ABSTRACT - Draft

In the last decade human ocean use has changed, putting additional pressure on many areas of the ocean-based resources posing significant threat to social economic benefits. Traditional uses, such as marine transportation, sand and gravel mining, and marine recreation have continued to grow in importance and scale. Fisheries, while an important economic and food security commodity, continues to decline, due to overexploitation and IUU fishing. New opportunities hitherto unexploited e.g. oil and gas, mining including increasing maritime trade fueled by enhanced production and consumption will pose more pressure on coastal and marine resources in the region. To boost maritime trade, there is currently increased pace and scope of port expansion further threatening coastal resources depended on by coastal communities. Climate changes continue to modify species distributions and habitats, increasing ocean acidification, raising new levels of concerns about the survival of many species. In many areas, conflicts among human activities have increase in many sectors such as transportation, conservation, fisheries, and ports development.

For most coastal countries and small Island countries - blue economy has emerged central to their economic development as an a means of engendering sustainability and address the multiplicity of threats discussed above. The blue economy concept provides us with an opportunity to break through the management silos, through which we are used to working. We need to develop the mechanisms and supporting tools to make decisions that affect a range of sectors, and that integrate information and stakeholder interests that have historically been excluded.
Several countries have tried to do ocean planning, efforts have been made in the areas of Integrated Coastal zone management. Planning the maritime territory was traditionally done through sectoral policies that often did not consider the presence and impact of other sectors. Sectoral policies do not always consider spatial aspects, which can lead to conflicts over the use of the sea space.

There is paradigm shift in recent years to use marine spatial planning program to manage our oceans. MSP has emerged as a multisectoral approach with an explicit spatial perspective, aiming to coordinate and facilitate negotiation among sectors and societal actors to solve current conflicts, as well as avoiding potential future ones. MSP provides a vehicle for addressing risks to biodiversity while balancing needs and activities from multiple economically important sectors, including fishing, shipping, tourism and marine protection.

The participatory MSP processes that involve multiple stakeholder groups set the basis for an improved regulatory framework allowing integration of protection with fisheries management reforms to drive biodiversity conservation and support ecosystem resilience. MSP is therefore a comprehensive and strategic process to analyses and allocate the use of the sea areas to minimize conflicts between human activities and maximize benefits, while at the same time ensuring the resilience of marine ecosystems.

The application of MSP and the improvement of fisheries management will have an impact in keeping healthier ecosystems, which in turn will provide services that increase the adaptive capacity and resilience to climate variability and change. The impacts will come first and foremost through the MSP engagement process that foster understanding of issues and jointly plan for solutions. Secondly, MSP programs when implemented it will provide sustainable ocean resources management encompassing sectors such as fisheries, tourism, Marine protected areas MPA, transport, LMMAs and maritime security. A regional MSP Framework has been developed and is poised to spur national level actions.

The social-economic and ecological dimensions interphases through peoples’ multiple dependencies on ocean resources and space for their food and livelihoods. One of the guiding principles for MSP is the participatory approach. An inclusive participatory approach means the active engagement of stakeholders in the process of developing and implementing a public policy addressing societal needs. MSP in a nutshell will help us achieve sustainability, equity and more inclusive management of our natural resources.

In the WIO region the marine and coastal ecosystems are rich and diverse, supporting globally unparalleled marine biodiversity and economically important activities, from tourism to fishing. In direct alignment with existing international agreements, a number of the countries in this region have embraced the Blue Economy concept as a mechanism to realize sustainable development goals and biodiversity conservation of coastal and marine resources, key priorities include development of sustainable, climate-smart coastal and offshore fisheries, marine spatial planning and sustainable financing mechanism for marine conservation, and coastal resilience.

The nature conservancy (TNC) has been working with various countries and other partners in WIO on strengthening the blue economy of these countries through marine spatial planning and integration of ecosystem services and effective biodiversity conservation. Other partners, Nairobi convention, is developing an MSP strategy for the WIO while WWF has developed spatial plans for county governments for Kenya. At national level, MSP development processes are ongoing supported by different partners
e.g. the TNC have supported MSP processes in countries like Seychelles. Development of MSP requires both financial resources investment and long-term commitment from government and stakeholders.

During the special session at the 12th WIOMSA symposium, a special session will be convened by partners (TNC, Nairobi convention, WIOMSA and WWF ) and governments to share experiences from different context on the ongoing processes with MSP and also how the WIO MSP strategy aims to support the different country MSP processes.

The session provides need for partner to work together to advance ocean protection and enhancement of ocean assets central to their blue economies. Through MSP and improved fisheries management, coastal and offshore fisheries will be sustainable and critical ecosystems, such as coral reefs, mangroves and sea mounts, will be better protected, and the rate of degradation of these habitats and resources will be reduced, mitigating climate change, enhancing local food security and sequestering carbon. In addition, how all these activities contribute to full implementation of SDG 14, CBD commitments, country-level NDCs, ensuring sustainable management, utilization, and conservation of marine resources.

Finally, Sustainable Ocean economy emerges when economic activity is in balance with the long-term capacity of ocean ecosystems to support this activity and remain resilient and healthy. Sustainable fisheries management is underpinned by harvest strategies that specify a predefined relationship among data collection programs, assessment methods, and management measures. This special session will demonstrate how MSP plays central role to the blue economy development and how marine natural capital valuation integrates with MSP in the WIO region.

Session objectives

- Understand ongoing MSP works in the region
- Understand country needs and support required
- Fast track regional MSP strategy process and its implementation

1. Proposed session presentations: presentations Where we are in the region
2. Regional MSP Framework
3. Transboundary conservation planning
4. Seychelles MSP process
5. South Africa Operation Phakisa
6. Sub-national planning