



Draft in Revision: Cape Town Manifesto

Background

The Cape Town Manifesto is a call to action from Africa to the rest of the world advocating for ambitious commitment and actions towards a Regenerative Blue Economy.

The IUCN and OceanHub Africa collaborated to draft a document stressing the need for a framework on nature positive blue economy, the need for science-informed innovation and the importance of IPLC recognition and participation in the Regenerative Blue Economy transition.

This draft was passed through a review committee for adjustments and pre-validation before being presented in February 2024 to the delegates of the fifth Ocean Innovation Africa Summit in Cape Town for approval by acclamation.

The Manifesto will be brought to high level ocean events as a unified voice for action in the run-up to the third United Nations Oceans Conference in June 2025 in France. In March 2024 it was presented at the Monaco Ocean Week and at the OECD plenary meeting in Paris on Guidance on Development Co-operation for a Sustainable Ocean Economy.

To submit your comments, suggestions, or queries about the manifesto please get in touch by email:

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Contents

Overview	Page 2
Developing a Regenerative Blue Economy Architecture	Page 2
African-led Transformation	Page 3
Rationale for Development of Regenerative Blue Economy Framework	Page 3
Annex 1	Page 5

DEVELOPING A REGENERATIVE BLUE ECONOMY ARCHITECTURE

Overview

The "Blue Economy" has been celebrated as the new frontier of Africa's renaissance, and rightly so. As a continent with over 30,000km of coastline, and significant marine resources, it has a tremendous role to play in advancing ocean-based climate solutions and its contribution to the 30x30 target can be a game-changer for the planet. Furthermore, the African continent is home to a significant demographic of ocean-dependent and coastal populations. In the Western Indian Ocean region, over 60 million people live within 100km of the coast while 51% of West Africa's urban population is coastal. Between 10 million people directly involved in fishing activities, to 200 million people benefiting from the seafood supply chain, the ocean is key to Africa's food security and livelihoods.

However:

- Less than 13% of oceans remain unimpacted by human activity (Jones et al, 2018), while the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) highlights that less than 3% of our oceans remain pristine.
- Under every emissions scenario, the African continent notes a projected decrease in the biomass of marine animal communities, a decline fisheries catch potential and a change in species composition, with concomitant decline in livelihoods, food security and income of marine dependent communities especially in the tropical regions (Sumaila et al, 2021)
- Furthermore, African blue economy development remains locked in "traditional" sectors such as fisheries, which have been found to be very inefficient. Compared with other regions, Africa receives significantly less investment in ocean related sectors, particularly regenerative sectors, which in turn hinders infrastructure development, technological advancements and overall development of a climate-resilient, nature-positive and people-oriented inclusive blue economy.

As such we need to recalibrate efforts towards unlocking a regenerative blue economy that prioritises restoration and protection of the natural resources and ecosystems through which the African continent and its people thrive, especially by leveraging ambition to create a knowledge and high-revenue, people-sensitive blue economy.

Regenerative Blue Economy Architecture

While the continent has made tremendous strides to adopt a blue economy, global indicators of biodiversity, planetary health, and community income/life quality continue to show a downward trend. There is therefore an urgent need to revise our approach to the blue economy and adopt nature-positive and people-driven priorities which not only favour sustainability and minimise harm, but incorporate elements of restoration, regeneration and nature-based solutions.

A regenerative blue economy architecture integrates three key pillars:

- Regenerative blue economy framework to guide policy and investment
- A science, research and innovation framework for the regenerative blue economy
- Integration and amplification of Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLCs)

African-led transformation

Why Africa? The world's second largest continent is home to unique marine biodiversity and diverse communities, with eight of the 36 global biodiversity spots, 439 marine key biodiversity areas, as well as 148 marine and coastal Ramsar sites including high levels of endemism. Africa is a net provider of critical ecosystem services and natural capital.

The continent triggered global attention on the blue economy through the seminal "Sustainable Blue Economy Conference" 2018 and has been a key actor in the development of international frameworks such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the UN Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Treaty).

Africa's island nations, such as the Seychelles as African Union Blue Economy champions, have been vocal in calling for renewed ocean attention. The Union of Comoros, assuming the presidency of the African Union in a historical first for SIDS, placed climate change and oceans at the heart of its mandate and convened Africa's island and Western Indian Ocean countries, hosting the Moroni Conference on Blue Economy and Climate Action resulting in the Moroni Declaration and establishment of an African High Level Panel on Regenerative Blue Economy.

The Great Blue Wall has also emanated as a uniquely African-born collaborative initiative between countries of the Western Indian Ocean, connecting nature-and-people positive seascapes through a living belt of critical ecosystems whilst leveraging financial and political momentum for ocean action at tremendous speed and scale.

Furthermore, Africa lies at the nexus of a broader South-South and Indo/Afro-Pacific cooperation which can drive sharing of experiences, consolidation of blue justice principles and accelerated ocean stewardship by the ocean-dependent demographics which make up this geography. This "ocean neighbourhood" agenda is based on a shared quest for prosperity through effective ocean stewardship.

Rationale for Development of Regenerative Blue Economy Framework

A comprehensive regenerative blue economy framework would be aimed at guiding investment and policy decisions within the broader blue economy to ensure environmental sustainability, social inclusivity, and economic transformation towards a regenerative blue economy. It equally takes into consideration the urgency of stimulating private sector activity and incentivising regenerative sectors of the blue economy to drive a nature-positive, climate positive, and African-owned ocean agenda.

As such, the Framework would be critical to emphasise the importance of protecting marine ecosystems, compliance with legal frameworks, risk-awareness, systemic impact assessment, inclusivity, cooperation among financial institutions, transparency, purposeful alignment with sustainable development goals, impactful contributions, the precautionary principle, diversification of investments, solution-driven approaches, partnering across sectors, and science-led decision-making.

This framework must be designed to de-risk investments in the blue economy by promoting practices that conserve and sustainably use ocean resources. They advocate for investments that not only avoid harm but also provide tangible social, environmental, and economic benefits including fostering innovation, thereby contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14 among others, with a specific focus on the Great Blue Wall which is being piloted in the African context to provide a regional approach to seascape-driven ocean innovation, regeneration and impact.

Rationale for Development of Regenerative Blue Economy Framework (cont.)

This framework is voluntary and serves as a complementary addition to existing sustainable financing principles and corporate responsibilities, with the signatories retaining sole responsibility for their investment decisions.

Given the focus on sustainability, inclusivity, and environmental protection, the underlying principles are geared towards incentivising and driving investment and decision-making for a regenerative blue economy in the African context, where there is a critical need for sustainable development that balances economic growth with environmental conservation and social equity within the African context which adds a special focus on regeneration, innovation-driven transformation, and social equity .

Building upon the foundation laid by the Sustainable Ocean Principles identified by OECD, the UN Global Compact, and the UNEP-FI for sustainability, this exercise recognises that the specific focus on regenerative practices within the blue economy—such as active restoration of marine ecosystems, enhancement of biodiversity, and carbon sequestration—might require further elaboration or dedicated principles. This is particularly relevant for addressing the unique challenges and leveraging the opportunities within the African context, where the balance between economic development and environmental sustainability is crucial and inordinately skewed.

It also recognises the urgency of fostering competitiveness in economies, which can be achieved through targeted investment mechanisms that favour nature-positive baselines. Thus the development of additional, more focused guidelines anchored upon **regeneration** are geared towards enhancing investment and decision-making processes for regenerative blue economy initiatives in Africa.

The **Cape Town Manifesto** will launch the process for designing and domesticating this framework for a truly transformative regenerative blue economy.

ANNEX 1

Cape Town Manifesto on Accelerating the Development of a Regenerative Blue Economy

We, the drivers of innovation and transformation in Africa's Ocean Space, recognising the critical importance of the oceans and seas to our planet's health and human well-being, and acknowledging the urgent need to actively regenerate coastal and marine resources, hereby commit to accelerating the development of a regenerative blue economy. This economy will not only sustain but enhance the ocean's health, biodiversity, and productivity for current and future generations, embodying a significant paradigm shift towards restoration, resilience, and net positive impact.

We recognise that Africa lies at the heart of many nature-based solutions and ecosystem services, and that a regenerative blue economy would allow Africa to meaningfully transform and lead the way on ocean action for its people and globally, particularly as a shared "ocean neighbourhood" agenda.

To transform Africa's blue economy into a global model of sustainability, innovation, and prosperity, where marine and coastal resources are managed transparently, responsibly, and inclusively, facilitating economic development while preserving the marine ecosystem's integrity.

The Cape Town manifesto calls for action and guiding principles to:

Ambitious Commitment: To champion the regeneration of marine and coastal ecosystems, aiming for a restoration-driven approach within the blue economy, significantly beyond traditional conservation efforts.

Bold vision: to radically embrace, support and amplify blue economy activities at all levels which promote restoration of ecosystems and knowledge-driven transformation of the continent. =

Paradigm Shift: To emphasise the urgency of unlocking the regenerative potential of the blue economy, transforming it into a driving force for positive outcomes for nature, climate, and humanity.

African Leadership: To highlight and support the pioneering role of African leaders in promoting a regenerative blue economy, particularly through the Great Blue Wall initiative. We express our support for the Heads of State across the continent who have taken the lead in announcing the establishment of a High-Level Panel on the Development of a Regenerative Blue Economy. This initiative serves as a beacon of visionary leadership, demonstrating Africa's commitment to sustainable and inclusive growth.

Enhanced Collaboration: To foster multi-sectoral partnerships that embrace this new paradigm, facilitating the sharing of knowledge, resources, and innovative solutions for the regeneration of ocean health.

Inclusive Development: To ensure that the benefits of a regenerative blue economy extend to all, particularly empowering coastal communities, youth, and marginalised groups, through inclusive policies and practices.

Integrated Ocean Management: Adopt a holistic approach to managing marine resources and spaces. This involves coordinating policies, plans, and practices across sectors and scales, from local to global, to ensure that the cumulative impacts on the ocean are addressed.

ANNEX 1

Cape Town Manifesto on Accelerating the Development of a Regenerative Blue Economy (Cont.)

The Cape Town manifesto calls for action and guiding principles to:

Innovation and Entrepreneurship: To support and scale innovative approaches and technologies that contribute to the ecological enhancement of marine environments, fostering blue growth that is truly regenerative.

Cultural and Heritage Preservation: To recognise and protect the cultural values and maritime heritage of coastal communities. This includes respecting traditional knowledge and practices that contribute to the sustainable management of marine resources.

Transparency and Accountability: To ensure that activities within the blue economy are conducted transparently, with clear reporting and monitoring mechanisms. Stakeholders should be held accountable for their environmental and social impacts.

Finance and Investment: To catalyse and redirect financial flows towards projects and initiatives that have demonstrable positive impacts on marine and coastal ecosystems, promoting a shift towards impact-driven investments in the blue economy.

Strengthen STI Capacities: To enhance Africa's science, technology, and innovation capacities is crucial. This principle serves as the backbone for virtually all other efforts in promoting sustainable and regenerative blue economy initiatives. By investing in research and development, fostering regional collaboration, and facilitating knowledge exchange among various stakeholders, Africa can build a solid foundation for addressing its unique challenges. This approach not only supports technological advancements and innovation but also strengthens the capacity for evidence-based policy-making, sustainable management of marine resources, and the development of solutions to pressing problems such as climate change, food security, and economic development.

Promote Africa-led Science and Inclusive Governance: To ensure inclusive governance of marine resources, recognizing the rights and roles of local communities, indigenous peoples, and women in stewardship and decision-making processes, whilst enhancing regional and international partnerships and supporting, encouraging and de-risking disruptive technologies.

This Consensus marks our collective dedication to a future where the regenerative blue economy serves as a cornerstone of ecological restoration, climate resilience, and sustainable development. Together, we pledge to take decisive, transformative action, recognizing the blue economy's pivotal role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 and addressing the global challenges of biodiversity loss, climate change, and environmental degradation through a regenerative lens. We call on the rest of the world to embrace this visionary leadership, including through joint advocacy and action oriented efforts in view in particular of the next UN Ocean Conference, CBD COPs, UNFCCC COPs, and the World Conservation Congress, joining us in our commitment to a regenerative future for our oceans and our planet.