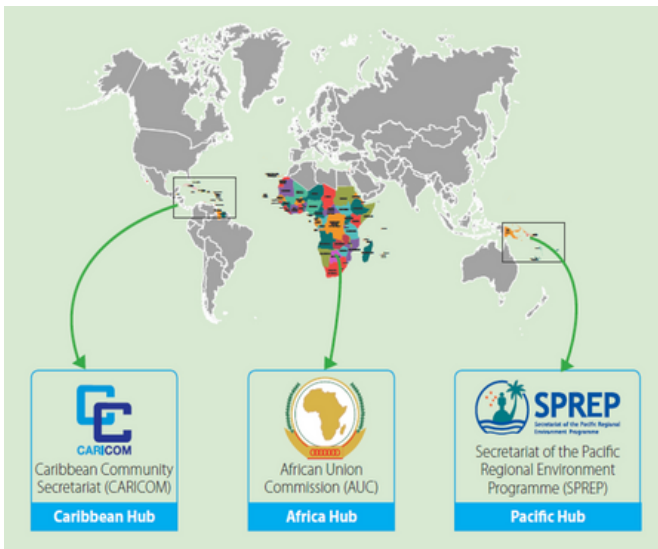




A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ACP MEAs 3 PROGRAMME

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PROGRAMME



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ACP MEAs 3 Highlights

The ACP MEAs programme is a partnership between the EU and UNEP that began in March 2009, as an initiative of the European Commission to address challenging environmental issues through the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) in the African, Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP) regions. The program is currently in its third phase of implementation, aiming to assist 79 ACP-countries to enforce and comply with MEAs related to biodiversity and chemicals and waste, and to deal with issues of Ocean and Regional Seas governance.

Some of the key activities and progress shared by partners during the first quarter of 2023 (January to March) include the following:

- Organization of the Western Indian Ocean Coral Reef Task Force Capacity-Building Workshop in March 2023, in Comoros
- The Nairobi Convention and the Western Indian Ocean Coral Reef Task Force
- Field mission in March 2023, in Mauritania, to support the conservation of “La Baie de l’Etoile”
- Regional Consultation Workshop on the Environment-Fisheries Nexus in September 2022, in Kenya
- Setting Sail Towards Sustainability: Supporting the implementation of Maritime Conventions in Dominican Republic and Barbados
- The European Environmental Bureau/Zero Mercury Working Group's (EEB/ZMWG) activities on ASGM.

Organization of the Western Indian Ocean Coral Reef Task Force Capacity-Building Workshop, in March 2023, in Comoros

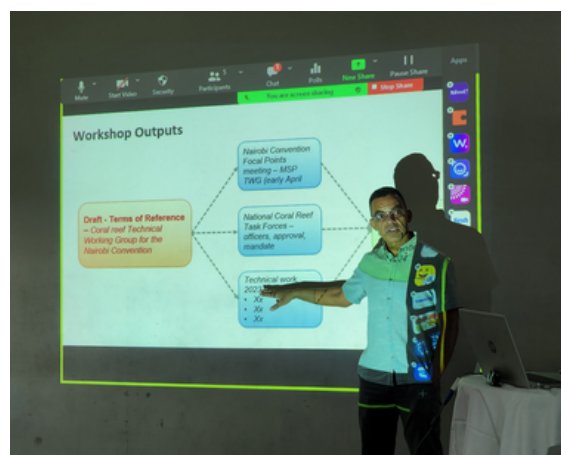


Coral Reef Task Force, workshop, Comoros. Photo by CORDIO, shared by the Nairobi Convention.

With a renewed focus on scientific support to policy through the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in December 2022, a new phase of activities is being initiated with support from the Nairobi Convention. A capacity-building workshop was convened in Moroni, Comoros, on 1-3 March 2023, aiming at revitalizing and enhancing the capacities of the national coral reef task force (NCRTF) members, for improved and collaborative management of coral reefs in the Western Indian Ocean.

This workshop was organized in collaboration with Coastal Oceans Research and Development – Indian Ocean (CORDIO) East Africa, AIDE NGO of Comoros, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Environment and Tourism in Comoros. Representatives from South Africa, Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Reunion-France, Seychelles and Tanzania attended the meeting. The meeting also benefited from the online participation of officials from GCRMN and the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI).

The objective of the workshop was to establish a new workplan (2023-2024), including priorities for monitoring and use of data, and continued engagement in the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network. Its goal was also to reconfirm coral reef monitoring tasks within the CRTF by confi-



Coral Reef Task Force workshop, Comoros. Photo by CORDIO, shared by the Nairobi Convention.

ming technical membership by country and roles, and coordination mechanisms. The issue of strengthening data sharing and repository mechanisms for the regional Coral Reef Monitoring Network was also discussed. In terms of coral reef monitoring, it was important to recognize the headline indicators and monitoring framework adopted under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, to identify mechanisms for supporting national coral reef management and reporting under the framework of the Nairobi Convention, the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Coral Reef experts present discussed the coordination of the regional coral reef monitoring network including identifying funding needs and report-back mechanisms for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. They also explored existing data, knowledge gaps and opportunities to capitalize on. The importance of aligning the actions of Coral Reef Network with national and regional sustainable development priorities were emphasized. After discussions on the state of progress of activities in the respective countries and at the regional level, contributions were made on new terms of reference and action plan for monitoring. These outcome documents will be presented to the competent authorities for validation.

An on-the-ground coral reef restoration project along the east side of Wasini island, Kwale county, Kenya provided much hope on the restoration of degraded reefs. The opening of the workshop was graced by AIDE President Mr. Said Ahamada, CORDIO Director Dr. David Obura, and the Head of the Nairobi Convention Secretariat Mr. Dixon Waruinge. Mr. Houmed Msaidié, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Environment and Tourism of Comoros officially opened the meeting and welcomed participants to Moroni. [Read more.](#)

The Nairobi Convention and the Western Indian Ocean Coral Reef Task Force



GCRMN Western Indian Ocean. Photo by Francesco Ungaro, Unplash.

The regional coral reef network in the Western Indian Ocean has been active since 1999, coordinating and reporting on coral reef monitoring activities through the Nairobi Convention Coral Reef Task Force ([CRTF](#)) and the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network ([GCRMN](#)), with support from partners. The Nairobi Convention CRTF was established based on a Decision made at the third meeting of the Nairobi Convention Conference of Parties ([COP3](#)) in 2001.

The Coral Reef Task Force entered into force in 2002, to coordinate work on coral reefs throughout the region, and in 2004 national bodies were constituted to coordinate coral reef activities, action plans, and strategies within each country. At the fourth meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention ([COP4](#)) in 2004, Contracting Parties resolved to strengthen the coordination structure of the Coral Reef Task Force, as well as the national coral reef task forces, and enhance linkages with [national focal points](#).

The Western Indian Ocean Coral Reef Task Force Capacity-Building Workshop was supported by the Nairobi Convention component of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) Countries Capacity Building of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) - ACP MEAs 3 programme. The programme is supporting the strengthening of management effectiveness and sustainably managing coral reef areas crucial to coastal livelihoods and ecosystems in Comoros by (i) increasing awareness and knowledge about value of ocean protection and role of MPAs, (ii) providing information on management effectiveness of two selected MPAs created to support future adaptive management, (iii) generating information on the alternative sustainable livelihoods for communities around the MPAs, and (iv) offering information on financial sustainability of the selected two new MPAs.

The Nairobi Convention for the protection, management, and development of the marine and coastal environment in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region offers a legal framework and coordinates the efforts of the 10 Contracting Parties to plan and develop programmes for strengthening their capacity to protect, manage and develop their coastal and marine resources.

Coral reefs in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region are approximately 6% (about 15, 180km²) of the global coral reef coverage. The region is considered as an important coral reef biodiversity hotspot.

Coral reefs are vital for economic activities and coastal communities due to their role in supporting sustainable fisheries for communities (estimated at US\$ 8.4 billion annually in the Western Indian Ocean), generating revenue from tourism, and providing natural barriers for coastal protection. These diverse ecosystems are home to millions of marine species, contributing to biodiversity and maintaining healthy ocean ecosystems.

It is critical to retain the integrity and enhance the resilience of coral reef ecosystems as we strive to attain the goals of particularly Sustainable Development Goal 14, under the 2030 Agenda for Sustain-

nable Development and the applicable targets of the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Solutions to protect coral reefs require a holistic and integrated approach, including reducing social, economic, and environmental pressures, and integrating climate mitigation and adaptation into national planning frameworks. Increasing support for reef monitoring, restoration, conservation, and effective management of at least 30% of coastal and marine ecosystems is crucial for enhancing biodiversity, ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity, and connectivity.

Regional Consultation Workshop on the Environment-Fisheries Nexus in September 2022, in Kenya



Delegates at the Environment-Fisheries Nexus Workshop held in Mombasa, Kenya. Photo by David Ouma.

The Nairobi Convention for the protection, management and development of the coastal and marine environment in the WIO region, under the ACP MEAs 3 programme, organized the environment-fisheries nexus consultative workshop in September 2022, in Mombasa, Kenya. The Nairobi Convention partnered with the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) for the workshop and more broadly to promote an ecosystem-based (EBM) approach to fisheries management and ocean governance for sustainable blue growth in the WIO region.

The workshop identified priority issues relevant to fisheries and marine environment-related interventions and engaged policymakers and key stakeholders in the fisheries and environment sectors.



Delegates at the Environment-Fisheries Nexus Workshop held in Mombasa, Kenya. Photo by David Ouma.

It notably provided an overview of the Western Indian Ocean's coastal and marine areas, ongoing efforts to improve ocean governance, and challenges facing coastal and marine fisheries. The workshop generated ideas for collaboration and identified gaps in existing data management and knowledge sharing mechanisms.

Mr. Dixon Waruinge, Head of the Nairobi Convention Secretariat, urged participants to “delve into how the Nairobi Convention and SWIOFC would enhance collaborative partnerships to serve the WIO seascapes better”.

Mr. Vasco Schimdt, SWIOFC Secretariat Executive Secretary noted that the partnership with the Nairobi Convention was “an important milestone focused on the artisanal and small-scale fisheries, coastal and marine environmental governance, and marine research”.

The Director General of the Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Prof. James Njiru, highlighted the main issues of concern in the environment- fisheries sectors in the region and how they affect the resilience of coastal fisheries communities dependent on them. He indicated that “Over seventy per cent of marine fisheries in the region are artisanal in nature”.

The environment-fisheries nexus meeting agreed to promote partnerships for cooperation, and collaboration to address environment and fisheries issues and the resultant challenges.

The two sectors also agreed to conduct, as far as is possible, joint assessments on ecosystems and species of concern. Experts from academic and research institutions in the Western Indian Ocean drafted a roadmap to develop a status report on the environment-fisheries nexus in the region.

The WIO region harbors a highly productive system that supports over 65 million people living within 100 km of the coast. The estuarine and coastal ecosystems protect the coastline, sequester carbon dioxide, provide habitats for marine organisms, and support fishing, aquaculture, tourism, and recreation.

Fisheries in the nearshore coastal and marine habitats sustain many coastal communities. However, anthropogenic activities such as coastal development, overfishing, and pollution threaten these ecosystems and resources. Climate change as well as ocean acidification has also exacerbated the loss and degradation of fish breeding grounds and nurseries. The December 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework emphasizes cross-sectoral and integrated approaches to conservation and sustainable use, which can help address the complex challenges facing the environment-fisheries nexus in the WIO region.



For further information or updates, on the Nairobi Convention, please contact Mwangi Theuri and Melisa Wandia Mureithi at theuri.mwangi@un.org and melisa.mureithi@un.org

Updates from the Regional Seas: The Abidjan Convention

Field Mission in March 2023 in Mauritania, to Support the Conservation of “La Baie de l’Etoile”



Seagrass provides ecosystem services in La Baie de l’Etoile.
Photo by the Abidjan Convention.

The Abidjan Convention, under the UNEP ACP MEAs 3 programme, conducted a field mission from 4 to 11 March 2023, to support Mauritanian government efforts to protect and save biodiversity through the establishment of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) “La Baie de l’Etoile”, in Nouadhibou, in the north of Mauritania’s coastline (Atlantic Ocean). While a future classification as a MPA could help mitigate the negative impact of human activities (urban pressure, household waste pollution, salt extraction, bird predation by settlers), some initiatives regarding the sustainable management of the area are already being implemented by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Education through Promopêche Programme funded by EU, and the intervention of local NGO Annajah.

During the mission, Abidjan Convention and UNEP representatives met with government stakeholders in Nouakchott and with local stakeholders in Nouadhibou. Mr. Diagana Abdoulaye, ACP MEAs 3 Programme Management Officer, presented the support the Abidjan Convention is currently providing to Mauritania, including through

capacity-building centers of expertise and the allocation of a grant for the establishment of “La Baie de l'Etoile” MPA. Mr. Diagana noted that these interventions are part of a follow up of the aide-memoire signed by Ms. Susan Gardner, UNEP Ecosystems Division Director, during her visit to Mauritania. Mr. Adamou Bouhari, UNEP Task Manager in Mauritania gave an insight on GEF funding possibilities.

Among government stakeholders met in the capital Nouakchott, Ms. Lalya Aly Camara, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Mauritania expressed her willingness to speed up the process of “La Baie de l'Etoile” MPA creation and mobilize additional funds to support the establishment of management bodies, tools, and activities. Mr. Mohamed Abidine Mayif, Minister of Fisheries and Maritime Economy, shared his expertise on the “Baie de l'Etoile”. He was part of the teams who conducted characterization studies on the bay and brought the urgency of the situation to the attention of decision makers. He shared his observation on the degradation of the ecosystem in “La Baie de l'Etoile” and pled for an in-depth reflection on “La Baie de l'Etoile”, to save what can still be saved.

Local stakeholders met in Nouadhibou during the mission included the Mayor's Office, NGOs and the President of the environmental NGO network, Free Zone Authority, the Regional Council and the Wali (Governor) of Nouadhibou. Recognizing that the commitment of the local communities will be decisive, they acknowledged the need to create “La Baie de l'Etoile” MPA and agreed to give their support. According to Mr. Baido Lom, Headmaster of the “La Baie de l'Etoile” Primary School, 60 pupils from Nouadhibou's schools and 282 teachers received awareness and capacities building on “La Baie de l'Etoile” sustainable management, while 8,690 pupils also received learning materials. Mr. Hamdi Mbareck, a champion of the protection of “La Baie de l'Etoile”, enthusiastically shared on the educational path utilized to raise awareness on the fragility of the beach and the ecosystem. The protection of the area will require significant efforts in education, awareness and behavior change communication.



Urban development and pollution threaten La Baie de l'Etoile.
Photo by the Abidjan Convention.

Anthropogenic pressure is putting at risk the ecosystem of “La Baie de l'Etoile”, notably endangered species such as monk seals. Once a site recognized for ecosystem services provided to local communities, it has been invaded by a multitude of concrete constructions. While local communities used to walk on the beach and enjoy the fresh air coming from the ocean, these buildings now block the horizon and hide the ocean.

With UNEP, the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, and the European Union through the ACP MEAs 3 programme, new opportunities are emerging for the protection of “La Baie de l'Etoile” and the Mauritanian coastline. Other international partners such as the Delegation of the European Union and the Spanish Cooperation Agency in Mauritania also support Mauritanian authorities' effort to save “La Baie de l'Etoile”.



For further information or updates on the Abidjan Convention, please contact Abdoulaye Diagana at abdoulaye.diagana@un.org

Setting Sail Towards Sustainability: Supporting the implementation of Maritime Conventions in Dominican Republic and Barbados



Photo by Mr. Christopher Corbin, the Cartagena Convention.

The UNEP Cartagena Convention Secretariat works with other Global Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) to ensure the sustainable use of coastal and marine resources in the Wider Caribbean. These include agreements such as the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, known as the MARPOL Convention and the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC). The MARPOL and the OPRC Conventions, both administered by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), were adopted in 1973 and 1980 respectively and focus on addressing pollution from maritime related activities.

With support of the ACP MEA 3 programme, the Governments of the Dominican Republic and Barbados are being provided with technical assistance to ensure the successful implementation of the MARPOL Convention in the case of the Dominican Republic and the OPRC Convention and Oil Spills Protocol of the Cartagena Convention for Barbados.

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources in the Dominican Republic is using this support to conduct a diagnostic of their internal institutional arrangements for enforcing the provisions of the MARPOL Convention and to obtain recommendations on how existing laws and regulations can be modified to ensure full compliance of their national obligations.

The Environment Protection Development of the Government of Barbados will enhance their oil spill preparedness and response capabilities and ensure that the country is equipped to handle any potential oil spills in its waters. This will be achieved through the improvement of their National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP) and National Dispersant Use Policy.

The Dominican Republic and Barbados are both Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols and using a more integrated approach to comply with national obligations under various MEAs could be a model for replication in other countries of the Wider Caribbean and beyond.



For further information or updates on the Cartagena Convention, please contact Christopher Corbin and Ashleigh Blythe at christopher.corbin@un.org and ashleigh.blythe@un.org

The European Environmental Bureau/Zero Mercury Working Group's (EEB/ZMWG) activities on artisanal and small scale gold-mining (ASGM)



Women miners in Amudat district. Photo by EEB.

In the context of the ACP-MEAs 3 programme of UNEP, EEB/ZMWG has been collaborating with two NGOs in Africa to reduce mercury in ASGM: the Uganda National Association of Community Occupational Health (UNACOH) and Women on Mining and Extractives (WoME), based in Sierra Leone. Both NGOs were selected through a call for proposal.

The ongoing work of UNACOH builds up on a project that ended in March 2022, funded by UNDP through the Small Grants Program (SGP)/GEF, and which aim was to strengthen the capacities of stakeholders in the ASGM sector to effectively reduce utilization of mercury in Amudat District and Uganda generally. Two demonstration facilities for mercury free technology were installed and several miners trained by a trainer from Tiira demonstration site, in Busia district. Under EEB/ZMWG's project in Uganda, more districts and sub county stakeholders have been reached and informed about the toxicity of mercury and trainers have been trained in those sites.

The EEB/ZMWG team visited the site in Uganda in September 2022, where they met with community leaders and mining associations and saw how these stakeholders are involved in the process of raising awareness and driving the change.

During the visit, EEB/ZMWG and international participants visited community leaders and mining associations, and participated in a training in Tiira's free mercury technology demonstration site, organized by the Danish NGO Dialogos in the margins of the Tiira summit.

Two miners from the Philippines came to train trainers and set up a group of specialized miners who could then teach other miners how to obtain good quality gold avoiding mercury and using small amount of borax, showing a good example of South-South Cooperation. Following the site visit, EEB/ZMWG team participated in the Mining Occupational Safety and Health (MinOSH) International conference, that was also held in September 2022 in Uganda.



Meeting with Miners' cooperatives. Photo by UNACOH.

In Sierra Leone, the NGO WoME operating in the districts of Bo, Kono and Tonkolili, reached and trained 81 women miners on occupational health hazards of mercury use in artisanal mining and corresponding environmental hazards. Since approximately 60% of the participants could not read or write (in English), the training session mainly utilized innovative environmental awareness raising activities using life-scene, area-specific artisanal mining and environmental degradation photos and videos to increase their knowledge and awareness about the impacts of mercury use during artisanal mining on humans and the environment.

The women miners trained by WoME demonstrated that they will be able to use the knowledge gained, together with the posters provided, to ensure that other female artisanal miners are informed, creating a multiplying effect. WoME also took the opportunity to interview the participants about their economic empowerment, their role in the communities, their rights and their access to social services collecting in this way valuable information to better target the future work. [Read more.](#)



MWomen training in Kono district. Photo by WoME.



MWomen training in Tonkolili district. Photo by WoME.



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