Thirteenth 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)

Virtual Meeting, 13th to 15th December 2021

REPORT OF THE TWELFTH CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE ABIDJAN CONVENTION
Twelfth meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern African Region
Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 27–31 March 2017

Draft report of the twelfth meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern African Region

Introduction
1. The twelfth meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region (Abidjan Convention) was held at the Hôtel Le Vaissseau (expert segment) and at the Maison de l’Entreprise (ministerial segment), Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, from 27 to 31 March 2017. The theme of the meeting was “Integrated ocean management policy in Africa”. The meeting was held in accordance with article 17 of the Convention, which stipulated that the Contracting Parties should meet in ordinary session every two or three years. The meeting marked the end of the Convention’s revitalization process, initiated in 2010, and launched its active phase.
2. The meeting was divided into two parts:
   (a) Expert segment;
   (b) Ministerial segment.

Part One: Expert segment

I. Opening of the expert segment
3. The expert segment was opened at 8.30 a.m. on Monday, 27 March 2017, by the Chair of the meeting, Mr. Lisolomzi Fikizolo (South Africa), representing the President of the Bureau.
4. Opening statements were made by Mr. Abou Bamba, Executive Secretary of the Abidjan Convention, and by Mr. Fikizolo. The opening address was delivered by Ms. Anne Désirée Otolo, Minister for the Environment of Côte d’Ivoire.
5. In her remarks, Ms. Otolo stressed the importance of using the marine and coastal environment sustainably in order to preserve and enhance its potential for present and future generations. Preservation of the environment and conservation of biodiversity, along with sustainable use of marine and coastal resources, were key to the social and economic development of the countries that were parties to the Convention. The programme of activities and budget for the period 2017–2020...
would help set the agenda for conservation and use of those resources. She drew attention to the threats to the marine and coastal environment from human activities, including navigation, overfishing, mangrove destruction, urbanization and settlement, and mineral extraction. Coordination and harmonization of activities by all stakeholders at the local, national and international levels was essential for combating those challenges. She expressed the hope that the week’s deliberations would be fruitful.

II. Organizational matters

A. Election of officers

6. It was decided that the officers of the eleventh meeting of the Contracting Parties would continue in office until the conclusion of the meeting, when a new Bureau would be elected.

B. Participation of observers

7. It was agreed that all sessions of the meeting would, unless otherwise decided, remain open to all observers, representatives of international bodies and national governmental and non-governmental organizations who were attending the meeting as approved observers.

C. Credentials committee

8. A credentials committee, composed of the representatives of Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana and Mauritania, as well as a representative of the secretariat, was appointed to examine the credentials of participants.

D. Adoption of the rules of procedure of the meeting

9. It was agreed that the Rules of Procedure for Meetings and Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Abuja Convention (submitted to the meeting as document UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/1) would govern the procedures of the meeting.

E. Adoption of the agenda

10. The provisional agenda (UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/1) was adopted.

III. Workshop on integrated ocean management policies in Africa

A. Introduction

11. Mr. Bamba, introducing the workshop, said that integrated ocean management was a dynamic process, given the ever-changing nature of the marine and coastal environment and the human impacts on it. It was therefore necessary to bring on board all stakeholders to identify the problems and issues involved, along with possible solutions; to formulate objectives to be attained; and to implement solutions. To support and inform that process, it was essential to build the database on the marine and coastal environment and its use and development, in order to establish a baseline of knowledge against which to measure its future evolution; to identify indicators; to ascertain how to work in a more coordinated manner; and to monitor the success of any measures undertaken. Actions taken on the marine and coastal environment should be within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, which adopted a development-oriented approach to conservation, emphasizing improvement in people’s lives alongside protection of the environment. Integrated management of coastal areas therefore required a holistic, multilateral and multisectoral approach, taking into account physical and ecological aspects and biodiversity, in addition to economic, social, cultural, and legal and administrative factors. The long-term roles of various actors needed to be clarified, with the ultimate objective of establishing mechanisms to ensure a balance between human activities and natural resources and thus achieve sustainable development.

B. Presentations by experts

12. A number of experts gave presentations on various aspects of integrated ocean management and the application of the concept, particularly in relation to policy development in Africa. Presentations were made by Mr. Tibor Vegh, Policy Associate, Environmental Economics Programme, Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions, Duke University, United States of America; Mr. Lawrence P. Hildebrand, Head of the Oceans Sustainability Department, World Maritime University, Sweden; Mr. Justin Allahmou, Regional Liaison Officer, Marine Policy Department, and Regional Coordinator, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission,
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); Mr. Pierre Failletz, Director of Research, Department of Economics, Portsmouth University, United Kingdom; Mr. André Share, Head, Ocean Economy Secretariat, South Africa; Mr. Louis Léandre Ebobola Tshibah, Director-General for the Environment, Gabon; Mrs. Hazel Thornton, Marine Programme, UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Cambridge, United Kingdom; Mr. Yacouba Gisse, International Law Commission; and Mr. Jeffrey Andrews, Environmental Security Program, United States Africa Command (AFRICOM).

13. Mr. Vegh, in his presentation, said that the United States had adopted a policy implementation plan containing recommendations and guidance for how to better manage the country’s ocean and coastal resources and ensure the growth of the ocean economy. He encouraged countries on the Atlantic coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa region to create ocean policy implementation plans adapted to their specific needs. Noting that a blue economy concept was required to align economic growth and environmental health, he gave several examples of blue economy policies aimed, among others, at securing access to resources; maintaining and improving ecosystem integrity; promoting social and economic development; and building resilience. He stressed the importance of incorporating the ocean’s natural capital assets into planning and policy, using integrated ocean management to reduce risk; and developing monitoring tools such as a blue economy index.

14. Mr. Hildebrand, in his presentation, outlined progress in developing integrated ocean management policies. Noting that UNEP and the World Maritime University had recently signed a memorandum of understanding, he emphasized the need to strengthen such collaboration in order to enhance education and research and support the work of the Abidjan Convention. Conventions, laws and plans needed to be translated into action without adding pressure to oceans, which constituted diminishing natural capital. While advances in science, technology and innovation would help to address many environmental challenges, they should not be used as an excuse to ignore environmental problems. Though the need for more integrated and coordinated ocean management was widely recognized, sectoral interests and institutions were entrenched, and there was a tendency to defy the status quo. The requirements of nations and ocean industries also needed to be considered in order to encourage them to help protect the ocean environment.

15. Mr. Alahranz spoke about the unique contribution of African coastal observation systems to strengthening the Abidjan Convention in the context of Sustainable Development Goals 13 and 14, on climate and oceans. The Global Ocean Observation System for Africa (GOOS-Africa) helped to generate knowledge and raise awareness in a number of areas, including oil and gas shipping, maritime transport and trade, offshore mining, fishing and tourism. He concluded his presentation by describing the critical role of satellite remote sensing and the need for space-based observation of coastal and marine ecosystems.

16. Mr. Failletz, in his presentation, on the valuation of the marine and coastal ecosystem services of Africa’s Atlantic seaboard, and its ecological, economic and policy implications, described the blue economy and blue growth in the African context, and more specifically in the framework of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, the African Integrated Maritime Strategy and the initiative on harnessing the blue economy for Africa’s development of the Economic Commission for Africa. Discussing facets of the blue economy such as oil and gas extraction, fishing activities, mariculture, coastal calcium mining and coastal tourism, he said that valuation and monitoring were needed to define priorities for economic development and ecosystem conservation, to include non-market ecosystem services in blue economy strategies and plans, and to better manage marine and coastal ecosystems.

17. Mr. Share, in his presentation, described how Operation Phakisa in South Africa worked to achieve objectives such as the implementation of existing frameworks, data collection and sharing, the establishment of integrated ocean management plans, the enhancement of capacity to utilize ocean resources, and regional and international cooperation. Marine spatial planning was a key element of the programme, and several projects were in place to unlock the economic potential of his country’s oceans. There was intersectoral collaboration in a wide range of areas, including marine transport, offshore oil and gas exploration, aquaculture, marine protection services, small harbours development, tourism, skills development, and research, technology and innovation. Operation Phakisa had the potential to contribute significantly to the economy.

18. Mr. Ebobola Tshibah gave a presentation on the Blue Gibson programme for integrated management of oceans and coastal zones. His country had over 800 kilometres of coastline, featuring rich marine biodiversity, and some 70 per cent of the population lived in coastal areas. Threats to the marine and coastal space such as clandestine immigration, piracy, natural catastrophes, illicit fishing and coastal erosion had led to the creation of the Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gibson and of the
National Ocean Council. The latter encompassed the institutional stakeholders concerned with marine and coastal matters and ensured the implementation of a national integrated maritime strategy.

19. Mr. Thornton spoke about the Ocean Synergies Initiative, a partnership that supported countries’ efforts to achieve multiple Sustainable Development Goals through synergies with Goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development). The world’s oceans faced many pressures, including pollution, development, overexploitation of resources and competition for space, and many countries had limited resources for tackling those problems. The “ocean synergies approach” linked Goal 14 to related targets under the other Goals, thereby achieving savings in costs and resources. The Initiative followed a two-stage approach: in the first stage, countries conducted a sustainable development assessment to establish a baseline and identify opportunities for synergies; in the second stage, the outcomes of the assessment were translated into actions. The next steps would be to identify countries and regions interested in exploring the approach; identify potential sources of funding; and roll out country-specific initiatives.

20. In his presentation, Mr. Cisse identified the challenges and opportunities for African States with regard to integrated ocean management. The wide range of challenges included the definition of national maritime jurisdictions and the delimitation of maritime boundaries, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, ports and maritime pollution, and piracy, spying and underwater cables and pipelines. There was also a need to harmonize national legislation, raise awareness of the costs of deficient ocean governance, and embed integrated national ocean governance strategies in multilateral, regional and subregional legal instruments.

21. Mr. Andrews, in his presentation on the AFRICOM Environmental Security Program, said that his Government’s security policy recognized environmental issues as key factors affecting local, regional and global security. Climate change in particular, with its attendant effects, could weaken governance and lead to economic collapse, human migration and conflicts. Accordingly, the Program sought to build the capacity of African partner nations to deal with environment-related challenges. The Power Africa programme, for example, aimed to increase provision of clean, efficient electricity generation capacity in six partner countries.

C. Recommendations

22. The representative of the secretariat outlined the key recommendations emerging from the expert presentations:

(a) To enhance collaboration between the Abidjan Convention secretariat and the Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions in order to support capacity-building activities relating to the blue economy in the countries of the Convention;

(b) To develop an internship programme between the Convention secretariat and the World Maritime University and encourage rapid implementation of the memorandum of understanding between the University and UNEP;

(c) To utilize available data and fill the gaps in data acquisition and production;

(d) To encourage countries to involve grass-roots stakeholders in policy formulation;

(e) To reinforce synergies between the Abidjan Convention and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO in the framework of the OCEAN-Adr programme for data collection and distribution;

(f) To mainstream the Abidjan Convention national implementation committees to assist them in bringing together the different stakeholders in the ocean debate at the national level;

(g) To coordinate data collection efforts by various agencies to assist in establishing a resource centre for Africa on marine and coastal matters;

(h) To encourage initiatives highlighting the economic value of healthy ecosystems;

(i) To disseminate information on Operation Phakisa, including in the French language, throughout the countries of the Abidjan Convention in order to promote the adoption of similar approaches;

(j) To create a centre of excellence for training on marine and coastal issues;

(k) To encourage the countries of the Abidjan Convention to request funding from subregional development banks for projects on integrated coastal zone management;

(l) To support and promote the Ocean Synergies Initiative of the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre.
IV. Report of the Executive Director of UNEP on progress made in implementing the decisions adopted at the tenth and eleventh meetings of the Contracting Parties

24. Under the item, the representative of the secretariat presented on the report by the Executive Director of UNEP, set out in document UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/3.

25. During the ensuing discussions, participants congratulated the secretariat on progress in implementing the draft decisions. Two representatives asked that tools and timelines be put in place to measure the impact of the Convention, and several participants suggested that the achievements to date be formally recognized. Several representatives urged those Contracting Parties that had not already done so to pay their contributions to the Trust Fund in full, with one representative noting that contributions could be made by offering the secretariat technical support from high-level experts. The representative of a regional organization asked that the objectives and priorities of the Convention be aligned with those set out in Agenda 2030. Concerning ocean governance and assessment, one representative said that the economic potential of oceans should be maximized and a balance achieved between environmental integrity and sustainable development. Another representative requested that the secretariat increase its efforts to strengthen the capacity of the Convention focal points, saying that they lacked the necessary resources to carry out their mandate. One representative said that Contracting Parties should work together to address the issue of excessive seaweed washing onto the region’s beaches, and to find ways in which the seaweed could be used to benefit the region.

V. Report of the chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Science and Technology

26. Under the item, the representative of the secretariat presented a report on the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Science and Technology (document UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/inf.11). The main purpose of the meeting, held from 15 to 17 March 2017 at the office of the secretariat, had been to provide guidance to Contracting Parties and the secretariat on technological and scientific issues covered in the agenda for the twelfth meeting of the Contracting Parties, taking into account the activities proposed for inclusion in the budget. The experts on the Ad Hoc Committee had analysed the documents and draft decisions prepared for the meeting, including the draft protocols and amendments to the Convention, to ensure that the content was of a sufficiently high standard to put before the meeting. The documents had also been sent to the Contracting Parties to enable national consultations on their content, and the feedback from the countries had been incorporated into revised texts.

VI. Consideration of draft decisions

A. Draft decision [CP-12.1]: Work programme for the period 2017–2020

27. The representative of the secretariat presented the work programme for the period 2017–2020, as contained in document UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/4. He described the rationale behind the programme, its main components and the proposed activities to be undertaken.

28. During the ensuing discussion, a number of representatives praised the programme. One representative said that it was well developed and took into account the concerns of the region. Some representatives raised concerns related to identification of funding sources and mobilization of resources to implement the planned activities, and about the lack of key performance indicators for monitoring and evaluating progress in implementation of the proposed activities. It was agreed that Contracting Parties could submit comments on the programme of work to the secretariat to assist in refining the document.

29. The draft decision was approved without amendment.

B. Draft decision [CP-12.2]: Financial matters

30. In a closed session, the representative of the secretariat presented a report on financial matters, in particular the financial report of the Abu Dhabi Convention Trust Fund for the period 2014–2016, as
contained in document UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/5. He said
that the Convention had been operating with limited budgetary resources, largely because the
contributions of several Contracting Parties were outstanding, as a consequence of which the resources
available did not accord with the mandate and activities of the secretariat.

31. During the ensuing discussion, general concern was expressed about the problems arising from
non-payment of contributions. Several participants drew attention to the difficulties faced in making
timely contributions, including the fact that invoices from UNEP tended to arrive after countries had
already made their budgetary allocations for the following financial year. One participant asked for
more information on the apparent difficulty of opening a bank account for the secretariat in Côte
d'Ivoire. Another participant proposed that those Contracting Parties with outstanding payments
develop a payment plan that the Secretariat could endorse and pursue. Yet another stressed the
important role played by the focal points and the need to support them in that role. Responding on the
matters raised, the representative of the secretariat said that there was no specific problem with
opening a bank account, other than the normal administrative arrangements, and that discussions on
the matter were continuing. The secretariat would follow up on the other issues raised.

32. The chair summarized the recommendations that had emerged from the discussion, including
that Contracting Parties make every effort to submit timely payments and encourage one another to
that regard; that those with overdue payments draw up a payment plan stipulating how they intended
to rectify the shortfall; that efforts be made to submit invoices in a timely manner; and to reinforce the
capacity of the focal points; and that donors and partners be assured that their funding was
matched by similar commitments from the Contracting Parties.

33. The draft decision was approved without amendment.

C. Draft decision [CP.12.3]: Amendments to the Abidjan Convention

34. The representative of the secretariat presented the proposed amendments to the Convention
text, as contained in document UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/7. He
explained that proposals had been made at the ninth and eleventh meetings of the Contracting Parties
to amend the text to reflect current issues relevant to the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and
Southern Africa region. A contact group had thus been established to update the Convention text and
associated protocols.

35. The chair of the contact group on amendments to the Abidjan Convention, and on the addition
of protocols to the Convention, said that the proposed amendments were in line with the objectives of
the Convention as set out in the original text, adopted in 1981. The preamble had been updated to
include the blue economy, sustainable development and climate change; definitions of “coastal
erosion”, “dumping”, “marine and coastal biodiversity” and “ballast water” had been added to the text;
and it was proposed that the geographical scope of the Convention be expanded to include countries
that were not Contracting Parties and areas that extended beyond the Convention’s scope, given the
transboundary nature of river basins. Two alternative ways forward had been suggested: to consider
the proposed changes as amendments to the Convention, or, given the substantive nature of the
proposed amendments, to consider the Convention as new, which would require a new ratification
process.

36. In the ensuing discussion, a number of representatives praised the work of the contact group.
Two representatives expressed concern about the expansion of the geographical scope of the
Convention, which they said might create confusion and hinder implementation. Several other
representatives said that the scope should be expanded, given that many pollutants reaching the sea
originated from inland river basins, and that environmental marine and coastal issues required an
integrated approach.

37. It was agreed that the Convention would be considered amended rather than new, that the new
articles would be approved, and that the proposal to expand the geographical scope of the Convention
required further consideration.

38. The draft decision was approved.

D. Draft decision [CP.12.4]: Work of the Convention on the interface between
freshwater bodies and marine and coastal ecosystems

39. The chair of the contact group on amendments to the Abidjan Convention, and on the addition
of protocols to the Convention, reported on the contact group’s work on the proposed text for a
protocol on integrated coastal zone management, as contained in document UN Environment
(Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/8.
The draft decision was approved without amendment.

E. **Draft decision [CP-12.5]: Sustainable management of mangrove ecosystems in the geographical area of the Abidjan Convention**

41. The chair of the contact group presented amendments to the Abidjan Convention, and on the addition of protocols to the Convention, reported on the contact group’s work on the proposed text for a protocol on sustainable mangrove management, as contained in document UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/9.

42. After a brief discussion on the proposed text, the draft decision was approved without amendment.

F. **Draft decision [CP-12.6]: Environmental norms and standards for offshore oil and gas activities**

43. The chair of the contact group presented amendments to the Abidjan Convention, and on the addition of protocols to the Convention, reported on the contact group’s work on the proposed text for a protocol on environmental norms and standards for offshore oil and gas activities, as contained in document UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/10. After a brief discussion of the proposed text, the chair said that the various comments made would be taken into account in finalizing the text of the protocol.

44. The draft decision was approved without amendment.

G. **Draft decision [CP-12.7]: Regional policy on the integrated management of coastal and marine areas**

45. The representative of the secretariat presented the regional policy on the integrated management of coastal and marine areas, as contained in document UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/12 The aim of the policy, he said, was to improve coordination and communication between various government and other agencies in the management of coastal and marine areas in order to avoid duplication and ensure integrated and efficient resources management.

46. During the ensuing discussion, several representatives raised relevant issues, including the need for safeguarding measures to ensure that actions did not have unforeseen negative consequences elsewhere, the importance of engaging specialist advice to ensure that decision-makers understood the ramifications of their policies; the advisability of studying the feasibility and efficiency of proposed actions; the possible role of an overarching national body for the implementation of marine and coastal management projects; the need to raise awareness of marine and coastal issues at the ministerial level; the importance of cross-border collaboration in the implementation of marine and coastal resources; and the urgency of combating the growing problem of invasive species.

47. It was agreed that additional elements – for example, regarding the provision of technical assistance at the national level – could be added to the decision.

48. The draft decision was approved without amendment.

H. **Draft decision [CP-12.8]: Establishment of the Guinea Current Commission by a protocol of the Abidjan Convention**

49. The representative of the secretariat presented the draft decision.

50. In the ensuing discussion, a number of representatives said that the establishment of the Commission could lead to significant progress on the environmental front. Noting that six years had passed since countries had requested that the Commission be created, several representatives asked for an explanation of the delay and whether it resulted from a lack of funds. The Secretariat was asked to provide clarifications concerning whether the priorities of the Contracting Parties concerning the establishment of the Commission had evolved since the initiative was first launched.

51. The draft decision was approved as amended.

I. **Draft decision [CP-12.9]: Revitalization of the action plan for the protection and development of the marine environment and coastal zones of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region**

52. The representative of the secretariat presented the draft decision, giving an overview of the revitalization of the action plan for the protection and development of the marine environment and coastal zones of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region. The process was ongoing to ensure that
there were synergies between the action plan in question, the protocol to the Convention concerning the concerted and sustainable management of mangrove ecosystems, the action plan on the integrated management of coastal areas, and international norms and standards for offshore oil and gas exploration and exploitation.

53. In the ensuing discussion, one representative asked the secretariat to provide an overview of the action plan and explain why it needed to be revitalized. The representative of the secretariat replied that the action plan had not been updated since its establishment in 1981, whereas the challenges facing the marine environment had evolved.

54. The draft decision was approved without amendment.

J. Draft decision [CP-12.10]: Coastal erosion and climate change

55. The representative of the secretariat, presenting the draft decision, said that the first draft of the programme of work for the period 2017-2020 incorporated the issue of coastal erosion, which represented a significant threat to the region’s economy.

56. In the ensuing discussion, representatives agreed on the importance of adopting the decision and on the need for multilateral cooperation on the issue. They encouraged the secretariat to engage with the relevant financial institutions to also include countries in Central and Southern Africa that were affected by coastal erosion.

57. The draft decision was approved without amendment.

K. Draft decision [CP-12.11]: Marine areas of ecological and biological significance

58. The representative of the secretariat, presenting the draft decision, emphasized the need to harmonize information on the protection of marine ecosystems in order to bridge the gaps that existed in the region with regard to the classification of marine protected areas.

59. In the ensuing discussion, representatives expressed support for the draft decision. Several described the difficulties encountered by their countries in establishing marine protected areas in a timely way and noted that economic and environmental interests sometimes clashed.

60. The draft decision was approved without amendment.

L. Draft decision [CP-12.12]: Conservation and sustainable use of the marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdictions

61. The representative of the secretariat, presenting the draft decision, emphasized the need for African countries to participate in global discussions on marine biodiversity.

62. In the ensuing discussion, representatives agreed that it was indeed essential for African countries to take part in such discussions, and to increase technology transfer and capacity-building efforts. One representative mentioned the difficulty of interesting countries in issues concerning marine areas that were in the high seas, beyond any country’s jurisdiction, and questioned the ability of the Contracting Parties to implement the decision, considering the limited resources available to them. Some participants expressed concern about the capacity needed to implement it and the issue of how information should be shared among countries.

63. The draft decision was approved without amendment.

M. Draft decision [CP-12.13]: Fighting invasive marine and coastal species

64. The representative of the secretariat, presenting the draft decision, introduced the Regional Strategy for the Management of the Coastal and Marine Alien and Invasive Species of West Africa, contained in document UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/11. The matter was particularly pertinent given the invasion of much of the coastline of West Africa by Sergazanum seaweed. Expert consultations had concluded that Sergazanum should be considered in the wider context of aquatic alien and invasive organisms in the marine and coastal ecosystems of West Africa.

65. There was broad support for the draft decision, and several participants reported the difficulties faced by their countries in dealing with Sergazanum and other invasive species. One participant said that greater clarity was needed on the scope of the decision and the organisms to be included.

66. The draft decision was approved without amendment.
N. Draft decision [CP-12.14]: Illegal trade, illicit trafficking, consumption and other uses of protected, endangered and/or vulnerable marine and coastal fauna and flora

67. The representative of the secretariat, introducing the decision, said that the issue had not received the prominence given to other similar illegal activities, such as elephant poaching, and deserved more attention.

68. A number of participants expressed firm support for the draft decision, while recognizing the scale and complexity of the challenge. One participant said it was important to adopt a holistic approach—for example, by harmonizing legislation so that similar penalties were applied in all countries. Another said that greater surveillance and monitoring were needed. The representative of a non-governmental organization said that illegal consumption of aquatic life was a growing problem similar to that of illegal trade in “bush meat”, and that definitions needed to be extended to cover such phenomena. It was also important to enforce applicable legislation at the local level.

69. Other matters raised included the capture of fish while they were spawning, which limited their production and shortened their lifespan; the benefits of sensitizing local populations to the value of preserving marine turtles and other species; and the need to ensure that law enforcement officials were fully informed about illegal trade and related matters.

70. The draft decision was approved as amended with text on harmonization of legislation and the need to train law enforcement agencies and officials.

O. Draft decision [CP-12.15]: Sustainable management of lagoons

71. The representative of the secretariat, introducing the decision, said that the item recognized the important role played by lagoon environments and their ecosystem functions in the socioeconomic well-being of local populations.

72. Several participants reported the challenges faced by their countries in the preservation of lagoon environments, including pollution from industrial and extractive activities, contamination and the associated threat to food supplies, waste disposal and infilling by littoral communities, and discharge of wastewater and chemicals. There was strong support for the draft decision.

73. The draft decision was approved without amendment.

P. Draft decision [CP-12.16]: Marine litter

74. The representative of the secretariat said that the draft decision, which complemented the one on lagoons, referred to solid waste found in marine and coastal environments.

75. Many participants expressed support for the draft decision, with several drawing attention to laws that had been passed banning the sale and manufacture of plastic bags. Attention was also drawn to the growing problem of microplastics, which were difficult to detect and very harmful to marine life.

76. The draft decision was approved without amendment.

Q. Draft decision [CP-12.17]: Management of coastal cities

77. The representative of the secretariat, introducing the draft decision, said that it arose from the problems faced by coastal communities when populations were displaced by erosion and flooding. The secretariat had already collaborated with UN-Habitat to assess the feasibility of creating a sustainable planning framework for coastal towns in the Abidjan Conference geographical area.

78. Several participants expressed their support for the draft decision. Some said that the Convention did not have the resources to take major steps to help countries deal with this major challenge, and that Contracting Parties should take appropriate measures to ensure that coastal settlements were managed in accordance with their commitments under the Convention. One participant said that community contingency plans in place to manage risk in coastal cities should be regularly updated. Some participants highlighted the problems posed by migration to cities, which increased pressure on coastal cities and presented waste management and other challenges.

79. The draft decision was approved as amended with text to reflect the issues raised concerning risk management and the domestic responsibilities of signatories to the Convention.
R. Draft decision [CP.12.18]: Ocean energy

80. The representative of the secretariat introduced an information document containing a report on the ocean energy potential of the West Africa region (UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP 12/INF.15). The aim of the initiative was to present the Contracting Parties with options for tapping the energy potential of the oceans in order to diversify their sources of energy.

81. There was general support for the draft decision. One participant noted that the draft decision was aligned with several African initiatives on renewable energy. Implementation of the provisions of the draft decision would be facilitated by partnership with institutions that were supporting renewable energy projects. Another participant said that the initiative was a timely opportunity to diversify the energy mix in Abidjan Convention countries. Yet another noted that a considerable range of ocean energy opportunities were available in West Africa, including thermal, tidal, wave and wind energy, and that studies were needed to assess their potential. After further discussion, it was agreed that the study to be undertaken should consider the whole range of the blue economy, with a particular focus on the energy dimension.

82. The draft decision was approved as amended, and the secretariat was mandated to support feasibility studies on the various technology options available.

S. Draft decision [CP.12.19]: Alliance of parliamentarians and local elected representatives in support of the Abidjan Convention

83. The representative of the secretariat introduced document UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP 12/INF.15), providing information on the establishment of a network of parliamentarians and local elected representatives. The aim of the initiative would be to involve those groups in the development of instruments that would ultimately be considered under their national decision-making processes.

84. A number of participants expressed support for the draft decision, noting the importance of inclusive stakeholder involvement in the management of marine and coastal ecosystems and the crucial role of government in the creation and enforcement of legislation on environmental matters. One participant drew attention to the role played by local government officials as a communications link between parliaments and local populations.

85. The draft decision was approved without amendment.

T. Draft decision [CP.12.20]: Transatlantic cooperation on the environment

86. Introducing the item, the representative of the secretariat said that the dynamic nature of the oceans, and the interactions between marine currents, required a transoceanic approach to the management of the marine and coastal environment, as was illustrated by the invasion of the West African coast by Sargassum, which originated in the western Atlantic. There was no institutional relationship between the north and south, or the east and west, of the Atlantic Ocean, hence the need to consider how to set up an ad hoc framework for environmental cooperation across the Atlantic.

87. Broad support for the draft decision was expressed. One participant said that the initiative was in line with the objectives and work of the commissions on the Guinean and Benguela currents.

88. The draft decision was approved without amendment.

U. Draft decision [CP.12.21]: African Forum on Oceans

89. Introducing the draft decision, the representative of the secretariat said that the issue concerned the added value of an information-sharing network between stakeholders and the main actors in the African maritime sector.

90. During the ensuing discussion, one participant said that the Abidjan Convention could play a leading role in the organization of the suggested forum, taking account of similar platforms that had been put in place elsewhere.

91. The draft decision was approved without amendment.
V. Draft decision [CP.12.22]: Expression of thanks to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire

92. Introducing the draft decision, the representative of the secretariat said that Côte d'Ivoire had shown commitment by making available the necessary facilities and supporting the secretariat in successfully hosting the twelfth meeting of the Contracting Parties.

93. Many participants thanked the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for hosting the meeting at short notice. Several said that the efforts made had demonstrated the commitment of Côte d'Ivoire to the Convention.

94. The draft decision was approved without amendment.

VII. Consideration of the draft Abidjan declaration on integrated ocean management policy in Africa

95. The representative of the secretariat introduced the draft Abidjan declaration on integrated ocean management policies in Africa, as contained in document UN Environment (Division of Ecosystems)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/6.

96. Subsequently, the meeting decided to establish a contact group, chaired by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire, to further discuss the text of the proposed declaration.

97. The draft declaration was approved without amendment.

VIII. Consideration of the recommendations from the workshop and the draft report of the expert segment

98. The recommendations and draft report of the expert segment were submitted to the meeting for its consideration. The recommendations were adopted, without amendment, for submission to the ministerial segment. The draft report was approved, with minor amendments, for inclusion in the report of the meeting.

IX. Other matters

A. Proposal for additional draft decision

99. Several participants said that a draft decision should be drawn up to recognize the work done to revitalize the process of the Abidjan Convention. It was agreed that interested parties would discuss the matter with the secretariat to decide on the way forward.

B. Clarification concerning the composition of the Bureau

100. One participant sought clarification on the composition of the Bureau. The Executive Secretary confirmed that historically the Bureau had been composed of two members from West Africa, two from Central Africa and one from southern Africa. The representative from southern Africa had always been the only Contracting Party in that subregion, namely South Africa, but the accession of Angola and Namibia meant that further consideration needed to be given to the Bureau membership from the southern African subregion. He also confirmed that the next meeting of the Contracting Parties would be held in Central Africa, according to the rotation system.

C. Statement by the representative of the Gambia

101. The representative of the Gambia expressed his country's appreciation to the Government and the people of Côte d'Ivoire for hosting the twelfth meeting of the Contracting Parties and expressed the hope that his country, which had originally agreed to host the twelfth meeting, would be in a position to host an upcoming meeting.

X. Closure of the expert segment

102. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the expert segment was declared closed at 4:40 p.m. on Wednesday, 29 March 2017.
Part Two: Ministerial segment

I. Opening of the ministerial segment

103. The ministerial segment was opened at 9:45 a.m. on Thursday, 30 March 2017, by the Chair of the meeting, Ms. Edna Molewa, Minister for Environmental Affairs, South Africa.

104. Opening statements were made by Mr. Aoua Bamba, Executive Secretary of the Abidjan Convention; Ms. Mette Wilkie, Director, Division of Environmental Policy Implementation, UNEP; Nana Akoua Tanoe Amoan, King of Nzema; Ms. Molewa; and Mr. Arne Dewitte Ouloto, Minister for the Environment of Côte d’Ivoire.

105. In his statement, Mr. Bamba emphasized the linkages between oceans and issues relating to culture, food production, economic empowerment and employment, transport, recreational activities and tourism. Given the potential wealth that could be contributed by the coastal zone of the West, Central and Southern African regions to the total GDP of the region, it was time, he said, to link oceans to economic growth and development through the implementation of blue economy principles and within the institutional, diplomatic, technical and legal framework afforded by the Abidjan Convention.

106. Ms. Wilkie, in her statement, said that the twelfth meeting of the Contracting Parties marked the end of a decade-long revitalization process that had led to an increase in the number of ratifying States, additional protocols and a rise in productive partnerships. Encouraging the Contracting Parties to contribute their efforts and expertise to in situ initiatives aimed at protecting oceans, she highlighted the recent launch by UNEP of the Clean Seas campaign, the adoption of four resolutions on marine issues at the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, held in Nairobi in May 2016, the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 14, on the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, and the work being done by UNEP to secure commitments from Governments, the private sector and civil society to work towards a pollution-free planet.

107. Nana Akoua Tanoe Amoan, speaking on behalf of the traditional chiefs of Côte d’Ivoire, expressed the hope that the twelfth meeting of the Contracting Parties would lead to the adoption of decisions aimed at resolving the challenges faced by the inhabitants of coastal areas as a result of climate change. Expressing concern about the deification of natural resources, high tides and recording conditions, which had threatened the lives and livelihood of the population, he stressed the need to tackle such threats through optimal coastal management policies. He expressed the hope that the ministers’ deliberations would lead to insightful decisions that would enable coastal populations to live without fear of the future.

108. In her remarks, Ms. Molewa reiterated her appreciation to the Government and people of Côte d’Ivoire for hosting the meeting. The theme of the meeting – “Integrated ocean management policy in Africa” – was appropriate, given the ongoing multisectoral efforts to build on the concept of blue growth and to make sustainable use of marine and coastal resources to promote the socioeconomic well-being of communities. She highlighted the role of the Atlantic Ocean as an artery for trade and gave examples of how South Africa had tapped that potential by developing its coastal infrastructure. She urged parties to support the Antarctic Treaty, citing South Africa’s polar research vessel S.A. Agulhas II as an example of how scientific research could help inform policy development for ocean management. She ended by saying that, while the Abidjan Convention had made significant progress, challenges remained, and further national, regional and international efforts were needed to overcome them.

109. Mr. Ouloto, recalling the history of the Convention, welcomed the revitalization process that had seen it grow in scope and effectiveness over the previous decade. With the establishment of the secretariat in Abidjan, assisted by the Government of Côte d’Ivoire, the meeting at hand had considerable symbolic value. The participation of the King of Nzema in the ministerial segment was a reminder of the multiple threats faced by coastal populations, which could only be addressed by efficient and dynamic cooperation, and by complementarity among relevant organizations at all levels. The high-level consultations offered an opportunity for ministers to articulate views on the management of the oceans, and to demonstrate their commitment to crafting a comprehensive framework of ocean governance that would involve all sectors in harmonized development of marine and coastal resources. She concluded by welcoming all participants and officially declared the meeting open.
II. Adoption of the agenda and organizational matters

110. The provisional agenda (UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/1) was adopted.

III. Report of the Executive Director of UNEP on progress made in implementing the decisions adopted at the tenth and eleventh meetings of the Contracting Parties

111. Under the item, the representative of the secretariat presented the report by the Executive Director of UNEP, as set out in document UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/3. He highlighted the significant achievement in revitalizing the Convention to the extent that it was viewed as the main forum for marine and coastal management issues across the subregion covered by the Contracting Parties. He stressed that as the Convention entered a new era, full payment of dues by the Contracting Parties would be a significant factor in enabling the Convention to fulfill its mandate.

IV. Report of the chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Science and Technology

112. Under the item, the representative of the secretariat presented a report on the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Science and Technology (document UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/inf.11).

V. Financial matters

113. In a closed session, the representative of the secretariat presented a report on financial matters, in particular the financial report of the Abidjan Convention Trust Fund for the period 2014-2016, as contained in document UN Environment (Ecosystems Division)/ABC-WACAF/COP.12/5. He said that the Convention had been operating with limited budgetary resources, largely because the contributions of several Contracting Parties were outstanding, as a consequence of which the resources available did not accord with the mandate and activities of the secretariat.

114. Following the presentation, the Executive Secretary submitted invoices for current and outstanding contributions to the representatives of the Contracting Parties attending the meeting. Several representatives stressed the importance to the successful implementation of the Abidjan Convention of ensuring that all contributions were up to date, though some mentioned that ministers of finance did not always understand the critical significance of the work of the Convention. It was agreed that the secretariat would prepare a brief information document on the success and value of the Convention for presentation by the ministers of the environment to the ministers of finance to support the former's advocacy efforts for timely payment of contributions. It was also agreed that ministers would be provided with information on the contributions of partners and donors, in addition to the data already presented by the secretariat.

115. The Director of the Ecosystems Division of UNEP, speaking on behalf of the Executive Director of UNEP, underscored the serious financial situation of the Convention and the threat that posed to the sustainability and proper functioning of the secretariat. She congratulated those Contracting Parties that had paid their dues and assured and encouraged others to follow suit early in 2017 to help mitigate the cash flow problems facing the secretariat. She assured the Contracting Parties that UNEP was committed to the revitalization of the Convention, adding, however, that the Contracting Parties needed to translate their own commitment into tangible financial contributions.

116. The report on financial matters was adopted.

VI. Report of the credentials committee

117. The representative of the credentials committee, presenting the report on credentials, noted that rule 32 of the Rules of Procedure stipulated that two thirds of the Contracting Parties constituted a quorum. Only 11 of the 19 Contracting Parties had presented original copies of their credentials, while three had submitted copies of their credentials. The meeting agreed to accept the copies of credentials, with the proviso that valid originals be presented to the secretariat within two weeks. The meeting took note of the report of the credentials committee and moved forward with a quorum.
VII. Review and adoption of decisions

118. The draft decisions approved by the participants in the expert segment were submitted to the ministers for their consideration. Proposals were made by the ministers to amend draft decisions CP-8, CP-18, CP-19 and CP-21, and the secretariat was mandated to revise the text of those draft decisions for further consideration by the ministers. The secretariat was also requested to finalize the text of a new decision on expressing thanks to the secretariat of the Convention for the work done to revitalize the Convention.

119. The draft decisions, incorporating the requested amendments, were presented to the meeting for adoption. [to be completed]

120. [to be confirmed] The text of the decisions as adopted by the Contracting Parties is appended to the present report.

VIII. Dates and venue of the thirteenth meeting of the Contracting Parties
[to be completed]

IX. Other matters
[to be completed]

X. Finalization and adoption of the Abidjan Declaration
[to be completed]

XI. Adoption of the report of the meeting
[to be completed]

XII. Closure of the meeting
[to be completed]