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**First Bureau Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the  
Convention on Cooperation for the Protection,  
Management and Development of the Marine Environment and  
Coastal Areas of the Atlantic Coast of the  
West, Central and Southern African Region (Abidjan Convention)**

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019

**2019-2020 PROGRAMME OF WORK**

## **A. Introduction**

The Convention on the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region (Abidjan Convention) came into force in 1984. Recognizing the ecological uniqueness of the marine environment and coastal areas, threats to that environment and a need for action, the countries in the region met in 1981 and signed the Convention and its Protocol. They also adopted an action plan for the protection and development of the region's marine environment and coastal areas. The Convention and its Protocol on cooperation in pollution control in cases of emergency were signed in 1981 and ratified by 16 out of the 22 countries in the region. South Africa which was not covered by the Convention in 1981, applied for acceding to the Convention in 2000 and ratified it in 2002.

This work programme for 2017-2020 which is actually an extension of the previous planning cycle, will therefore carry on with ongoing efforts and build on the gains made as part of the implementation of the aforesaid five components. By marking the end of the revitalization phase and the start of an active phase, the implementation of the 2017-2020 work programme will not be based on scenarios. With the contribution payment efforts made in recent years and the support of technical and financial partners, the Secretariat was able to secure resources for programme implementation.

The Abidjan Convention is now recognized as a major player and a privileged partner in the management of marine and coastal biodiversity throughout the Atlantic coast of Africa. In addition to the activities implemented and partnerships established, others are being finalized. The variety of partnerships established supports the Convention Secretariat in fulfilling its mandate and achieving the objectives of its program. A set of partners supported the Secretariat by providing funding directly to support the implementation of the activities.

## **B. Implementation Strategy for the 2017-2020 Work Programme**

The 2017-2020 Work Programme is very similar to, or even identical to that of 2015-2017. Consequently, no attempt has been made in this instance to reinvent the wheel as to the rationale or explanation of programme content and, of course, the comprehensive strategy of the implementation programme. Therefore, the following paragraphs will be a logical follow-up to the approach adopted during the implementation of the previous Work Programme. It should be noted, however, that the Secretariat will work relentlessly to ensure that the commitment of the Parties results in the payment of contributions to end the revitalization process and start a phase of stability for the Convention.

## **C. The main goals of the Work Programme for 2019-2020:**

Strengthening the role of the Convention as a platform to promote synergies and ensure a coordinated implementation of regional initiatives for the protection of the marine environment and coastal areas. Specifically, this shall involve:

- a) Facilitating the use of the Abidjan Convention as a platform to increase collaboration and implementation of marine and coastal components of environmental protection programmes, organizations and regional partnerships such as the African Union, ECOWAS, CEEAC, NEPAD, African Ministers' Council on Water, USAID through the WABiCC programme, USAFRICOM, MAVA Foundation, GRID Arendal, WACA ReSIP etc.;
- b) Helping build regional capacities for integrated coastal and marine management as part of the Bali Strategic Plan for technology support and capacity building and facilitating interregional and south-south coordination;
- c) Promoting the recognition and mainstreaming of the Abidjan Convention provisions into national policy; the legal, institutional and financial framework and national development processes, especially emergency plans, poverty alleviation strategies, country joint assessments and country budgets, especially in countries where coasts and oceans substantially impact the economic and social development or serve as a major basis for such development;
- d) Provide advice permanently on the development of institutional, legal and financial procedures that are required to back up the long-term implementation of the Abidjan Convention, recognizing that many

countries are implementing the Convention in the context of other policies, strategies and sustainable development programmes;

- e) Promoting and facilitating integrated coastal area management to preserve coastal habitats and the fight against physical degradation of coastline, by partly establishing links between river basin and watershed management and by way of ecosystem-driven management approaches, particularly in the context of relations between activities on land and marine environments.

#### **D. The main components of the 2019-2020 work programme**

The 2019-2020 Work Programme is divided into components that are based on the WACAF Action Plan.

- **Assessments.**

This component focuses on the activities related to assessment operations of ecosystems and habitats. Three countries, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana will produce State of the Marine Environment Reports of their respective countries, EBSAs will also be described. Data will therefore be made available. Reference studies are planned in Mauritania, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo and Sao Tome & Principe to inform the monitoring and evaluation system of the Convention.

- **Management.** The idea is to implement programmes and activities aimed at reducing or preventing the degradation of coastal and marine environments. It will focus on the sustainable enhancement activities for resources through field projects and programmes. The activities shall be based on:

- i. Spatial planning
- ii. management of ecosystems and habitats (mangroves, coral reefs, marine herbal communities, canyons, seamounts, islanders complexes, beaches and other sand bars, lagoons, lakes, ...)
- iii. coastal erosion control;
- iv. sustainable development of resources for poverty alleviation in coastal areas;
- v. conservation of biodiversity especially in MPAs;
- vi. prevention of marine pollution risks.

The aim of this component is to manage effectively, to use in a sustainable way and to ensure the protection of the marine and coastal environments of the Western and Central Africa region.

- **Coordination and Political and Legal Issues.** Emphasis is laid here on the revision and updating of the Abidjan Convention and its Protocol, the preparation of additional Protocols on specific topics, action plans for the implementation of the said protocols, improved coordination of activities (including reporting and information exchange procedures) and institutional strengthening for enforcing the Convention. The activity will be focusing on:

- i. the adoption of the amended text of the Abidjan Convention and its Protocol;
- ii. formulation of action plans for additional Protocols as well as their adoption;
- iii. the preparation of an integrated ocean management policy along the Southeast Atlantic.

The purpose of this component is to strengthen the coordination body within the Abidjan Convention and to work out an adequate legal and institutional framework for the effective and coordinated implementation of the Abidjan Convention jointly with all the partners concerned.

- **Communication and information technologies.** This component deals with exchange of information with State-Parties, partners, local communities and public awareness, stakeholders' empowerment and capacity building. The activities will include:

- i. Implementing of the communication,
- ii. the setting up and maintenance of a resource center;
- iii. information management and exchange;
- iv. awareness, capacity building and
- v. Increasing visibility for the Convention.

The goal of this component is to turn the Secretariat into a learning center to provide information in an easily accessible and understandable format to assist in decision-making in respect of marine and coastal resources to raise public awareness of the importance of the marine and coastal environment.

The activities of the components were identified at regional and national levels. Higher funding levels would, at the request of Governments, help place greater emphasis on supporting national governments to recognize, mainstream and implement the Abidjan Convention into all sectors and major development processes.

The list of activities is not meant to be exhaustive. This is indicative of the type of activities that the Abidjan Convention Secretariat will undertake jointly with other partners.

### 1. The Main activities under the 2017-2020 Work Programme for Assessments

Component 1: Assessment	Partners
Collection and summary of data on coastal habitats and associated threats	WACA & GRID Arendal
State of the Marine Environment Report (SoME) in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana	GRID Arendal
Critical habitat assessments including coral reefs, canyons, seamounts, marine herbal communities, mangroves, estuaries, island complexes, etc.	WACA, GRID Arendal & WABiCC
Promotion and support for the formulation of integrated national ocean management policies	GRID Arendal
Promotion and support for the use of MSPs, SoMEs, EBSAs, VMEs as tools for planning and management of habitats with significant biodiversity	GRID Arendal, German Ministry of Environment
Assessment of Biodiversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdictions (ABNJ)	IASS of Potsdam and IDDRI

### 2. Management

In terms of the current level of resources, the limited funds available do not enable the Convention Secretariat to support all major activities, management-wise. The focus will therefore be on project development. In addition, activities as part of the major marine ecosystems projects in the region will be the main contributor to this objective.

Should resources improve, the activities will therefore support existing initiatives in the field of protection, habitat restoration and resource sustainable development.

Should the resources be adequate enough, the implementation of programmes and projects in various fields will be a good seller for the Abidjan Convention Secretariat.

Component 2: Management	Partners
Development of action plans for the implementation of Protocols on Mangroves, environmental norms and standards for offshore oil and gas exploitation, LBSA and ICZM.	WACA, GRID Arendal, MAVA Foundation, PRCM & WABiCC
Programme for the implementation of planning and management tools of habitats with significant biodiversity (MSP, SoME, EBSAs, VMEs)	GRID Arendal, German Ministry of Environment
Project/programme development related to the management of ABNJ	IASS of Potsdam and IDDRI
Support to development and implementation initiatives for habitat and biodiversity planning and management tools.	GRID Arendal, PRCM, WABiCC
Support to pilot projects for the protection, restoration and development of critical marine ecosystems and wildlife	PRCM, RAPAC and WA-BiCC
Support for national climate change adaptation and mitigation action plans	State Parties
Support to marine protected area management efforts (MPAs)	RAMPAO
Development of a monitoring-assessment system for projects and programmes of the Abidjan Convention Secretariat	WA-BiCC
Development and conduct of training courses on MSP, climate change, assessment of ecosystem goods and services, management of protected areas, etc.	GRID Arendal
Implementation of a programme for the management of plastic wastes and other marine debris	UNEP

### 3. Coordination & Political and Legal Issues

Strategic Guideline 5 on regional seas (“Strengthening Regional Seas Use as a Platform for coordinated implementation of Multilateral Agreements and Global Initiatives on the Environment”) went even further, by increasingly endeavoring to use the Convention as a platform for increased collaboration. Indeed, the formulation and implementation of the 2015-2016 Work Programme is the product of a collaborative effort based on a partnership between the Secretariat, governments, donors and non-governmental organizations. Moreover, the Abidjan Convention requires an effective coordination mechanism based on existing ecological management units. It is urgent that decentralized coordination bodies address the complexities arising from:

- a growing number of non-coordinated initiatives with international scope and related to the marine environment and the coastal areas taken by multilateral and bilateral partners;
- many programmes and projects spearheaded by non-governmental organizations along a 14 000 km-long coastline;
- end distances between countries in the Convention Area; and
- the distinct and unique nature of the three large marine ecosystems (the large Benguela, Guinea and Canary Currents).

With regard to the above bullet points, strengthening and forging partnerships with other organizations and projects will be key to the programme of work, as reflected by the incorporation in the work programme of the Convention highlights of work plans and activities of the partner non-governmental organizations.

The strengthening of focal points will continue to be a priority and will make the most of the momentum generated by the setting up of National Implementation Committees, the development of a specific mandate and the establishment of a reporting mechanism for the Convention. The national reporting mechanism for the Convention will provide ongoing guidance to the Secretariat on national priorities for the management of coastal areas and the marine environment.

A new Protocol on land-based activities and sources of pollution was developed under the GCLME project and was adopted as the Plenipotentiary Conference convened on 22 June 2012. Additional Protocols are being developed.

<b>Component 3: Coordination and political and legal issues</b>	<b>Partners</b>
Preparation and convening of meetings of the Contracting Parties (Bureau and CoP)	Secretariat of the Abidjan Convention
Coordination of the implementation of the cooperation activities agreed at the meetings of the Contracting Parties	Secretariat of the Abidjan Convention
Strengthening of the coordination mechanism for large marine ecosystem projects, possibly based on the setting up of the subregional coordination programme and monitoring groups	Secretariat of the Abidjan Convention
Support for the ratification process of Mangrove Protocols, environmental norms and standards for offshore oil and gas exploitation and LBSA and ICZM.	States Parties
Support to the setting-up and commissioning process of the Guinea Current Commission	Secretariat of the Abidjan Convention
Arrange for leaders training to raise the awareness of decision-makers, experts, task forces on policy development, laws, institutional frameworks and strategies related to the marine environment and coastal areas at the national, regional and global levels.	GRID Arendal
Recruitment of adequate staff necessary for the operation of the Abidjan Convention Secretariat	Secretariat of the Abidjan Convention
Updating the constitution and bylaws of the Abidjan Convention and the WACAF Action Plan	Secretariat of the Abidjan Convention
Hosting of national consultations for the development of action plans and domestication of the Mangroves Protocols, environmental norms and standards for offshore oil and gas exploitation, LBSA and ICZM	Secretariat of the Abidjan Convention

#### 4. Information and Communication Technologies

Visibility is a crucial for the progress of the Convention and this about was reiterated by partner organizations and NGOs in recent forums including the Consultative Forum on the LMEs and the joint meeting of both offices. In this context, the Secretariat will focus on improving the vision between the Contracting Parties, partners, nongovernmental organizations and local communities. This theme is by and large a basis for achieving this goal.

The relations between the Contracting Parties to the Abidjan Convention and the Joint Secretariat of the Convention are defective. Therefore, this irrefutable fact led to a lack of institutional communication between the Secretariat, the Regional Coordination Unit in Abidjan and among the Contracting Parties. The RCU and the Secretariat should therefore work towards ensuring the visibility of the Abidjan Convention as a regional organization that is deeply rooted in Africa.

A reporting format has been developed in the last work programme. With this tool, national focal points compiled status reports on the marine environment and coastal areas. The Secretariat will follow up by regularly updating status reports and identify gaps. At higher funding levels, the Secretariat will catalyze on activities to fill the gaps so identified and (as previously reported under assessment and management issues).

<b>Component 4: Communication and Information Technologies</b>	<b>Partners</b>
Reporting on the progress of the work programme and the dissemination of findings meant for Contracting Parties and other partners;	Abidjan Convention Secretariat
Review of requests made by and information from the Contracting Parties;	
Forwarding to all Contracting Parties any notification, report and other relevant information received by the Secretariat from the Contracting Parties and other partners;	
Updating of status reports every two years and identify gaps relating to information and activities;	
Consultation with the Contracting Parties on matters related to this Convention and its Protocols.	
Regular updating of the Convention's website.	
Implementation of the action plan pegged to the communication strategy	Abidjan Convention Secretariat
Setting up and maintenance of information sharing centers for Nairobi and Abidjan Conventions and regularly update the website	
Improved visibility of the Abidjan Convention by improving the website and communication tools	
Development of a new Web portal on the Abidjan Convention site.	UNEP-Nairobi
Production of some communication tools.	Abidjan Convention Secretariat
Implementation of the communication strategy of the Abidjan Convention Secretariat.	Abidjan Convention Secretariat
Facilitating the management and sharing of information, including sharing of results, best practices, etc., through the setting up of an information sharing mechanism to tally with the database of LME and other partners.	
Provision of information and participating in regional ministerial fora on the environment;	
Training on participation, problem solving, knowledge sharing and awareness raising;	
Promoting activities and public awareness campaigns and community initiatives for resource management.	Abidjan Convention Secretariat