



# **SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY CONFERENCE**

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## **BUSINESS AND PRIVATE SECTOR FORUM**

SESSION ON  
ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY

Opening Remarks

by

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Excellences,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me at the outset to express our pleasure to participate in this session and to thank the organisers for associating the ACP Group to this first International Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy. We are particularly grateful to the Government of Kenya and Cabinet Secretary Monica Juma for the invitation addressed to the ACP Secretariat.

The reason we have gathered here is because we have clear recognition that the blue economy will play a critical role in addressing many of the global challenges facing our planet in the decades to come, from food and nutritional security and climate change to the provision of energy, trade and natural resources.

I recall a recent forecast study by OECD which projected the potential growth of the blue economy to outpace the growth of the global economy as a whole, both in terms of value addition and employment by 2030. Sectors expected to witness robust growth powered mainly by advances in technology include fish processing, aquaculture and offshore wind energy.

It is fully understandable that the Blue economy represents a relatively new frontier for many countries. In the ACP Group, we are privileged to have countries for which what is presented here is, beyond an economic standard, a way of living. A Country like Kiribati in the Pacific region, with a total land area of about 800 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of approximately 110 000, has an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 3.44 million km<sup>2</sup>, almost equivalent to the first 3 largest EEZs in Africa (South Africa: 1.53; Seychelles: 1.33 and Mauritius: 1.28). Being a Group comprising countries with such different realities places the ACP in a unique position to serve as platform for knowledge management and experience sharing. And we are prepared and happy to continue doing so.

For the ACP Group, special focus is allocated to the sustainable development of the fisheries and aquaculture sector as an area where the Member States have a relative comparative advantage. It is also a crucial sector that underpins the food and nutritional security, employment, exports trade and livelihoods of many ACP countries.

We are encouraged that globally, fishery products are the most traded food commodities with about 38% of the world production enters international markets valued at US\$ 152 billion in 2017. In fact, exports of fish and fish products are essential to the economies of ACP Small Island Developing States (SIDS) exceeding 40% of the total value of merchandise trade in Cabo Verde, Seychelles and Vanuatu.

Therefore, leveraging on the growing export trade opportunities, we can substantially enhance the contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to our economies, expand value adding activities, formal employment opportunities and substantially have a positive impact on the poverty reduction efforts.

To bolster the blue economy, ACP fisheries and aquaculture ministers in September 2017 launched the ACP Blue Growth Initiative which seeks to leverage resources for the sustainable development of member states blue economies with a main focus on fisheries and aquaculture sector.

To implement this commitment, an initial EUR 40 million program has been approved to be funded from the 11<sup>th</sup> EDF intra-ACP resources. The program aims to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of ACP fisheries and aquaculture value chains. It will contribute significantly to poverty reduction, food and nutrition security and inclusive economic growth. This program will address the critical issues affecting the productivity and competitiveness of ACP fisheries and aquaculture value chains which include production constraints, compliance to stringent quality norms of export markets, value addition and to improve the quality of the regulatory environment.

We also understood that we can harness the potential of the Blue economy through conservation of the marine resources.

Indeed, in the Caribbean country of Belize, coral reef- and mangrove-associated tourism contributes an estimated US\$ 200 million to the national economy (12 to 15 percent of GDP). While fishing is an important cultural tradition, as well as a safety net and livelihood for many coastal Belizeans, reefs and mangroves also protect coastal properties from erosion and wave-induced damage, providing an estimated USD 350 million in avoided damages per year. These estimates capture only part of the many services provided by coral reefs and mangroves, and should not be considered the “total” value of these resources. These numbers should be regarded as a lower bound estimate.

Despite their importance, these benefits are frequently overlooked or underappreciated in coastal investment and policy decisions. Unchecked coastal development, overfishing, and pressures from tourism threaten the country’s reefs, with the additional threats of warming seas, fiercer storms, and other climate-related changes looming on the horizon. Fish populations, including commercially valuable sport-fishing species and colorful reef fish, will diminish if they lose the mangrove forests they rely upon as critical nursery habitats. Coastal properties will become increasingly vulnerable to storms and erosion, and reef-related tourism will suffer as reefs and mangroves decline.

It appears therefore clearly that the considerable economic potential offered by the Blue economy can also be harnessed through minimal investment in the marine resources conservation. The ACP Group has decided to accompany its Members States in this perspectives with two specific programme :

- An EUR 35 million programme to support ACP SIDS and Coastal countries to develop and strengthen capacities to effectively manage coastal and marine biodiversity and enhance resilience to climate change; assess, conserve, protect, manage and sustainably use marine and terrestrial biodiversity; and develop partnership and set up framework to optimise economic return from the protection of the resources;
- An EUR 60 million programme, BIOPAMA II, with the aim to reinforce the management and governance of protected and conservation areas, both terrestrial and marine, in ACP regions and countries, through better use and monitoring of information and capacity building of ACP institutions.

These are some of the areas of focus for the ACP, and we are delighted to be working with all participants, especially the private sector, towards strengthening the position of our members so that the Governments and public agencies are able to provide appropriate framework and design policies to enable the private sector to add value, diversify and seize trade opportunities while also improving environmental and social sustainability within the seafood value chain and other marine resources related services.

As we look forward to the policy recommendations of this session, I want to thank you for your attention.

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