

## Concept Note

### 3rd High Level Conference of the Blue Belt Initiative

*Building a foundation to boost Blue Food and Jobs under a Blue Economy development approach*

7th-8th October 2024, Tangier, Kingdom of Morocco

## Context

Developing sustainable blue economies in Africa offers a critical pathway to achieving continental and global aspirations outlined in the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063: The Africa “We Want” as well as the African Union Blue Economy Strategy, and other regional strategic frameworks. The Blue Economy, encompassing activities such as fishing, aquaculture, biotechnology, marine transport, and marine tourism, is essential and valuable for Africa’s sustainable growth and prosperity. Climate change, environmental management challenges, anthropogenic effects, and the increasingly intense use of the oceans impact the continent’s livelihoods, health, water, energy, and food security. As oceans play a crucial role in Africa, approximately 38% of African populations live within 100 kilometres of the coast, relying on maritime resources for food, employment, and income. The fisheries sector in Africa is vital, employing over 12 million people and contributing around US\$10 billion to the continent’s GDP annually. In many African countries, seafood provides more than 20% of protein intake from animal-based food, which is essential for meeting the continent’s food and nutritional security needs. Therefore, creating blue jobs and enhancing food value chains (blue food) are crucial for promoting sustainable growth in the blue economy and achieving sustainable development in Africa’s coastal marine areas.

At both the continental and global levels, various multilateral, international, regional, and national public and private entities are collaborating to design and implement concrete solutions to maximise the utilisation of coastal marine natural resources, build a climate-ready African Coasts, and preserve the oceans. Within this framework, the Kingdom of Morocco supports the Blue Belt Initiative (BBI), which aims to sustain high-quality ocean observations and ocean science, empower the fisheries industry to achieve climate and economic resilience and promote sustainable aquaculture practices to mitigate climate change. The BBI serves as a platform to drive the blue economy through south-south and multilateral cooperation mobilising financial and technical support to address Africa’s challenges and gaps in the blue economy sector. Strengthening the BBI platform at regional and continental levels can reinforce existing coordination and collaboration mechanisms accelerating the implementation of blue economy initiatives. The World Bank, with financial support from PROBLUE, is engaging country stakeholders, development partners, the private sector, and civil society in this effort.

In line with its efforts to implement an inclusive blue economy, the Kingdom of Morocco in collaboration with the World Bank, is organising the 3rd High Level Conference of the Blue Belt Initiative on the 7th and 8th of October in Tangier, Morocco. The event, themed “Building a Foundation to Boost Blue food and jobs under a Blue Economy Development Approach” aims to foster cooperation, identify partnership opportunities, and develop action plans to assist countries in preparing blue economy development roadmaps, based on scientific and expert approaches.

Building on the outcomes of the 1st and 2nd high-Level Conferences of the BBI, the Agadir Declarations of 2019 and 2023, this edition aims to showcase approaches, instruments, and roadmaps to accelerate blue food and jobs in Africa. It also seeks to inspire, discuss, and agree on tailored solutions to accelerate the blue economy. The BBI and the World Bank are combining efforts to enhance network capacity to identify and implement actions and investments that foster the creation of blue jobs and promote blue food as foundational elements for sustainable development.

This event provides momentum for ocean action in Africa, offering an opportunity to build synergies that accelerate the blue economy paradigm in Africa and pursue a comprehensive cooperation reform towards greater solidarity and collective action for a resilient ocean.

## Objectives and expected outcomes

### The 3rd High level Conference's main goal is to boost blue food and jobs in Africa in line with the blue economy approach.

Organizing a "Blue Food and Jobs Conference" in Tangier, supported by the Morocco BBI, offers a vital opportunity to advance sustainable development in the marine and fisheries sectors. This event will highlight the potential for economic growth and job creation within coastal communities, showcasing how sustainable marine practices can generate employment and improve livelihoods. By emphasizing sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, the conference would also underscore the critical role of blue food in ensuring food security and nutrition across the continent.

The conference would serve as a platform for innovation and technology transfer, bringing together experts, policymakers, researchers, and industry stakeholders to develop new methods and technologies that enhance productivity and environmental stewardship. It will address climate change challenges and opportunities, highlighting strategies for climate mitigation and adaptation and coastal resilience. Additionally, the event will promote regional and international collaboration, strengthening partnerships and fostering policy development to support sustainable marine practices and economic growth. Overall, the conference will raise public awareness of the vital role of the blue economy and contribute to the success of the BBI and promote the development of a sustainable marine economy across Africa.

### The specific objectives

- Strengthen BBI's strategic role in promoting blue food and jobs in the continent and beyond.
- Highlight WB's role in supporting countries to develop sustainable blue economies.
- Identify a common approach to promote blue food and jobs.
- Map blue financial flows to promote sustainable blue food and jobs.
- Promote BBI as an enabler of Blue food and jobs.

### The expected outcomes

- Identified common approaches to promote blue food and jobs.
- Mapped blue financing to advance sustainable development, job creation and food security.
- Offering strategies for operationalizing and measuring the impacts of projects on blue food and jobs.

- Recommended a 5-year strategy and implementation plan of blue food and jobs building on existing Africa blue economy strategy and based on best BBI science, data and information.
- Supported concrete actionable solutions to address challenges and leverage opportunities in the Blue Economy (BE) sector.

## Audience

- High-level government officials
- Innovative project leaders
- Regional African and international organisations
- Scientists and Experts community
- Media

## Format

- **Monday October 7th: Scientific Conference (Day 1)**

This day will be dedicated to discussing and addressing various themes of blue food and jobs from a scientific and practical perspective. The focus will be on identifying challenges, exploring opportunities, and outlining concrete solutions and pathways based on scientific research and expert diagnosis and recommendations to enhance the development of blue food and jobs.

- **Tuesday October 8th: Ministerial Conference (Day 2)**

This day will highlight countries' contributions, potentials, and challenges in implementing blue food and jobs. It will provide an opportunity to accelerate south-south and multilateral cooperation. Under the Blue Economy strategy, a common declaration to promote blue food and jobs in Africa is expected.

## Agenda

### Day 1: The imperative of scientific knowledge on marine and coastal ecosystems to accelerate Blue food and jobs in Africa

**Main objective:** To assess from a scientific point of view the health status of the coastal oceans in Africa, focusing on needs and solutions to enhance blue food provision and job creation.

**Framework for discussion:** Keynote speakers will introduce each topic, setting the stage for the roundtable discussions. Experts and scientists will deliver analytical presentations and case studies throughout these sessions. Following this, they will engage in dialogue to extract and convey the core messages, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of each topic.

09h00-10h00

#### Opening speeches

**His Excellency Mohammed Sadiki**, Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development, Waters and Forests;

- **Mr Ahmadou Ndiaye**, Country Director- World Bank.

10h00-11h00

#### Status of Blue Economy in coastal African countries

The Blue Economy (BE) holds immense potential for coastal African countries offering significant benefits in terms of blue food and blue jobs. With Africa's vast marine and coastal resources, sectors like sustainable fisheries, aquaculture, marine biotechnology, and coastal tourism present critical opportunities for economic growth, job creation, and food security. Blue food industries are essential for nutrition and livelihoods, particularly in communities reliant on marine resources. The development of blue jobs through sectors like renewable ocean energy and eco-friendly coastal tourism can help foster economic growth and boost resilience. However, the status of BE strategies varies across African regions and countries. Some nations have made progress in BE strategy planning and implementation, but many other coastal nations are in the early stages of policy formulation. The African Union has outlined a continental BE agenda, but regional cooperation is crucial for success. Challenges such as overfishing, pollution, weak governance, and limited funding persist. Yet, opportunities abound. Harnessing scientific innovation, fostering regional collaboration, and developing inclusive policies could accelerate BE growth, ensuring sustainable use of marine resources while addressing unemployment and food insecurity.

#### The session objectives :

- Identify best practices in BE policy implementation.
- Assess strategies to scale BE initiatives promoting blue food and jobs.
- Overcoming challenges for sustainable BE growth.

### Keynote Speaker

- **Mr. Hamady Diop**, International development consultant

### Panelists

- **Mr. George Mba Asseko**, Division Blue Economy - African Union
- **Ms Linda Etta**, Senior Blue Economy Advisor at the African Union
- **Dr Obinna Anozie**, Policy Analyst- Fisheries and Aquaculture, AU - IBAR
- **Dr Amadou Tall**, Senior Fisheries and Aquaculture Expert- ECOWAS

11h00-11h15

Coffee break

11h15-12h15

## Unlocking the potential of Blue Food through scientific innovation under the blue economy development approach

Unlocking the potential of blue food through scientific innovation is crucial for addressing Africa's food security, economic development, and climate adaptation needs. The continent's extensive coastal and marine ecosystems—from the Atlantic coast of West Africa to the Indian Ocean—provide a rich source of blue food, including fisheries and aquaculture, supporting millions of livelihoods. However, challenges such as overfishing, pollution, and climate change threaten these resources. To address these issues, advances in scientific innovation—such as sustainable aquaculture technologies, ecosystem-based fisheries management, and climate-resilient practices—are essential. This session will highlight the importance of fisheries science in ensuring the blue economy's sustainability and particularly for fostering blue food and jobs. It aims to encourage countries to invest in tailored research aligned with their specific priorities, recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective. Participants will explore examples of approaches to strengthen the fisheries value chain and enhance the long-term viability of related sectors.

### The session will focus on three key areas:

- Advancing innovative scientific approaches to improve the productivity and sustainability of blue food sectors.
- Integrating these innovations into national policies to enhance food security and alleviate poverty.
- Fostering public-private partnerships to scale scientific breakthroughs across coastal communities.

### Keynote speaker

- **Dr. Hassan Moustahfid**, Keynote speaker, Senior Marine Scientist & Manager- NOAA, US IOOS, Co-Chair UN Ocean Decade Africa Task Force. Co-chair of the scientific committee - BBI

### Panelists

- **Dr Aboubacar Sidibé**, Chief technical advisor at FAO- Regional coordinator of CCLME project
- **Mr Amrani Mohamed**, Secretary General of the Moroccan National Institute of Fisheries Research (INRH)
- **Dr Kharroubi Mariem**, Head of INRH's specialized seafood valorization and technology center in Agadir
- **Dr Patrice Brehmer**, Senior Marine Scientist (IRD), Scientific Adviser of the Permanent Secretary of the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC), Co-chair of the scientific committee - BBI

12h15-13h15

## Exploring high-growth Blue Economy sectors for job creation and workforce development in Africa

Africa's blue economy (BE) presents vast potential for job creation and workforce development, particularly in high-growth sectors like sustainable fisheries, aquaculture, coastal tourism, renewable ocean energy, and marine biotechnology. With its extensive coastline and rich marine resources, these sectors offer significant opportunities to generate employment, especially for youth and coastal communities. To fully unlock this potential, successful inclusive blue business models that foster sustainable blue jobs must be developed and implemented. Additionally, discussions will explore high-growth blue economy sectors that hold the most promise for job creation and how science, knowledge, data, and tools, such as Marine Spatial Planning, can power the development of these sectors. By focusing on inclusive business models and sustainability, Africa's blue economy can drive poverty alleviation, enhance food security, and create a resilient, future-ready workforce.

### Key objectives for sessions focused on these sectors include:

- Identifying evidence-based strategies for enhancing workforce skills and technical training, ensuring that workers are equipped to meet the demands of blue economy industries;
- Promoting research-driven innovation to ensure sustainability in fisheries and aquaculture, balancing economic growth with ecosystem preservation;
- Developing policies that integrate scientific research with market needs, ensuring sustainable and equitable growth across high-potential sectors.

### Keynote speaker

- **Mrs Majida Maarouf**, Director of the National Agency for Aquaculture Development (ANDA), Morocco

### Panelists

- **Mrs Yolanda Molares**, Director of Instituto para el Crecimiento Sostenible de la Empresa (ICSEM)
- **Dr Ussif Rashid Sumaila**, University of British Columbia, Fisheries Economics Research Unit, Canada
- **Mr Georges Mba Asseko**, Head of Blue Economy, African Union

13h15-14h15

Lunch break

14h15-15h15

## Addressing challenges: towards building a resilient, climate-ready Africa

As Africa grapples with the escalating impacts of climate change, its fisheries and blue economy sectors are confronting significant challenges. Rising sea temperatures, ocean acidification, and shifting fish stocks are jeopardizing the livelihoods of millions who rely on these resources for sustenance and employment. To build a climate-ready Africa, it is crucial to not only adapt fisheries and aquaculture practices but also enhance the overall sustainability of the blue economy. By incorporating climate resilience into the blue economy framework, Africa can safeguard its marine resources, ensure blue food security, and foster the development of sustainable blue jobs. This panel discussion will explore how Africa can address these pressing challenges through innovative strategies and collaborative efforts.

### The objectives of the session are to:

- Discuss innovative approaches to boost the resilience of fisheries and aquaculture against climate impacts, focusing on adaptive management and sustainable resource use.
- Explore strategies for integrating climate resilience into the blue economy, emphasizing sustainable practices in fisheries, aquaculture, and marine biotechnology to support long-term economic growth and job creation.
- Examine the role of effective policy frameworks and regional cooperation in advancing blue food security and generating blue jobs, highlighting the need for cross-sectoral collaboration and community engagement.

### Keynote speaker

- **Pr. Julia L. Blanchard**, Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania (on Zoom)

### Panelists

- **Mrs Carole Megevand**, Program Leader Sustainable Development- World Bank
- **Mr. Rama Chandra Reddy**, Senior Environmental economist specialist- Climate Change impact in fisheries
- **Dr Jilali Bensbai**, Head of Fisheries department- INRH
- **Dr Abdoulaye Sarré**, Expert, former chair of small pelagic assessment in North West Africa

15h15-16h15

### Fueling Blue Food and Jobs: Advancing Sustainable Growth through Regional Tools, Cooperation, Science-Based Mechanisms, and Policy for the Sustainable Use and Exploitation of Africa's Ocean

The fisheries sector is an essential component of the blue economy in Africa. Despite its considerable development potential, it faces numerous challenges whose management can only be effective through strengthened and integrated regional cooperation. The contrasting evolution of the fisheries sector in Africa highlights the diversity and complexity of these challenges, whether they are environmental, technological, or related to the production of scientific knowledge and the governance of the ecosystems that support the fisheries industry.

To address these challenges, many national strategies have been developed, accompanied by projects, programs, and other implementation mechanisms, largely supported by regional and international cooperation frameworks. However, in many cases, these efforts struggle to meet their objectives and to sustainably transform the fisheries sector into an economically viable, socially inclusive, and ecologically sustainable activity.

### The objectives for the session are:

- Showcase examples of successful south-south and multilateral cooperation in the context of Africa's ocean research and blue economy development action.
- Highlight regional scientific cooperation that fosters sustainable growth in the fisheries sectors.
- Discuss challenges, opportunities and best practices for enhancing science-based policy and governance in African coastal and marine ecosystems.
- Identify pathways to promote the role of African-led research, expertise and knowledge exchange in driving sustainable development and effective resource management.

16h15-16h30  
Coffee break

### Keynote speaker

- **His Excellency Dr Paubert Mahatante**, Minister for Fisheries and the Blue Economy of the Republic of Madagascar

### Panelists

- **Dr Abdelmalek Faraj**, General Director of the National Institute for Fisheries Research (INRH), Morocco
- **Mrs Tandstad Merete**, Coordinator of EAF Nansen- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- **Mr Khallahi Brahim**, Permanent Secretary of the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC)
- **Mr Miguel Bernal**, Executive Secretary of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)
- **Mr Taoufik El Ktiri**, Executive Secretary of The Ministerial Conference on fisheries cooperation among African States bordering the Atlantic Ocean (ATLAFCO)

16h30-17h30

## Financing blue food and jobs projects and programs in Africa

In Africa, securing financing is crucial for advancing blue food and blue jobs initiatives, which are vital for the continent's economic and environmental sustainability. The blue economy—spanning fisheries, aquaculture, and marine biotechnology—holds immense growth potential, but unlocking this potential requires adequate funding. Investments are needed to drive innovation, enhance infrastructure, and support sustainable practices, thereby ensuring food security and job creation. However, challenges such as limited capital access, inadequate financial mechanisms, and high-risk perceptions must be addressed. Effective financing strategies are essential to overcoming these barriers, fostering the development of sustainable blue food industries, and creating resilient blue jobs.

### The objectives for the session are:

- Explore innovative financing mechanisms and models to support blue food and blue jobs projects in Africa, including public-private partnerships and impact investments.
- Assess the current investment landscape and identify critical areas where financial support is most needed to drive blue food, blue jobs and sustainable development in the blue economy.
- Discuss how financing can be utilized to support Blue Belt Initiatives (BBI), focusing on enhancing ecosystem protection and sustainable resource management in marine and coastal areas.

### Keynote Speaker

**Mr. Kieran Kelleher**, Fisheries Consultant - World Bank

### Panelists

- **Mrs Joan Fulton**, Senior Advisor - Ocean Assets
- **Dr Ahmed Khan**, Manager of Agribusiness Development Division- African Development Bank
- **Mrs Najat El Moutchou**, Environmental consultant - World Bank
- **Mr Mahmoud Arbouch**, Economist at Policy Center for the New South (PCNS)

17h30-18h30

## Recommendations and closing remarks

- Demo projects and programs to showcase the blue food and jobs potential financing mechanisms
- 5-year strategy plan for the blue food and jobs



## Day 2: Ministerial Segment dialogue of the BBI High-level Conference: Demands and oriented solutions to accelerate Blue Food and Jobs in Africa

**Main objective :** Exchange on demands and potential oriented solutions adapted to African regions and countries to provide blue food and create blue jobs, considering the status of the oceans and the status of the Blue Economy in Africa.

The solutions will concern mechanisms of cooperation and financial mobilisation, in order to support science, governance policy and blue transformation in Africa.

**Framework for discussion :** Four expert-led panels will address key cross-cutting topics on implementing specific targeted solutions tailored to African context. The sessions will explore strategies to advance the Blue Economy with a focus on blue food and jobs creation. High-level keynote speakers deliver experts' and scientists' recommendations to set the scene for each panel, followed by ministerial speeches to further shape the dialogue.

10h00- 10h45

### Introductory movie : Set the Scene (2 min each)

#### Opening speeches (8 min each)

- **His Excellency Mohammed Sadiki**, Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development, Waters and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco
- **Her Excellency Mrs. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko**, Commissioner of agricultural food and blue economy of the African Union
- **His Excellency Mr. Omar Hilale**, Morocco's Permanent Representative of Morocco to the UN :
- The importance of African and South-South cooperation to meet aquatic food sovereignty
- **Mrs Maria Sarraf**, Practice Manager for the Environment, Natural Resources and the Blue Economy in the MENA region

#### Keynote speaker (8 min)

- **Pr. Rashid Sumaila** in Oceans & Fisheries Economics of the University of British Columbia : *Blue food & jobs development sustainably is possible and economically beneficial*

10h45 - 11h45

### Session 1

#### Science and Data

- **Take away from day 1 : Dr. Patrice Brehmer**, Senior Marine Scientist (IRD), Scientific Adviser of the Permanent Secretary of the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC), Co-chair of the scientific committee - BBI ( 3 min).
- **Expert insight: Dr. Hassan Moustahfid**: Co-Chair of the Africa and Adjacent Island States Ocean Decade Taskforce: What science and data can power blue food and Jobs? (2 min)

### Ministerial speeches:

Contribution, challenges and demands (8 min / per Head of Delegation)

*(The list of countries for the ministerial speeches is subject to change based on attendee confirmations.)*

- Angola
- Benin
- Burkina Faso
- Burundi
- Cabo Verde
- Cameroun
- Central African Republic
- Côte d'Ivoire

11h45- 12h35

### Session 2

#### Governance and policy

- **Take away from day 1 : Dr. Georges Mba Asseko** Head of UA- Blue Economy Division (3 min)
- **Expert insight : Dr. Miguel Bernal** Representative of FAO : What policies and governance are needed to meet the needs of Blue Food and Jobs? (2 min)

### Ministerial speeches:

Contribution, challenges and demands (8 min / per Head of Delegation)

*(The list of countries for the ministerial speeches is subject to change based on attendee confirmations.)*

- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Equatorial Guinea
- Eswatini
- Gabon
- Gambia
- Ghana
- Guinea
- Guinea Bissau

12h35-12h50

#### Official ceremony: Restitution of scientific survey in Benin and Liberia

- **Dr. Abdelmalek Faraj**, Director of INRH : Introduction speech (2 min)  
*The movie of the Survey : Dive in the scientific survey in Liberia and Benin*
- **Dr. Najib Charouki**, Head of mission in Liberia and Benin (5 min)

12h50-14h30: Lunch Break

14h30-15h30

### Session 3

#### Finance

- **Take away from day 1 : Ms. Sylvia Michele Diez**, Program Manager for PROBLUE at the World Bank (3 min)
- **Expert insight : (TBD)** what financing opportunities are available to develop blue food and jobs (2 min)



### Ministerial speeches:

Contribution, challenges and demands (8 min /per Head of Delegation)

*(The list of countries for the ministerial speeches is subject to change based on attendee confirmations.)*

- Kenya
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Liberia
- Libya
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Mali
- Mauritania

15h30-16h30

### Session 4

#### Cooperation

- **Take away from day 1 : Dr. Brahim Kallahi** Permanent Secretary of SRFC (3 min)
- **Expert insight : Dr. Diop Hamady**, Post Malabo Presse Coordinator : How could we go forward by south-south cooperation to develop blue food and jobs? (2 min)

### Ministerial speeches:

Contribution, challenges and demands (8 min / per Head of Delegation)

*(The list of countries for the ministerial speeches is subject to change based on attendee confirmations.)*

- Niger
- Republic of Congo
- Rwanda
- Sao Tome and Principe
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone
- South Sudan
- Sultanate of Oman

16h30-17h00

#### Recommendations and closing remarks

- Promote a roadmap for the blue economy in Africa.
- Promote the BBI as an accelerator to blue economy programs in Africa.