

16th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans Athens, Greece 29th September – 1st October 2014

Thank you chair for

Dear Colleagues

On behalf of the Minister of state – environment, Vice presidents office of Tanzania. Who is the chair of both the Africa Ministerial conference on Environment (AMCEN) and the Nairobi Convention. Let me start with - Thanking UNEP for inviting me to this important meeting. And for the government of Greece for excellent facilities and hosting.

1) The first Governing Council of UNEP of June 1973, **while discussing oceans, “agreed to develop a program for the monitoring of marine pollution and its effects on marine ecosystems, paying particular attention to the special problems of specific bodies of water including semi-enclosed seas.**

We should note, and draw strength from this decision. It is a fact that OCEANs were high on the Agenda of UNEP from the inception of UNEP.

2) The most important decision for this meeting was taken by the Governing Council - in March 1974. The Governing Council agreed that “ in view of the numerous other agencies in the field of Oceans, UNEP should concentrate on; a) the co-ordination of activities and on the protection of the marine environment; b) to prioritize on regional activities with the possibility of establishment of programme activity centres in the **Mediterranean** including regional activities in the **Caribbean, the Baltic Sea, the Persian Gulf**, and parts of the Atlantic and the Pacific; c) Encourage and support the preparation of **regional agreements or conventions** on the protection of specific bodies of water from pollution, particularly from land-based sources.

This is the Regional Seas mandate, given on 22 March **1974**.

The **Mediterranean Action Plan** was the first Regional Seas Program (RSP). And that is why we are here in Athens 40 years later.

We are on the right spot, at the headquarters of the **Mediterranean Action Plan**, to take stock of how much we have collectively accomplished in the last 4 decades.

The Nairobi Convention for Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region was adopted in a meeting hosted by UNEP in June 1985. 11 years after the Regional Seas Program was created.

Tanzania was the sixth country to ratify the Nairobi Convention in 1996, and the Nairobi Convention came into force in 1997. 22 years after the Mediterranean Action Plan had come into effect.

The Nairobi Convention, Action Plan and the related Protocols, mirror those of the Barcelona Convention and the other Regional Seas Programs; I will therefore be general, hoping that our experience in the Nairobi Convention, including our expectations and challenges are in line with all other regional seas conventions and programs.

First, Ocean issues have support from the highest level of Governance in Africa. The AU in its 24 session in January 2014 adopted 2063 development agenda. The AU notes that, Africa's inland waters, oceans and seas are under serious threat arising from: dumping of toxic waste; illegal trafficking; oil spill; degradation of the marine environment; loss of biodiversity; illegal, unreported, unregulated and indiscriminate fishing; aggravated effects of climate change. And to tackle these problems, the AU Commission has developed the 2050 Maritime Strategy that is aimed at fostering more wealth creation from Africa's oceans, seas and inland water ways.

In the 2050 AIM Strategy, recognizes that coastal and marine areas are ever increasing in value to the welfare of countries, communities and regions. Marine and coastal areas provide natural, social and economic functions that contribute to increased quality of life. Further oceans are instrumental in determining climate that beneficially affects all life on Earth. Other natural functions include habitat for endangered species, species breeding and resting areas, water treatment, groundwater recharge, and flood attenuation. Other social and economic functions include tourism, commercial and recreational fishing, oil and gas development, and construction of ports, harbours and industries.

We are also aware that coastal and marine environments are also very susceptible to the negative effects of factors ranging from climate, to human activities in coastal areas or in marine areas. It is almost impossible to control climate, and very difficult to avoid human impact on coastal and marine environments as these environments play such an integral role in the quality of human life.

However, the current pattern of the use of coastal and marine spaces is not sustainable and there is an urgent need to make sustainability a fundamental norm in the use of these areas.

The main issue that should preoccupy our minds in this meeting, is whether our 40 year old institutional set-up, primarily developed for **programs for monitoring of marine pollution and its effects on marine ecosystems**, is capable of responding to all human impacts on coastal and marine environments including issues related to the impacts of climate change at the strategic regional governance level.

Governance

In my mind, the regional seas should progressively evolve to a "marine governance system" for the sustainable use of the oceans and coastal environments. Governance is about decision-making using complete and useful information regarding; a) resources, b) the state of the

environment, as well as; c) coastal communities relationships to those resources.

The need for information must have been part of the consideration when contracting parties asked for periodic assessment of the state of the environment in the convention areas (Nairobi convention article 17).

We should therefore ask ourselves whether the Regional Seas Programs in their current form, are effective in supporting governance processes at the, regional or global levels? More importantly, how effective are we in providing **credible, complete and useful information** regarding the resources, or the state of the environment, as well as the socio-economic data that is required for effective governance of oceans and coasts.

Fisheries

Western Indian Ocean, the ‘fishing industry’ provides protein, income, employment and security, creating a vast and complex human infrastructure. However, many countries in WIO are struggling to sustainably manage fish stocks and protect marine biological diversity. There is also a debate about the role of ecosystem-based management (EBM) and the tools available to implement EBM. At the same time, there is concern over some of the tools e.g. MPAs. Some of the MPAs are “theoretical or paper parks” which lack scientific basis, legal, administrative or enforcement processes to ensure that MPAs meet their objectives. The Aichi Target 6 for effective ecosystem-based fisheries management is a clear indication that a lot more still needs to be done.

The third question is: What is the contribution of the Regionals Seas Programme in supporting parties in the attainment of Aichi Targets? What is our relationship with the CBD and we can further ask, - what is the relationship between Regional Seas Programs with the other MEAs that our countries have ratified or signed? The point is – shouldn’t Regional Seas Programmes be the de-facto platforms for implementing the relevant global MEAs at large (CBD, CMS, CITES, POPS etc.?)

Regional Seas Programmes Evolution

The traditional approach to RSPs has been a one-way flow on the prevention of pollution, and creation of protected areas. However, there are new challenges that require the development of technologies that will transform our economies in Africa and how we deal with new opportunities and challenges, such as **offshore oil and gas**. **Oil and gas** is a large-scale activity where multinational players possess global reach beyond the capacity of some of the WIO governments. The challenge facing our countries on offshore oil and gas industry includes, ensuring sustainable practices, equity and ensuring public acceptance for offshore oil & gas exploration methods in WIO. .

In conclusion may urge the Regional Seas Programs to move into the future. To move from

concepts designed to handle pollution uncertainties, to the implementation of governance systems; to an adaptive approach to the management of oceans as a continuum and at multiple scales i.e. within territorial waters, the EEZ, and at the ecosystems level which may be across jurisdictions including open oceans.

RSPs comes with a mandate for coordination across several scales of governance. RSPs can therefore provide legitimacy through various scales of decision making. Regional seas can apply the EBM concepts where ecosystem boundaries for historic, cultural, or other reasons unrelated to the needs of ecosystem management are not aligned to jurisdictional boundaries.

Within the Nairobi Convention we have joined hands with FAO through UNEP, for pilot activities under the FAO lead project on Areas beyond National jurisdictions (ABNJ project). We have adopted a protocol on the Protocol for the Protection of Coastal and Marine Environment from Land-based Sources and Activities in Eastern and Southern Africa (LBSA Protocol) and we are developing a protocol on ICZM.

The idea is to make the Nairobi Convention as futuristic, and relevant to the needs of the contracting parties within the rapidly changing circumstances and demands.

It is our hope that UNEP will provide the intellectual leadership required to transform the Regional Seas Program from a successful 1980s model, to a global leader on oceans governance and sustainable use of the blue natural capital .

My final question would be: are we ready as regional seas programs at 40 to respond to these new challenges? Equally, is UNEP structured in way that can guide the RSPs program to meet the challenges of the 21 century? e.g ; carbon storage ; marine mineral extraction in oceans; on and offshore oil and gas; blue economy, and new forms of ocean based renewable energy generation ?.

On our part as Parties, we are ready to support the Regional Seas program into the next decade and to the future.