

Consortium for the Conservation of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems in the Western Indian Ocean (“WIO-C”)

CHARTER

VISION

Our vision is of healthy coastal and marine environments that support and sustain the livelihoods and prosperity of the people of the Western Indian Ocean.

Our mission is to advance efforts to protect, conserve, and manage the coastal and marine environment of the Western Indian Ocean region while working to alleviate poverty and attain sustainable livelihoods for the most vulnerable segments of its population.

OUR REGION

The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region¹ is the home of some 178 million people², many of whom depend on it for their livelihoods, and it includes some of the world’s most valuable coastal and marine ecosystems. Productive and diverse habitats such as mangroves, mudflats, sea-grass meadows and coral reefs provide coastal protection, food, shelter and safety for a great variety of organisms, including the fishes, crustaceans and mollusks which are of great ecological and commercial value. Unfortunately, these ecosystems are also extremely vulnerable to the impact of human activities.

We will work to:

- *Develop a common vision and strategic priorities for marine conservation among regional institutions*
- *Capitalize on synergies among existing programmes of work on marine and ecosystem management*
- *Support the efforts of local organizations and create a unified voice in the international community on behalf of regional stakeholders*
- *Strengthen the implementation of the Nairobi Convention Work Programme*

The situation - rapidly increasing population densities, natural disasters, and anthropogenic climate change are hastening the degradation of the marine and coastal environment in the WIO region and the depletion of its natural resources and biological diversity. Inadequate policies and ineffective regulation of marine resource use have resulted in lost opportunities to mitigate the impact of human activities and to assist coastal populations in adapting to their changing environment. While some organizations have individually been making progress, programmes in the region have been largely fragmented, and there has been a lack of communication and information sharing among key actors. The health of these ecosystems and of the populations which depend on them are inextricably linked, creating the imperative for coordinated, strategic action to sustain conservation and development efforts in the region.

The opportunities - these challenges present an opportunity for regional organizations to pool resources and work together toward a common set of priorities. Streamlining existing programmes across the region will ensure the exchange of critical ecological and socioeconomic expertise to increase the capacity of regional organizations. Elevating current conservation and development efforts from the local level to national and international levels will greatly increase awareness of the link between biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods in the international community. And at the highest level, combining the resources and knowledge of regional stakeholders will greatly increase the chance of meeting our common goal of preserving the valuable natural resources of the WIO ecosystems and creating an improved, sustainable living standard for all people.

¹ The WIO region includes the waters and coastal zones of Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and South Africa as well as the islands of Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion (France), and Seychelles.

² Based on national populations. Source: Population Reference Bureau 2008 World Population Data Sheet

OUR PRINCIPLES

The principles that underlie our work in achieving the WIO-C vision mirror those contained in international and regional conventions on sustainable development and conservation:

1. All people are entitled to a sustainable and dignified livelihood in harmony with their surrounding environment.

We believe that all people of the WIO region, particularly the poor and disadvantaged have a right to a good quality of life that is based on sustainable use of their natural resources.

2. Environmental conservation is paramount to achieving sustainable development.

In a growing world economy characterized by excess consumption and increasing demands on natural resources, development must be founded on conservation and sustainable ecosystem-based management, ensuring that natural assets and ecosystem goods and services are not depleted.

3. Conservation and development efforts cannot succeed without the involvement and empowerment of local communities.

All people have a right to participate in and decide on their access to and use of resources, with the common benefit of all users protected through transparency, accountability and empowerment. Local communities must be involved in co-management of their resources, which will enhance sustainability and protection for future generations.

4. The challenges of environmental conservation and sustainable development transcend political boundaries; thus our collective responsibility requires a collective effort.

The WIO region encompasses many countries, cultures, organizations and issues and a collective consensus on actions will far outweigh our individual contributions. We therefore undertake to build collective action in support of sustainable use and livelihoods in the WIO, and conservation that transcends political boundaries.

RELATED PRINCIPLES

Rio Earth Summit

Principle 1: "human beings are at the center of sustainable development; they are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature"

Principle 4: "in order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part and cannot be considered in isolation from it"

Principle 10: environmental issues should be handled with participation of all concerned citizens..."

Principle 22: "indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture, and interests and enable their participation in the achievement of sustainable development"

World Summit on Sustainable Development

"...children to inherit a world free of the indignity and indecency occasioned by poverty, environmental degradation and patterns of unsustainable development"

"assume a collective responsibility to advance and strengthen the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development - economic development, social development, and environmental protection - at the local, national, regional, and global levels"

Millennium Development Goals

Goal 7 Target 9: "Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources"

Goal 8: "develop a global partnership for development"

Convention on Biological Diversity

"Recognizing that economic and social development and poverty eradication are the first and overriding priorities of developing countries..."

"Aware that conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity is of critical importance for meeting the food, health and other needs of the growing world population, for which purpose access to and sharing of both genetic resources and technologies are essential"

"Recognizing the close and traditional dependence of many indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles on biological resources, and the desirability of sharing equitably benefits arising from the use of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices relevant to the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components"

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

"...change in the Earth's climate and its adverse effects are a common concern of humankind,"

"...the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effect and appropriate international response..."

"...responses to climate change should be coordinated with social and economic development in an integrated manner with a view to avoiding adverse impacts on the latter, taking into full account the legitimate priority needs of developing countries for the achievement of sustained economic growth and the eradication of poverty"

Nairobi Convention

"Realizing fully the need for cooperation amongst themselves and with competent international and regional organizations in order to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive development of the natural resources of the region."

WHO WE ARE

The Consortium for the Conservation of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems in the Western Indian Ocean ("WIO-C") comprises a group of international and regional NGOs in partnership with intergovernmental organizations that have presence and are active in regional marine and coastal ecosystem management in the Western Indian Ocean.

WIO-C was officially launched at the Fifth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention held in Johannesburg, South Africa in November 2007.

WHAT WE WILL DO

We are committed to ensuring a healthy coastal and marine environment that sustainably supports the livelihoods of people in the WIO. To achieve these goals, WIO-C aims to support improved coordination, strengthened partnerships, and improved conservation and management of marine and coastal resources in the region by endeavoring to:

- 1. Present a united voice on issues and policies that matter to the region, its ecosystems, and its people.**

We will leverage this partnership between conservation actors to develop a common agenda. Speaking as a consortium, we present an even stronger voice in the international community to promote the interests of the region, proactively tackle critical issues, and champion new causes as they emerge.

- 2. Serve as a forum for the exchange of critical knowledge and experience.**

As a consortium, we will tap into the vast experience of our membership in professional implementation of projects and programmes from the local to the regional level. WIO-C will enable members to share knowledge, information, and lessons learned, as well as providing a flexible platform for an ongoing dialogue on marine and coastal conservation issues.

- 3. Pool our collective scientific knowledge across our networks of scientists and practitioners.**

WIO-C membership has access to a broad range of technical expertise, comprised of scientists and practitioners within and beyond the region. Working together, we can serve as a significant resource to the international, regional, and national policy arenas in encouraging a science-based approach to marine and coastal conservation in the WIO region.

- 4. Catalyze and undertake joint activities beneficial to the region.**

In addition to the programmes already in place with each respective member organization, we will partner on numerous joint activities that individual organizations may not have the capacity to undertake. Further, we are committed individually and as a consortium to work with the Nairobi Convention and the governments of the region towards the implementation of the Nairobi Convention Work Programme.

- 5. Support local NGOs and build civil society.**

Many smaller local organizations are driving important efforts in the region and possess key knowledge of the local populations, languages, and customs. However, many still lack critical resources to support their work. WIO-C, by gathering the resources of many NGOs active in the region, can strengthen the capacity and impact of these organizations by improving their access to skills, resources, and regional networking.

6. Build capacity at all levels in the region.

Our partnership allows us to spearhead initiatives to build capacity within the region by providing educational and training opportunities for scientists, managers, and local NGOs to learn how to more effectively carry out their work. Additionally, we will work to build the capacity of local communities to use natural resources sustainably.

OUR COMMITMENT

As organizations working in conservation and sustainable development, we recognize the urgent need for action to preserve our fragile ecosystems and support the local communities in the WIO region. While evidence of climate change and environmental degradation continues to accumulate, there is still time for prevention and mitigation of future damage while supporting the adaptation of ecosystems and communities. In spite of the many challenges facing the region, the potential impact of a unified effort to channel critical expertise and resources to tackle these challenges is what brings us together in this consortium.

To achieve our vision of a healthy coastal and marine environment, for the benefit of current and future generations, we commit to the mission and principles of this charter. Membership is open to organizations that subscribe to the objectives of the Consortium and meet its requirements.