



## 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 and 8th October 2024

## Expert Remarks

### Science and Data

**Dr Patrice Brehmer**  
**Scientific Advisor of the Permanent Secretary of the**  
**Sub-regional fisheries Commission. Co-chair of the**  
**scientific committee- BBI**

The Blue Economy can simply be defined as the maritime economy with a sustainable and socially inclusive approach. Yesterday's technical session highlighted the strong potential of the blue economy to ensure food sovereignty for African states, strengthen climate resilience and support economic development through job creation. The challenges are certainly numerous, but scientists are in a position to provide solutions to the demands of political decision-makers, as long as they are given the means to do so. And by the same means, they can help these decision-makers move towards sustainable governance of marine resources. The relationship between blue economy initiatives and scientific research is inextricable, and cannot be dissociated. Any effort to develop sectors such as fishing or aquaculture without a solid base of local scientific expertise risks being ineffective, or even counter-productive. Investment in sustainable practices must be accompanied by solid interdisciplinary scientific support. Common solutions are emerging, and require political support.

A profound transformation in the way policies are approached to support innovation-driven research, to ensure that government strategies and budgets are well directed. A profound transformation in the approach to policies supporting innovation-driven research, to ensure that government strategies and budgets are well directed.

Each state should support, and ensure the effective operation of, efforts to collect standardized, long-term "marine" data essential to the development of Blue Economy, and which are often the same as those required for the proper management of fisheries resources.

We recommend setting up and maintaining a digital analytical platform to facilitate, improve and accelerate the delivery of scientific expertise. This type of platform supports the sharing of information, thereby enhancing the excellence of scientific advice and facilitating governance.



## Science and Data

**Dr Hassan Moustahfid**  
**Senior Marine Scientist - NOAA Vice Chair UN Ocean**  
**Decade Africa Task Force Co-chair of the scientific**  
**committee - BBI**

Today, I urge you to recognize the vital importance of investing in data and science for the future of our aquatic blue food sectors—fisheries and aquaculture—and the jobs they create.

First, consider sustainable fisheries management. My Agency, The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has effectively utilized scientific assessments to rebuild fish stocks. As of 2023, 50 stocks have been restored, thanks to precise catch limits based on robust data. This successful management has not only protected marine ecosystems but has also secured thousands of jobs in the U.S. fishing industry. By investing in similar initiatives, we can ensure sustainable practices that benefit our economies and preserve our resources.

Next, let's examine aquaculture. Chile's transformation of its salmon farming industry showcases the power of scientific investment. By employing data analytics for fish health and feeding practices, Chile has become a global leader, creating thousands of jobs in rural areas. We can adopt this model to enhance our own aquaculture sectors, fostering innovation and sustainable employment.

Lastly, we must prioritize climate resilience—what I call “Africa Climate Ready Fisheries.” Through scientific research and data analysis, we can adapt to climate impacts, preserving jobs and ensuring food security.

The evidence is clear: investing in data and science is essential. I also call for full support of the Blue Belt Initiative as a collaborative platform to share best practices across Africa. Let us commit to fostering a vibrant blue economy that empowers communities and safeguards our marine resources for generations to come. The time to act is now! Thank you.



## Governance and Policy

**Dr Georges Mba Asseko**  
**Head of Blue Economy Division**  
**African Union**

BE is the core drive for sustainable growth and food security in Africa. Most of the countries have already developed their strategies and implementation plans for the BE. Now it is time to take action and ensure implementation and implementation capabilities. Several challenges should be addressed:

Coherence in politics, there is a need to interlink sectorial policies among them so that a BE approach is ensured.

Technical training is a must. Despite of having several universities and training centers, there are not specialized on BE and specifically y on the knowledge challenges that the different activities require.

Access to funding instruments adapted to the country needs

Public private cooperation is a must to drive innovation and competitiveness. The role of public administration is creating a favorable ecosystem that attract investors to fulfill the value chain of the blue sectors.

It is necessary to concentrate efforts on designing bankable projects aimed to generate impact of value. So that countries are those who should submit the projects to potential donors, so to avoid the possibility.



## Governance and Policy

**Dr Miguel Bernal**  
**Representative of FAO**  
**Executive secretary of GFCM**

1. By 2050 Africa will grow to 2.5 billion people, which means that 25 percent of the world's population will be African. Providing sufficient food, nutrition, and jobs for this growing population, requires an increasing contribution from the ocean, and in particular from aquatic food production systems.
2. Through the Blue Transformation FAO aims at supporting this continent through long-term vision and investment planning as well as cooperation with relevant initiatives such as the Blue Belt Initiative, and key players in blue economy, such as the World Bank PROBLUE.
3. At the regional level, FAO management bodies such as the GFCM, as well as advisory bodies such as CECAF and WECAF and projects like NANSEN, are tailoring the Blue Transformation principles to the specific needs of various African subregions.
4. In particular, the GFCM leads an effective fisheries and aquaculture policy-making in north Africa, contributing to maintain a production of 2 million tons of nutritive blue foods and securing nearly 1 million jobs, ensuring the achievement of regional objectives such as the reduction of overfishing and the development of aquaculture.
5. The effective governance of fisheries and aquaculture requires the know-how and technical expertise of FAO and its regional organizations, but also requires adequate capacity, resources and commitment at national level, securing a level playing field and a framework of cooperation that allows to effectively manage shared resources.
6. Integrated ocean governance also requires intersectoral cooperation, and initiatives such as Blue Belt, as well as the African Conference that we will have tomorrow, should make sure that African needs and priorities are fully integrated in global dialogues such as the ones promoted by the UN Ocean Conference of Nice in 2025.
7. I look forward to hearing the vision of African countries in this panel and to continue working with you towards an effective ocean governance and investments in blue economy.





## Cooperation

**Dr Khallahi Brahim**  
**Permanent Secretary of SRFC**  
**Sub Regional Fisheries Commission**

At the expert session, we stressed the importance of sub-regional and regional cooperation in implementing the Blue Economy in Africa. Our oceans are a precious source of economic growth, but their sustainable management is crucial to ensure their preservation. The Blue Economy is an integrated approach to combining economic prosperity and environmental protection, and several African countries have already made progress along this path.

To maximize results, it is essential to capitalize on the experience gained. Exchanges of information, data and experience between countries are fundamental to the shared management of marine resources, as are joint research programs on stock assessment and aquaculture development. This sharing helps to strengthen scientific and technical capacities across the region.

The harmonization of national policies, particularly in the fisheries sector, is also essential. Close cooperation between states will enable common management standards to be established for shared resources, thereby reducing conflicts and optimizing their exploitation.

Another key pillar of cooperation is market access. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) can play a major role in ensuring fair market access for all stakeholders, while introducing sustainable practices and innovations in emerging sectors. To succeed, however, appropriate infrastructure is required.

Finally, the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing remains an urgent priority. Regional cooperation in monitoring and data sharing is essential to protect marine resources and the livelihoods of coastal communities.

Cooperation between governments, the private sector, researchers and civil society is the key driver for achieving a sustainable Blue Economy in Africa.

Kingdom of Morocco



Ministry of Agriculture, Marine Fisheries,  
Rural Development and Water and Forests



## Cooperation

**Dr Hamady Diop**  
**Post Malabo Process Coordinator**  
**Member of the BBI Scientific Committee**

To advance the blue economy and related employment opportunities through South-South cooperation, countries can engage in the sharing of best practices and expertise in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.

Additionally, they can establish joint research initiatives with the objective of innovating in blue economy technologies and creating investment partnerships with the aim of mobilizing resources.

By aligning policies, facilitating market access, and engaging local communities, these nations can enhance their capacity and leverage local knowledge.

Furthermore, the promotion of technology transfer and collaborative training programs will empower stakeholders, thereby ensuring sustainable growth and food security in the blue economy.

Kingdom of Morocco



Ministry of Agriculture, Marine Fisheries,  
Rural Development and Water and Forests



## Finance

**Mrs Sylvia Michele Diez**  
**Senior Environmental Specialist**  
**World Bank**

The Blue Economy refers to processes and transformation, and for this we need a shift in the paradigm of financial models.

Currently, there is a lot of funding that is not being fully utilized. And this is largely due to fragmented demand arising from different priorities, disagreements on taxonomies, and differing decision criteria. This has resulted in a large gap for blue finance between supply and demand.

To address this, we have to transition to new financial models designed specifically for the Blue Economy, ensuring they align with the priorities of the different countries, especially in relation to blue food and blue jobs.



## Finance

### **Dr Amadou Tall Senior Fisheries and Aquaculture Expert**

A variety of financial instruments supports the growth of blue food and related jobs, creating a multifaceted funding approach. International development banks, such as the World Bank and African Development Bank, play a crucial role by providing loans, grants, and technical assistance for sustainable marine resource development.

In parallel, climate funds enhance these efforts by backing blue economy projects, particularly in fisheries and aquaculture. The private sector further strengthens this initiative, with venture capital and impact investing driving innovation in blue food startups. Public-private partnerships enable governments and companies to effectively pool resources for greater impact.

Additionally, debt-for-nature swaps allow countries to reduce external debt while advancing environmental stewardship. Complementing these strategies, blue bonds provide a targeted means to raise capital for the preservation and sustainable management of marine ecosystems