



OFFICIAL STATEMENT

H.E. Workneh Gebeyehu, IGAD Executive Secretary

2nd IGAD Blue Economy Knowledge Share Fair

26th November 2024 | Djibouti

- Honourable Ministers,
- Distinguished Delegates from IGAD Member States,
- Esteemed Development Partners and Stakeholders,
- IGAD Colleagues,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

1. I am delighted to have this opportunity to welcome you all to the **IGAD Blue Economy Knowledge Share Fair** here in the beautiful and majestic city of Djibouti, the headquarters of IGAD and one of our littoral member states.
2. **In May 2023, Djibouti adopted its National Blue Economy strategy developed with the support of IGAD.** The blue economy is a significant sector of the national economy in Djibouti, contributing approximately **19% to the national GDP** and accounting for **27% of total jobs in our host country.**
3. **This strategy is therefore vital in aiding to steer the development of the country's Blue Economy** and positioning our Member State and host country to be a regional power in the development of this very important sector and contributing towards the realization of Djibouti Vision 2035.



4. **This is the second Blue Economy Knowledge Share Fair organized by IGAD, following our inaugural event in June 2023 in Mombasa, Kenya**, which was jointly organized with the African Union, Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) and the EU-funded Eco-fish Programme.
5. It is therefore a great honour that you have all responded positively to this initiative and **your presence here is a testament to your willingness to share knowledge and experiences** for the sustainable utilization of our marine and aquatic resources and services for the socio-economic development and prosperity of the IGAD region.
6. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden for all the assistance extended to IGAD regional programs and projects and particularly for the support to the IGAD Blue Economy project through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

The Significance of the Blue Economy

Honourable Ministers and Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Globally, the blue economy is estimated to be worth between **1.5 trillion** and **3 trillion dollars** annually. Fisheries and aquaculture contribute approximately **100 billion dollars** per year and support around **260 million jobs worldwide**. Coastal tourism on its own, generates about **161**



billion dollars annually which is approximately **59% of the combined GDP of IGAD Member States.**

8. The blue economy accounts for roughly **3.5% to 7%** of global GDP and employs about **1%** of the global workforce or **approximately 35 million people**, while approximately **8%** of the world's population that is **approximately 640 million people** (more than twice the IGAD Population) rely on fisheries for their livelihoods.

9. Sweden's support for the IGAD Blue Economy Project is the product of our long-standing strategic partnership. **When it comes to the Blue Economy, Sweden stands out as a global leader in sustainable blue economy practices**, with a strong emphasis on innovation and environmental stewardship. The Swedish blue economy contributes approximately **15 billion dollars** annually to its national GDP, driven by sectors such as fisheries, aquaculture, maritime transport, and marine tourism.

10. Sweden's commitment to sustainable practices is evident in its ambitious goal to become carbon neutral by 2045. Sweden already has a well-developed offshore wind energy sector that contributes significantly to its renewable energy portfolio and aims to produce **100 terawatt-hours (TWh)** of renewable electricity by 2040, with offshore wind expected to play a crucial role in achieving this target.



The IGAD Blue Economy

11. Like our Swedish partners, the IGAD region is strategically positioned along the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean, and in the Nile Basin, endowed with tremendous blue economy resources.

12. The coastal member states of IGAD have an aggregated **Exclusive Economic Zone of 1.1 million square kilometres** and close to **7,000 kilometres** of coastline. The region also boasts significant freshwater bodies such as the Great Lakes, transboundary rivers, and internationally recognized wetlands like the Sudd Wetlands in South Sudan.

13. However, **the blue economy potential in our region is largely under-exploited**. Traditional sectors such as fisheries, tourism, mineral extraction, and marine and river transport are showing strong evidence of development capacities. At the same time, **emerging sectors** such as aquaculture, marine biotechnology, desalination, and renewable energy **require extra attention as they need substantial investment initiatives**.

14. In this regard, I am honoured to tell you Honourable Ministers and Distinguished Delegates, that **IGAD is the first Regional Economic Community under the AU architecture to develop and adopt a regional blue economy strategy** that aligns with Africa's Blue Economy Strategy. The IGAD Regional Blue Economy Strategy is designed to guide member states in effectively addressing critical challenges to blue economy growth.



Focus on Knowledge Generation and Information Sharing

Honourable Ministers and Distinguished Delegates,

15. As we gather here today, I want to emphasize that **knowledge generation and information sharing among all stakeholders**, from member states' policymakers and practitioners at regional and national levels to implementation agencies is vital for advancing our blue economy initiatives.
16. This fair therefore provides an invaluable platform for exchanging ideas on best practices that can enhance our collective efforts. In particular, **we must focus on empowering coastal communities and especially women** who play a critical role in fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Gender equity is essential not only for social justice but also for improving food security through enhanced participation of women in decision-making processes related to resource management.
17. This share fair will help **strengthen and support IGAD's knowledge management unit to ensure that information is accessible to all member states and stakeholders** involved in the blue economy. We aim to document success stories that highlight innovative practices while promoting gender equity within these sectors.

Conclusion

18. In conclusion, I want to stress that one of IGAD's key priorities is establishing partnerships with development partners to explore and sustainably utilize our blue economy resources for socio-economic transformation.



19. As we move forward, it is crucial that **we deepen our collaboration with all partners represented here with us and beyond not only in funding but also in sharing best practices** in sustainable fisheries management, renewable energy development, and marine conservation strategies.

20. Let us seize this opportunity to collaborate effectively towards unlocking the immense potential of our blue economy for sustainable development while **ensuring inclusivity through gender equity and empowerment of all stakeholders involved and fishing communities in particular**. I wish you all fruitful discussions and successful deliberations over these next few days.

Thank you!