



PEACE, PROSPERITY AND
REGIONAL INTEGRATION

OPENING STATEMENT
WORKNEH GEBEYEHU, IGAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

**Ministerial Validation Meeting of the IGAD Blue Economy
Strategy (2021-2025)**
Friday, 1st April 2022
Addis Ababa
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia



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- Your Excellency and our gracious host, Woizero **Dagmawit Moges**, Minister of Transport and Logistics, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;
- Your Excellency, **Mohamed Abdoukader Moussa**, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Republic of Djibouti;
- **Dr. Francis Otieno Owino**, Principal Secretary, State Department for Fisheries, Aquaculture and Blue Economy Republic of Kenya;
- Your Excellency, **Mahad Mohamed Hassan**, Deputy Minister of Ports and Marine Transport, Federal Republic of Somalia;
- Your Excellency, **Hon. Onyoti Adigo Nyikwec**, Minister of Livestock and Fisheries, Republic of South Sudan;
- Your Excellency, **Gebreil Ibrahim Mohamed**, Minister of Finance, Republic of Sudan;
- Your Excellency, **Hon. Sam Cheptoris**, Minister of Water and Environment, Republic of Uganda;



ES Statement | Ministerial Meeting to Validate IGAD 2021 – 2025 Blue Economy Strategy

- Your Excellency, **Hans Henric Lundquist**, Ambassador of Sweden to Ethiopia;
- **Dr. David Phiri**, FAO Sub-Regional Coordinator for Eastern African and Representative to AU and UNECA;
- Distinguished **Delegates from our IGAD Member States**;
- Representatives from our **Mother Organization the African Union** and our **Sister Regional Economic Communities**;
- Our steadfast **Development Partners**;
- Fellow **participants here present** and **joining us online**;
- My dear **IGAD Colleagues**;
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**,



ES Statement | Ministerial Meeting to Validate IGAD 2021 – 2025 Blue Economy Strategy

Good morning and **please accept my warm welcome on behalf of the entire IGAD family** as we gather here to validation IGAD 2021 – 2025 Blue Economy Strategy.

At the outset, I would like to **invite us all to appreciate the Government and People of Ethiopia for their warm hospitality and generosity** in hosting this ministerial meeting and the preparatory technical meeting that took place yesterday.



Excellencies, Dear Participants;

Water bodies constitute 71% of our planet but as land-based creatures, **the human race has naturally concentrated the majority of our economic activities on the remaining 29% of earth** that is above water.

As our **population has expanded and industrialised to unprecedented levels in the history of our planet**, our appetite for food and development resources has grown proportionally and this has compelled us to increasingly look towards water and even space-based resources.



In this regard, I am gratified to note that **starting with the 2018 Global Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy that was organized in Nairobi**, Member States of the IGAD region have remained at the forefront of driving the agenda in the development of the Blue Economy.

It is unfortunate that the momentum that this initiative had gathered was one of the first casualties of the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent global lockdown that followed.

I want to **commend all the teams involved that came together to find innovative ways around the obstacles raised by the pandemic** and with single-minded determination kept the process on course to convene us here today.



Ladies and Gentlemen:

Alongside the ecological diversity in our region, **the principal resource that we have been bestowed as IGAD is to be found in our Geo-strategic location** along the Western shore of the Indian Ocean and the southern mouth of the Red Sea.

Our access point to the Suez Canal carries over 20% of global maritime trade valued at over 800 billion dollars. **Moreover, 80% of maritime traffic between Europe and Asia transits through our neighbourhood**, making our region an important link and partner between the two continents.



IGAD Member States have **approximately 6,960 kilometres of coastline accounting for approximately 22.8% of the African total**. Paradoxically, the African coastline is shorter than that of Europe, because there are far fewer inlets, large bays or gulfs.

Nevertheless, the coastal states of IGAD have an **Exclusive Economic Zone of 1.1 million square kilometres whose productive potential remains largely under-utilised**.

Studies have shown that both **traditional and emerging blue economy sectors** have significant but under-capitalised development potential **due to under-investment of intellectual, technical and financial resources**.



On the other hand, we have become **over-reliant on agricultural, rain-fed economies** in a region that consists of 65% water-stressed and 35 % marginal lands. This **has left our region vulnerable to shocks** such as droughts, floods, economic crises, resource conflict and climate change.

As a result, **food insecurity remains a perennial problem in spite of the potential of the blue economy to feed this region.**

It is therefore very distressing that the IGAD region uses 30% to 40% of World Food Programme supplies annually, while our people comprise only 3% of the total world population.

This situation has to change if our region is to become more resilient. We urgently need to **consider new ways of enhancing our rain-fed agricultural economies with blue economy production systems.**



It is increasingly self-evident that the Blue Economy is a **potential driver of growth, development and most importantly, regional integration**, and I will highlight 4 of the most important areas;

- i. **Food security**, the significance of fish in African diets has doubled in the past 7 years and aqua-culture has grown by 10% annually since 2008.
- ii. In the transport sector, the **maritime industry** has been called 'the new frontier of the African renaissance' with the IGAD Coastal Member States poised to gain the most.
- iii. For **extractives and non-renewable resources**, oceans in our region have serious prospects for deep sea mining and energy development.
- iv. **The prospects Sustainable Tourism** have improved tremendously with the development of ports and connecting infrastructure along coastlines of IGAD Member states.



We are also **learning from the experiences of other regions which have prioritized the blue economy** to support the socio-economic development, for instance;

- i. The Seychelles has **formulated a National Blue Economy Roadmap** including establishing a “Ministry of Finance, Trade and the Blue Economy”.
- ii. Canada which has committed itself to lead the blue economy agenda by **establishing the Ocean Super-cluster (OSC)**.
And importantly for us here;
- iii. Sweden’s holistic maritime **strategy for people, jobs and the environment** which aims to socially, environmentally and economically develop the Swedish maritime sector in a sustainable manner.



ES Statement | Ministerial Meeting to Validate IGAD 2021 – 2025 Blue Economy Strategy

It is in response to these challenges and opportunities, that we are gathered here to **validate the IGAD Blue Economy strategy (2021 – 2025)** and its **accompanying Implementation Plan**, both of which are **anchored on 3 principles**; (i) the **circular economy** (ii) **good governance** and (iii) **environmental and social sustainability**.

These documents are naturally **aligned to the 6th Goal of the AU Agenda 2063** which defines Africa's Blue Economy strategy.

Our strategy also **complements the UN declaration of 2021 to 2031 as the Decade of the Oceans**. This strategy therefore domesticates and cascades our shared vision for the blue economy and percolates it down to regional level.



The vision of our Blue Economy strategy is to **develop an inclusive and sustainable Blue Economy that significantly contributes to the transformation of the Horn of Africa.**

The accompanying implementation plan will **facilitate increased cooperation and regional integration** by strengthening support to member states to effectively translate Blue Economy policies into tangible actions.

However, in order to effectively provide a strong anchor for ongoing Blue Economy initiatives and efforts, **the strategy and implementation plan before you today will require the full and formal adoption and validation by our Member States at Ministerial level.**



I therefore **entreat our Ministers and Member State representatives here present to favourably consider the policy strategy, implementation roadmap and implementation recommendations.**

The adoption of this basket will **constitute a regional blueprint to guide our individual Member States in formulating National Blue Economy Strategies.**

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen;

In closing, **let me revert to my extensive expertise in Peace and Security** and lend emphasis the fact that maritime safety and security is integral to a strong blue economy.



The development of a strong blue economy can only occur sustainably in the context of stability. **Peace on land, translates into peace on the water - not the other way around.**

Let us digest the **findings of the 2021 report of the African Union Peace and Security Council**, which underscored that illegal and illicit activities such as trafficking in humans, weapons and narcotics as well as commercialized piracy, constitute the greatest threats to the development of the blue economy in the continent and our region.

I therefore urge all of our partners to **work closely together with IGAD in support current stabilisation efforts and strengthen the maritime regulatory environment**, in order to improve our capacity to police, prosecute and deter crimes affecting the blue economy.



Equally, I call upon our member states **to create an enabling environment for the private sector to invest in the development of the blue economy** of the region.

Finally, I would like to **recognise that this ministerial meeting would not be possible without** the indulgence of our generous hosts, the **Republic of Ethiopia** and the **commitment of our IGAD Member States**, who have worked tirelessly with us in the spirit of regional cooperation on diverse thematic areas this week; first on **Health**, then **Education** and today the **Blue Economy**.



Special recognition goes out **to the Government and People of Sweden**, who through their substantial technical and financial support, have been our unwavering partner in the development of the Blue Economy and other sectors;

Our deepest gratitude to the **European Union**, our most steadfast partner and finally the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations** whose global experience and assistance is of great value to IGAD.

Thank You Very Much.