initiatives with regard to maritime issues, the blue economy, ocean sciences and the Decade of African Seas and Oceans (2015-2025).**
- **Part II: Diverse perspectives on African institutional capacity in the areas of ocean science, ocean technology and innovation, and ocean policy and governance in Africa.**
- **Sub-theme 2: Global ocean governance and promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa.**
- *Impact of the programmes of UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) in Africa: case study on coastal vulnerability in Africa.*
- *Integration and synergies: Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB), Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP) and coastal ocean – capacity building in basic sciences in support of ocean sciences and the sustainable development of the African coast.*
- *Africa’s regional conventions on its marine and coastal environment under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).*
 - **Sub-theme 3: Strategic institutional partnerships and African diasporas: funding African initiatives for the promotion of technology, innovation and ocean sciences in support of sustainable development in Africa.**

All these sub-themes will be concluded by a high-level round table, as well as the recommendations made by the Africa Group at the 41st session of UNESCO’s General Conference, to be included in the Medium-Term Strategy and four-year programme.

The Africa Group also takes this opportunity to recognize and pay tribute to the African experts who distinguish themselves by remarkable contributions to capacity building and the promotion of ocean science in Africa.

Key stakes and expected results

1. Establishment of a high-level African political and scientific interface between African policymakers and scientists in the maritime field, in ocean science, technology and innovation and in the sustainable management of the ocean and seas in Africa. This joint monitoring team including UNESCO’s Africa Group, the UNESCO Secretariat extended to the competent sectors in a multidisciplinary approach and the African Union Commission (AUC) will facilitate the articulation of the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) with existing African initiatives – such as *the Decade of African Seas and Oceans (2015-2025)*, *Africa’s Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050*, *Africa’s Blue Economy strategy*, *the Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa – “Lomé Charter”*, *GOOS-AFRICA as a Pan-African model for*

scientific integration and the African policy dialogues on infrastructure, including maritime infrastructure, just to mention a few - as a pivot and cornerstone.

2. Establishment of a high-level Pan-African scientific and technical team to support the African Union with informed, independent scientific advice as a political and scientific interface in the maritime field and ocean science.

3. Harmonization of the period of the Decade of African Seas and Oceans (2015-2025) with the initiatives of the African Union, particularly Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050 and Agenda 2063 of the African Union, while taking into account the period of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), which will run until 2030, to ensure a monitored implementation of results in the appropriate time frame.

4. Establishment of an African fund for ocean science and the maritime field for peace and sustainable development in Africa along the lines of the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF).

5. Establishment of prizes to reward the best African research teams for the advancement of ocean science, technology and innovation, meeting local and universal priorities to enhance knowledge of the ocean and coastal environment, thereby contributing to the improvement of the lives of the coastal populations.

6. Establishment of a communication platform between Africa's specialized institutions, universities and specialists in the form of an African Association for Ocean and Climate Sciences.

7. Establishment of a platform devoted to the promotion of women in ocean and climate sciences in Africa in the form of a Network of African Women in Ocean and Climate Sciences.

8. Establishment of a platform devoted to youth and mentoring in ocean and climate sciences in Africa in the form of a Network of African Youth in Ocean and Climate Sciences.

9. Mobilization of African States for the launch of synchronized ocean campaign programmes throughout Africa in the dual context of the Decade of African Seas and Oceans (2015-2025) and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) to speed up the development of local knowledge on African seas and oceans.

10. Recommendations pertaining to the 41st session of UNESCO's General Conference and the AUC.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN "Online Conference and Exhibition Activities" in line with the central ocean theme.

Regarding the format of the event, it may be appropriate to consider the following structure:

A.- The conference will be held as a *forum of ideas*

- High-level panels are being prepared with the support of the Priority Africa and External Relations Sector (PAX), UNESCO's IOC in close collaboration with UNESCO's Africa Group and specialized African institutions.

Organization of a high-level online scientific conference (webinar) that is to provide an overview of the above-mentioned African initiatives (African Union) linked to the ocean theme.

- Varied debates around sub-themes forming the framework of the main theme, with a particular focus on the vulnerability of the African coast and the development of Africa's institutional capacities and human resources.

Invitations to introduce the discussions will be issued to:

- the most eminent specialists from the African continent and diaspora in the field of ocean science, technology and innovation;
- specialists in the field concerned from specialized United Nations agencies;
- specialists from other regions, who will share their experiences to promote South-South and North-South scientific cooperation.

B.- The exhibition will be held as a forum on the culture of peace, entitled "*Crisis prevention and the peaceful resolution and mitigation of conflicts in Africa*"

- **Forum on the culture of peace: the Biennale of Luanda, Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace.**

Given UNESCO's universal mission to promote and preserve peace in the world, the occasion was considered preferable to dispersed regional or sub-regional initiatives held under the auspices of UNESCO, in a holistic approach to promoting the culture of peace in Africa (2012-2020).

In Africa, the concept of the culture of peace is enriched by **all the values, belief systems, forms of spirituality, ways of transmitting endogenous knowledge and technology, traditions and cultural and artistic forms of expression** that contribute to the respect of human rights, cultural diversity, solidarity and the rejection of violence to build democratic societies. The Manden Charter resulted from that corpus of African knowledge, forming the first Declaration of Human Rights in the world (1222).

The idea of creating a biennale for the culture of peace in Africa was inspired by the **Charter for African Cultural Renaissance**, which states that culture is the surest means for Africa to increase its part in global scientific production and meet the challenges of globalization.

Moreover, in 2019, the Biennale of Luanda was directly in line with the Action Plan for a Culture of Peace in Africa adopted in Luanda, Angola, at the Pan-African forum "Sources and resources for a culture of peace", jointly held by UNESCO, the

African Union and the Government of Angola in March 2013. The forum made it possible, on one hand, to launch a **continental and sustainable movement for the culture of peace in Africa** and, on the other, to encourage the genesis of awareness and mobilization campaigns on a global level under the African Union's motto "**Make Peace Happen**".

A vast array of varied activities already undertaken in partnership with Member States could be displayed in the form of a photo report (with captions), videos and other appropriate materials.

In a holistic approach linking human culture and vulnerabilities, the Government of Angola, with the support of the UNESCO Africa Group's Central Africa sub-group and in partnership with the IOC Secretariat and the United Nations system in Angola, held, as part of the Biennale of Luanda and Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace, 2019 Edition, a **sub-regional workshop on coastal vulnerability in Central Africa** at the Agostinho Neto Mausoleum in Luanda on Friday 20 September 2019. It was considered a major event on the ocean and coastal vulnerability in Africa in the context of the Decade of African Seas and Oceans (2015-2025), the African Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050 and Agenda 2063 of the African Union, and as a prelude to the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

The results of the workshop will be presented in the Africa Week conference and 2021 edition of the Biennale of Luanda.

Note:

- This topic will be prepared with UNESCO's PAX Sector, field offices and Member States.
 - The "craft shops" space should be utilized by guiding the creativity demonstrating the place of cultural industries in Africa's economic and social development.
- The "craft shops" space** should be leveraged online to promote the creativity and place of cultural industries in Africa's economic and social development.

C.-PARTNERS' FORUM

One of the virtual spaces of the event could be reserved for the **partners' forum - "Alliance for Africa"**.

Objectives

- Mobilize partners (banks and private companies), current and future, by involving them in the implementation of African initiatives pertaining to the continent's maritime field and ocean science for sustainable development with a view to fostering lasting peace.
- Strengthen the leadership of African specialized institutions and experts in the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development on the basis of the priorities defined under the *Decade of African Seas*

and Oceans (2015-2025), Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050, Africa's Blue Economy strategy, the Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa – "Lomé Charter", GOOS-AFRICA as a Pan-African model for scientific integration and African policy dialogues on infrastructure, including maritime infrastructure.

- Provide targeted presentations (graphic exhibitions, reports or other kinds of materials) that should shed light on the activities already undertaken, or underway, with the support of the field offices (in Africa).
- Formulate the most relevant recommendations for UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy regarding priorities Africa and gender equality.

D.- SIDE EVENTS

The *Awalé* tournament planned in 2020 was held in the form of a virtual multidisciplinary conference over two days, as a prelude to Africa Week, on 31 March 2021 from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 1 April 2021 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. The initiative had been planned as part of the celebration of 14 March 2020, International Day of Mathematics, the idea being to host the laureates of the championship held in several cities simultaneously and hold a small tournament at UNESCO during Africa Week.

Note:

Awalé, Ngola, Wari-wari, Kiela or Matacuzana, depending on the region, is an African strategy game based on counting and combinatorics that combines history, sociology, technological innovation and the pleasure of bringing people together. Professor Niousséré Kalala Omutunde from Institut Anyjart (see audio component) could be invited for African mathematic game animations during Africa Week.