



SIDE EVENT

Eighth North Africa Development Forum

The blue economy in North Africa:
the efficiency of maritime transport in facilitating
international trade in the digital age

Marrakech, 23 March 2019

Concept Note



1- Background and rationale

The Blue Economy is an increasingly popular concept that combines the economic use of aquatic and marine resources, such as oceans, seas, rivers, lakes and other bodies of water, with a responsible and sustainable approach. The Blue Economy concept, which can meet the requirements of such an approach, has been discussed in various fora, most recently at the World Sustainable Blue Economy Conference held in November 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya, which was attended by over 18,000 participants, including heads of state and ministers, from more than 180 countries and five continents. The sustainable and responsible use of aquatic and marine resources has been adopted

as a driver of development by development roadmaps such as the United Nations Agenda 2030 (with SDG 14 on sustainable ocean management) and the African Union Agenda 2063 (AUC) which ranks Blue Economy among key development levers for Africa.

Several international institutions including the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) are working on this approach.

A growing number of countries are also taking an interest in this concept and are starting to develop Blue Economy strategies built around economic sectors which use oceans, seas and inland waters ranging from fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, maritime transport, biotechnology, maritime safety and mining, oil and gas.

Given the growing importance of the subject, ECA developed a handbook in 2016 designed to support member countries in the step-by-step development of a Blue Economy and to mainstream the concept into existing national strategies.



With a view to contributing to this reflection, the ECA Office for North Africa is organizing the 8th edition of the North African Development Forum on 23 March 2019 in Marrakech (Kingdom of Morocco), on the sidelines of the 52nd Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. This event will focus on the challenges and prospects of the Blue Economy in North Africa and allow participants to examine the role of maritime transport in facilitating international trade and within the context of the building of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). The forum will be structured around the exploratory study carried out in 2018 on the state of the Blue Economy, drawing on the sectoral analysis of maritime transport in North Africa and its impact on international trade. The reflection will then be expanded to adopt a conceptual and methodological approach based on the handbook and aimed to support member countries efforts to formulate Blue Economy strategies.

2- Forum objectives

The main objective of the forum is to contribute to further reflection on how to mainstream the Blue Economy approach into development policies and strategies using the analysis of maritime transport in North Africa and its impact on international trade as a starting point. The forum will also allow participants to discuss the handbook developed by ECA to assist member countries in formulating a Blue Economy strategy or mainstream the concept into existing national development strategies.

3- Expected outcomes

Specifically, by the end of the forum:

- Participants will be informed about the importance of the Blue Economy approach in development policies and strategies;
- Participants will know more about the Blue Economy Handbook as a tool for developing national and regional policies and strategies;
- Participants will contribute to establishing a formal framework for discussion (electronic platform) in order to continue dialogue and exchange on the subject.

4- Forum structure

The forum is organized around two main sessions

Session 1: Presenting the findings of the sector analysis study on maritime transport in North Africa and its impact on international trade

This session will use the state of maritime transport in North Africa and its impact on international trade as a practical example. Indeed, North Africa is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea and is strategically located on one of the busiest shipping routes from the Suez Canal to the Strait of Gibraltar. Currently, more than 8% of the global maritime trade is conducted through the Suez Canal. This is both an opportunity and a challenge in terms of preserving marine and coastal environments.

Session 2: Formulating a Strategy for the Development of the Blue Economy in Africa

This session will present and discuss the handbook developed by ECA to assist member countries in formulating a Blue Economy



strategy and indicators to measure the state of the Blue Economy. This session will also provide an opportunity to issue recommendations and conclusions to inform the Bureau's work program in this area

5- Forum Format

The forum will be held over three hours and will be conducted in two plenary sessions (Davos style), comprised of a high-level panel meeting followed by discussions to foster exchange and reflection.

6- Participation and contribution

The forum will be attended by experts from national, regional and international institutions as well as private sector representatives selected in the light of their expertise and knowledge of the field. Experts participating in the 52nd Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development will also be able to attend the forum.



7- Date and venue

The forum will be held on **23 March 2019** from 1 to 3 p.m. at the **Palmeraie Golf Palace Hotel** in **Marrakech**, Kingdom of Morocco, on the sidelines of the 52nd Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

8- Working languages

The working languages of the meeting are French, English and Arabic.

9- Contact persons

For further information, please contact :

Focal Point - Coordination

Omar Ismael Abdourahman

abdourahman@un.org

Knowledge Management

Salem Sebbar

sebbar@un.org

Communication

Houda Filali-Ansary

filali-ansary@un.org

Documentation

Mohammed Mosseddek

mosseddek.uneca@un.org

Administration/Logistics

Lahcen Hmade

hmade@un.org

Secretariat

Naima Sahraoui

sahraoui.uneca@un.org

