

## **ECA CONTRIBUTION TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL REPORT**

### **ON OCEANS AND LAW OF THE SEAS:**

#### **Oceans and sustainable development – *integration of economic, environmental and social.***

##### **1. Context:**

African Small Island Developing States (Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea Bissau, Mauritius, Sao Tome & Principe and Seychelles) are made of small land masses but large ocean space. The Seychelles for example, has only 454km<sup>2</sup> of land but 1.4 million square kilometers ocean whose potentials are yet to be fully exploited for development. The large Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of these countries provide global trade routes and fishing space which are exploited illegally by other nations, as the capacity of African SIDS to harness their ocean resources is highly limited by the absence of appropriate technology.

The sparse geographical distribution of African islands seriously hampers the economic prosperity of these countries, especially as these physical features exert high transport and transaction costs on goods for international markets. Their dependency on imported fossil fuels exposes them to interminable fluctuations in oil prices. Furthermore, their small markets and low purchasing power make SIDS unattractive for foreign investors which in turn decreases foreign direct investments; thus, impeding growth and economic development.

Added to these economic challenges are the impacts of climate change on these islands whose human resource capacity to respond to such challenges is very limited. In spite of these location challenges, the large EEZ of SIDS have huge resource potential that could be harnessed in a sustainable manner for transforming the economies of island states and addressing the impacts that climate change has on their overall development. This would boost the capacity of the countries to build resilience, while keeping climate change impacts at bay.

Hence, harnessing ocean resources and marine services is critical for the sustained growth of African SIDS as well as for enabling a smooth transition from economic growth that is dependent on costly fossil fuel, to one of low carbon economies and resilient development.

In recognition of the continent's enormous oceans potential which remains largely, African Heads of State and Government decided to embrace the green economic development pathway

that includes blue economy. Consequently, the *Africa Agenda 2063* will include a chapter to guide the continent's pursuit of a Blue Economy development model for African SIDS.

Guided by the decision of the African leaders on SIDS development and by ECA's regional mandate of supporting the continent in meeting its economic aspirations, ECA is supporting Africa's Small Island Developing States to implement the decision of the African Heads of State and Government as highlighted in the *Malabo Declaration*, as well as in the *Samoa Pathway to sustainable development* in the following way:

### 1. ECA intervention in African SIDS.

- **Fostering Intra – island partnerships** as well as coastal states to enhance the sharing of experiences, know-how and best practices between countries; improve conservation of marine resources in addition to mutual support in responding to extreme events as a result of climate change which countries find difficult to address them single-handedly.
  - In this regard, ECA is supporting the strengthening of Mauritius climate centre to serve the entire West Indian Ocean including, Seychelles, the Comoros, Madagascar as well as coastal countries of mainland Africa.
  - Similarly, ECA is working with the government of Cabo Verde, to design a similar intra-island climate change information platform to service other lusophone island countries of Guinea Bissau and Sao Tome and Principe.
- **Generation of climate and development-related knowledge products:** In recognition of limited study and knowledge support to African SIDS as opposed to the Caribbean and Pacific SIDS, ECA is supporting the adaptation work in African SIDS through a blend of knowledge products linked to climate change impacts and opportunities for blue economy and climate resilient development.
- **Implementation of Samoa Pathway:** In addition, ECA is collaborating with other UN agencies in implementing previous UN General Assembly decisions such as the Barbados Programme of Action, the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation and the Samoa Pathway. In this regard, ECA organized a side event and sponsored participants from African Island states at the International conference on SIDS in September 2014 to provide a space for dialogue and a platform to articulate important concerns specific to African SIDS as well as raise their profile in a global arena.
- **Enhancing capacity to address impacts of climate change:** ECA is also working with individual SIDS to map out areas of support that will enhance their capacity to address climate change impacts and respond to extreme events through strengthening capacity in climate data and information services to help in early warning and disaster risk reduction, resilience of vulnerable local communities to extreme weather events. In Sao Tome & Principe the support will be in developing policy and strategy related to climate change; while in Guinea Bissau the support will be in strengthening climate change information

services as well as in the harnessing of the rich biodiversity resources including fish and oysters.

- **Development of Blue Economy Model:** In line with the decision of the African Heads of State and Government to embrace the development of Blue Economy and include it in the Africa Agenda 2063, ECA is working in direct partnership with African SIDS to further develop the concept of *Blue Economy* as an economic model that will ensure sustainable development in the Africa.
- **Options for development of renewable energy:** Equally concerned with the challenge of high cost of importation of fossil fuels for islands' economies and the need to transit to renewable sources of energy, ECA is working with African SIDS to look into options to enhance their capacity to adopt renewable energies that can insulate them against negative impacts of fluxes in the global economy, and to mitigate climate change and ensure sustainable development of these island economies.