

SS005-Building a regional seagrass strategy and bridging science-policy

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Seagrass meadows are vital coastal ecosystems that provide numerous ecosystem services including fisheries, coastal protection, carbon sequestration, and other climate adaptation benefits. Despite their importance, conservation and restoration efforts have lagged due to limited data, weak policy coordination, and low awareness. In the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region, scientific efforts have improved understanding, restoration and are advancing field-verified maps and carbon assessments to support better management. Raising awareness among policymakers and the public is key to integrating seagrass into climate goals and national climate policies such as nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and marine spatial planning (MSP). Several WIO countries are emerging as global leaders in this area. These efforts align with the Nairobi Convention's COP Decision 11, which calls for a regional seagrass strategy and action plan. This session brings together researchers, policymakers, and communities to discuss the role of seagrass in enhancing coastal resilience, fisheries, and the blue economy. It aims to foster collaboration and support a regional strategy to unlock the full potential of seagrass for conservation, climate, and societal benefits.