**Western Indian Ocean (WIO) Region Actions for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030)**

On 5 December 2017, the United Nations (UN) declared that a Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (‘Ocean Decade’) would be held from 2021 to 2030.

The Ocean Decade offers the ocean community a once in a lifetime opportunity to join efforts, mobilize resources, create innovative partnerships, and engage governments in moving towards the *Ocean We Need for the Future We Want*. Building on the several decades of international cooperation in ocean research and observations, as well as the policy-relevant goals defined by the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/2030-agenda/) and other ocean frameworks, the Decade aims to catalyse action to achieve high level scientific and technological breakthroughs.

The [Ocean Decade Implementation Plan](https://oceandecade.org/) outlines ten Decade Challenges, representing the most immediate and pressing needs of the Decade, which continue to guide stakeholders as they come together to co-design and co-deliver a wide range of Decade Actions.

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO) has been mandated to coordinate implementation of the Ocean Decade. The Ocean Decade will provide the data, knowledge and capacity to address science and knowledge gaps needed to make informed policy decisions.

In 2021, IOCAFRICA in partnership with WIOMSA conducted a regional gap analysis with an objective of developing a participatory, succinct statement of the priority needs for Africa under the Ocean Decade and identifying the key barriers, opportunities and actions to meet the needs. Some of the priorities and needs identified for the WIO sub region include but are not limited to marine litter; marine spatial planning; seabed mapping; the lack of a comprehensive open science programme within the region that is developed and implemented through national agencies/partners, capacity building i.e. research infrastructure and capacity and the linkages between fisheries management and applied research is currently inadequate; lack of infrastructure for deep-sea exploration; inability to enforce national and international laws; illegal unreported, unregulated fishing (IUU); lack of knowledge about the deep-sea fisheries; lack of hard information on the importance of capture fisheries and mariculture to the food security and local economies of households near the coast; lack of infrastructure for deep-sea exploration, lack of technological development in terms of forecasting and predictive models, sparse observational data closer to the coasts, continental shelves and bottom ocean; minimal peer reviewed scientific publications; protection and management of cultural heritage is lacking; and among others. The regional gap analysis led to the launch of the [Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap](https://oceandecade.org/africa) during the “African Conference on Priority Setting and Partnership Development for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development” held from 10-12 May 2022 in Cairo, Egypt in a hybrid format. The roadmap provides both an aspirational vision and a solid plan for diverse stakeholders to convene around a common set of nine priorities for the implementation of the Decade at the African continental level and in adjacent island states.

**Session Objectives**

1. Present the Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap
2. Present and announce the African Regional Taskforce for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development
3. Identify and propose key programmes to be developed within WIO based on the nine priority actions outlined the Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap
4. Catalyzing partnerships and enhancing collaborations for the implementation of the Ocean Decade in the WIO region
v. Launch and disseminate the Ocean Decade Challenge booklet
vi. Engaging Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) in the WIO region for their involvement to achieve Ocean Decade objectives

Session Outputs

i. Present the Africa roadmap
ii. Launching of the ODC booklet
iii. Proposed programmes for the ocean decade in WIO
iv. Enhanced partnership and collaborations on the Ocean Decade for the WIO region
v. Enhanced participation and involvement of ECOPs in the region’s Ocean Decade activities

Target Audience

The target audience for the session is ocean stakeholders within the WIO region and beyond including but not limited to government agencies, Intergovernmental organizations, Multilateral and bilateral organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Academic institutions, Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs).

Tentative Session Programme

To be developed

Organizers

The Organizers for this session are Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO through its Sub commission for Africa and Adjacent Island States and the Decade Coordination Unit (DCU) and the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association.