

Declaration of the ministers and high representatives of the island states of Africa and the Indian Ocean for the development of the circular economy

Ministerial Conference on the Circular Economy of
African and Indian Ocean Island States

Port-Louis, Republic of Mauritius | September 21, 2023

Ministerial Conference organised by



Foreword

Recalling the ambitions, calls and commitments indicated in the Final Declaration "The Way Forward" of the III United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) held in September 2014 in Apia, Samoa, particularly in the chapters on "Oceans and Seas", "Climate Change", and "Sustainable Consumption and Production";

Resolved to promote and support the development of the circular economy as a concrete contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, SDG 12 "Responsible consumption and production patterns", SDG 14 "Life below water" and SDG 15 "Life on land";

Referring to the Final Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Oceans in Lisbon vulnerability lines the collective and shared responsibility for the preservation and sustainable management of marine and ocean ecosystems, recalls the particular vulnerability of island developing states and encourages scientific initiatives and innovative measures, including through enhanced cooperation and partnerships based on science, technology and innovation, to prevent, reduce and eliminate plastic pollution;

Considering the resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly calling for the strengthening and amplification of cooperation, coordination, and governance actions to eliminate plastic pollution in marine and associated environments, as well as the decision to propose by 2024 a legally binding international instrument covering the entire plastic chain (production, consumption, disposal);

Considering the resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly calling for enhancing circular economy as a contribution to achieving sustainable consumption and production and towards addressing the triple planetary crisis;

Considering the achievements, initiatives, and protocols in force of the Abidjan and Nairobi Conventions for the environment, in particular the protocols relating to the protection of the marine and coastal environment against pollution from land-based sources and activities.

Concerned to participate in the implementation of continental and regional frameworks, strategies and plans in favor of the blue economy in line with the 2019 African Union Blue Economy Strategy;

Acknowledging the crucial role of the oceans in global action on climate and biodiversity, and the virtuous dynamic that the island states of Africa and the Indian Ocean, with nearly 10 million square kilometers of Economic Exclusive Zones, can bring about;

Recalling the strong commitments to the sustainability and preservation of the seas and oceans, particularly with a view to developing a blue economy that regenerates ecosystems and promotes sustainable growth, as expressed in the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations' Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change conferences, the African Leaders' Declaration and Call to Action on Climate Change, and the Moroni Declaration on the Blue Economy and Climate Action in Africa;

Underlining the efforts made by governments and non-state actors in the island states of Africa and the Indian Ocean to improve governance frameworks and operating conditions for the development of a blue economy that generates wealth, provides jobs, and respects ecological balances;

Committed to the particular vulnerability of developing island states to climate change, natural disasters, and the erosion of biodiversity, the effects of which are felt in our territories and herald global upheaval;

Recognizing the potential of young people as critical partners and agents of change, and where young people participate in decision-making and in the implementation of solutions concerning their communities, countries and the region;

Concerned by the multiple consequences of marine pollution on the environment, societies, and economies of our island states in Africa and the Indian Ocean.

Emphasizing the need to shift focus from landfilling of waste in a linear economic growth model by facilitating the implementation of circular economy models adapted to island contexts, enabling the emergence of new value chains, and capitalizing on opportunities for public-private partnerships, cooperation between state and non-state players or between territories;

Acknowledging the initiatives, including fiscal and regulatory initiatives, undertaken in the island states of Africa and the Indian Ocean to promote the blue and circular economy;

Recalling the interest of entrepreneurship in the circular economy, through the possibility of rethinking existing business models and designing innovative solutions for resource and waste management, developing partnerships with other companies to create synergies and optimize the use of resources;

Welcoming the Indian Ocean Commission's role in coordinating dialogue between the island states of Africa and the Indian Ocean on the development potential of the circular economy, which has enabled national studies to be drawn up and institutional and non-state players to be mobilized;

Reaffirming the need to mobilize national, regional, and international stakeholders within the framework of collective actions in support of the development of opportunities in the fields of the blue and circular economy in Africa, more particularly in island states;

Recognizing the need to strengthen regional and inter-regional collaborations between the islands of Africa and the Indian Ocean, on the one hand, and with other relevant states and organizations, on the other, in order to build capacity;

Recognizing the urgent need to accelerate the process of promoting the circular economy, in response to current ecological and economic concerns, and to the need to improve the well-being of the population in particular;

We, the Ministers and High Representatives of the Republic of Cabo Verde, the Union of the Comoros, the French Republic, the Republic of Guinea Bissau, the Republic of Madagascar, the Republic of Mauritius, the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, and the Republic of Seychelles, in the presence of technical and financial partners and regional stakeholders, meeting in Port-Louis (Republic of Mauritius) on the occasion of a Ministerial Conference on the Circular Economy in the Island States of Africa and the Indian Ocean, organized on the initiative of the Indian Ocean Commission, declare as follows:

Promote implementation of the regional action plan on the prevention, reduction, and control of marine pollution and plastic pollution.

1. We commit to examining appropriate ways to develop or advance national and regional action plans to combat marine plastic pollution and plastic pollution in general, including through:
 - a. Existing or planned initiatives under the Abidjan and Nairobi Conventions,
 - b. Actions coordinated by the Regional Economic Communities in cooperation with the African Group of Negotiators on the Plastics Treaty.
 - c. Actions by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and other appropriate means
 - d. The Indian Ocean Commission and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).
2. We commit ourselves to invite the main sources of financial support for the implementation of the SDGs, and of SDG 12 and 14 in particular, to support and participate in dialogues aimed at establishing regional mechanisms to finance the formulation et the implementation of national action plans, and to implement effective regional cooperation to combat plastic and marine pollution.
3. We request the Indian Ocean Commission to coordinate the above actions in concertation with the African and Indian Ocean Island States.

4. We commit to improve knowledge of the actual state of plastic pollution in our territories through scientific expertise.
5. We commit to resolutely address the pressing issue of single-use plastics (SUPs) and their devastating impact on the environment and health.

Promoting and disseminating circular economy models

6. We are committed to promoting the concepts of circular economy and eco-design at national level, and to translating them into regional and national policies that enable the development and dissemination of circular economy practices in the economic and entrepreneurial fabric of our islands. The regulations to be supplemented, modernized, or drawn up could cover the design, promotion and reuse of sustainable and recyclable products, optimizing the use of resources, reducing waste, and encouraging extended producer responsibility;
7. We will encourage the strengthening of existing regulations or the development of specific frameworks with implementation and monitoring/evaluation plans for the circular economy;
8. We note the desirability of defining incentive frameworks, including schemes, grants, subsidies, and fiscal instruments (this englobes incentives), to support the deployment of circular economy initiatives;
9. We confirm the importance of improving national intellectual property rights frameworks to stimulate innovation, entrepreneurship and facilitate the creation of repair channels (reuse, repair, refurbishment, remanufacturing, and re-purposing) to reduce waste generation and encourage circular activity flows;
10. We recognize the fundamental right of our citizens to repair. We are committed to facilitating access to spare parts, repair information and the skills needed to extend product life;
11. We recommend setting up regional and national circular economy observatories which could include a shared database of activities, experts and partners in the field.

Circular value chains through the recovery of pneumatic, electrical, and electronic waste and plastic wastes.

12. We underline our concern about the extent of marine plastic pollution, most of which originates from land-based sources, and commit ourselves to:
 - a. Target the tire sector, whose wear and tear/use is responsible for the pollution of terrestrial and marine environments and poses serious health risks for the region's inhabitants, including plastic micro-particles discharged into the sea, by promoting the responsible use of these materials through frameworks and actions facilitating the recovery, treatment, and recycling of tires, including on a sub-regional scale;
 - b. Initiate reforms of legal frameworks and/or the development of regulations favorable to the promotion of the circular economy for zero tire waste in the island states of Africa and the Indian Ocean;
 - c. Implement, where appropriate, action plans for the elimination of pneumatic waste from the environment in island states, through the promotion of the circular economy;
13. We recognize the potential for recovery and reuse of electrical and electronic waste on the islands and commit to:
 - a. Initiate reforms of legal frameworks and/or the development of regulations favorable to the promotion of the circular economy for zero electrical and electronic waste in the island states of Africa and the Indian Ocean;
 - b. Implement, where appropriate, action plans for the elimination of electrical and electronic waste from the environment in island states, through the promotion of the circular economy;

14. Facilitate the implementation of an operational framework for regional cooperation actions aimed at increasing the recycling of used tires and electrical and electronic waste in the island states of Africa and the Indian Ocean. This regional cooperation mechanism could examine the legal, technical, environmental and financial implications of a plan to allow the movement of pneumatic, electrical and electronic waste between the islands.

Education and awareness of the environment and the circular economy

15. We are committed to raising the awareness of decision-makers, economic operators, and communities, particularly children and young people, about the climate change, the circular economy, and ways to reduce/eliminate plastic pollution in our islands through dedicated campaigns and programs aimed at schools. To this end, we encourage environmental education programs run by regional and international organizations, NGOs, and schools, as well as the training of teachers in technical environmental education while encouraging the implementation of concrete projects to demonstrate their economic impact;
16. We commend the establishment of the regional network of stakeholders of the “Island States of Africa and the Indian Ocean Alliance Against Plastic Pollution” and its implementation at national level, to ensure the sustainability of advisory services and school awareness and environmental education programs initiated by the IOC since 2022;

The circular economy to support the energy transition.

17. We reaffirm the need to invest in sustainable energies and low-carbon technologies to reduce our islands' dependence on fossil fuels and facilitate the emergence of innovative, circular industries.
18. We take note of the need to strengthen the national waste management mechanism and to invest more heavily in the waste sorting, recovery, management, treatment, and valorization sector, with the aim of reducing environmental and health risks in a circular economy perspective through the generation of energy and fertilizers, among others.
19. We invite port and maritime authorities and all players in the commercial shipping and port management sectors to draw up port and vessels greening plans, which could take the form of clean energy projects for ships and new decarbonization practices to be incorporated into ports and shipping operating models.

Mobilizing funding and partnerships for enhanced cooperation in favor of the promotion of a sustainable blue economy which is inclusive and in favor of climate action, the energy transition, the elimination of marine pollution, and the promotion of circular economy

20. We advocate in regional and global forums for effective cooperation mechanisms, partnerships with industry and access to affordable financing, to implement regional cooperation programs, national action plans, including the development of circular economy, awareness-raising, improved solid waste management, research, development and innovation programs, and other actions planned at national and regional level.
21. We agree to place greater emphasis on regional collaboration to accelerate the development of appropriate financing and support mechanisms for entrepreneurs and innovators, including young people and women, from the ideation stage through to scale-up. These mechanisms aim to provide financial and technical support to start-ups and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) on a regional and African scale. Such initiatives are essential to foster research and development, incubation, and expansion of circular economy businesses in small island states.
22. Apart from conventional sources of funding, we support funding and cooperation partnerships with the following organizations:
- a. The African Development Bank, African Circular Economy Facility, UN Environment Program (UNEP), UN Development Program (UNDP), the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA),
 - b. The Global Environment Facility and associated programs such as the International Water Information and Resource Exchange Network,

- c. The European Union' circular economy stakeholder exchange platform and its beneficiaries,
- d. The Agence française de développement and the Fonds français pour l'environnement mondial,
- e. The ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform,
- f. Innovative financing players, including philanthropic funds and business angels, to support projects led by local players.

23. We invite the Indian Ocean Commission to mobilise support from these partners in consultation with the African Islands Climate Commission.

24. We would like to thank the Government of the Republic of Mauritius for the warm welcome extended to the delegations from our countries;

25. We would like to thank the Indian Ocean Commission and the World Bank for organizing the Ministerial Conference on the Circular Economy in the Island States of Africa and the Indian Ocean through their SWIOFish2 program, as well as for all the work and studies carried out upstream, which provided the basis for our discussions;

26. We encourage the Indian Ocean Commission to continue its advocacy on behalf of all the island states of Africa and the Indian Ocean, to seize opportunities in regional and international fora to promote our positions in favor of the circular economy, and to engage in confident dialogue with the community of development partners, in particular the World Bank, with a view to mobilizing additional resources in support of our national and collective initiatives and regional cooperation, in favor of the circular economy.

Adopted by acclamation Port-Louis, Republic of Mauritius, September 21, 2023

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