

Abstract by Director Ecosystems Division UN Environment Programme during the 13th WIOMSA Symposium

The 13th WIOMSA Scientific Symposium provides an unparalleled platform for scientists, practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders to exchange knowledge and showcase advances in marine and coastal science. This year's symposium themed *One Ocean, One Future: Connecting People, Policy, and Science for a Thriving Western Indian Ocean*, carries strategic importance as outcomes from the discussions are significant not just for our region, but for the global commitments and agreements aimed at addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.

As we reflect on the numerous global processes currently shaping our environmental landscape – from the Decade of Ocean Science and Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, to the BBNJ Agreement and the ongoing negotiations for a binding treaty on plastic pollution – it is clear that the Nairobi Convention plays a pivotal role in promoting regional cooperation. Regional adoption and domestication of these global agreements require scientists, policy makers and other relevant actors to cooperate in the co-creation of actionable knowledge needed to design and implement these policies which is the core business of the week.

WIOMSA is the leading science partner to the Nairobi Convention, ensuring that science is used in delivering global policy commitments relevant to the region such as SDGs in particular 14, Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the UNFCCC and implementation of the BBNJ Agreement among others.

The Regional Ocean Governance Strategy, which was adopted during the 11th Nairobi Convention Conference of Parties provides up-to-date guidance for our region and facilitates effective collaboration with our partners in the journey toward a sustainable Western Indian Ocean. The regular convening of the scientific dialogues is a testament to our shared belief in evidence-based decision-making. The outcomes of this Symposium will be instrumental in shaping the draft Decisions for Nairobi Convention COP12.