

**IOC has been a critical regional actor. How have regional collaborations enhanced marine conservation efforts while fostering economic opportunities for IOC member states?**

**Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests,**

It gives me great pleasure to intervene in this forum.

Before I proceed on the substantive issues of the panel, I wish to point out three important considerations:

1. Firstly, we can no longer ignore the consequences of the current non-ending but unsustainable quests for economic growth prevailing worldwide, leading to environment and marine pollution and the multiple consequences on the societies.
2. Secondly, the question is how to proceed towards sustainable development while addressing all the environmental challenges.
3. Thirdly, given that IOC is the sole Island States Inter-governmental organisation, we are particularly committed to the sustainable development of African island States

**Now coming to the specific theme of my intervention on what the IOC has done.**

The IOC has undertaken a lot of regional actions in this regard. In the last 25 years, we have implemented eight regional programme in the fisheries sector, three for capacity building for prevention and management against marine pollution, five programme for improving sustainable management of coastal and marine resources, two programme for planning policy development and tools for sustainable development, two on environmental education, three on use of new IT tools, including satellite imagery for sustainable development, and two programme for improving maritime security and ports security and safety of navigation.

The Regional Maritime Security Architecture established by the IOC and supported by the European Union, promotes a global and integrated approach to maritime safety and security in the region. It aims to strengthen regional maritime security capacities, both at sea and on land, both in terms of addressing transnational crimes and threats and in the fight against illicit financial flows. Within this framework, the IOC is responsible for strengthening national and regional maritime security capacities and establishing a network for information exchange and coordination.

The ExPLOI (Expedition Plastique Océan Indien) project, supported by the Agence française de développement (AFD), is an innovative project of regional scope at the crossroads of several economic, environmental and scientific issues of particular importance to the Indian Ocean region. To provide a comprehensive response to the problem of plastic pollution, this project will focus on 3 key areas: contributing to the reduction and recycling of plastic waste by improving knowledge of the impact of marine plastic pollution; environmental education and awareness raising on plastic pollution; and the development of a regional circular economy.

**There are several major regional initiatives of the IOC which require funds for implementation, and I wish to mention them.**

**Firstly**, the Indian Ocean (IO) Regional Blue Economy Action Plan (PAREB) was validated by IOC Member States on December 2019 and endorsed by the 35<sup>th</sup> IOC

Ministerial Council in 2021. It constitutes the reference framework for the coordination of IO BE projects, programs and initiatives. It aims to federate elements for actions related to the coastal and maritime domain, strengthen regional blue economy initiatives, enhance regional cooperation and integration, using blue economy as a catalyst to promote convergence of interests and efforts. However, we are not able to proceed with the implementation due to lack of funds.

**Secondly**, we worked for several years and achieved a Ministerial Declaration in September 2023 for promoting circular economy and Blue Economy. The vision is to reverse the increasing waste from our environment through promotion of circular economy. We are promoting EPR models in this regard. This Declaration provides for the development of new economic sectors based on circular economy and the establishment of Extended Producers' Responsibility frameworks in order to promote value chains through recycling of wastes and hence move towards a vision of Islands without wastes. For example, Réunion Island recuperates 95% of its used tyres and 60% of its electronic and electric wastes back into the economy. The IOC has organised mission studies to Réunion Island and there is lots of interests expressed towards such a goal, which has been then subject to the Ministerial Declaration of September 2023.

**Thirdly**, we should work together so that the Global Ocean Treaty successfully establishes a legal mechanism for marine conservation in international waters, as well as afford other protections to shared marine resources and the marine environment.

**Fourthly**, following the March 2022 vote of the United Nations, we should thrive to get the world adopt a global treaty on plastics to establish a common standard for plastic consumption across countries and create a path to a future without plastic pollution. We, at the IOC, have already taken several initiatives towards this goal.

There are of course several other areas of cooperation which need to be considered and which includes

- **Blue finance**
- **The Great Blue Wall** which is an African-led effort to unlock the potential of the blue economy and address the impacts of climate change in the region
- **The exploration of regional blue energy**, through the implementation of a genuine blue energy exploration strategy at the regional level.
- **The promotion of the economic growth through entrepreneurship, especially young entrepreneurship to produce a new breed of entrepreneurs who would be more sustainable development driven private sector.**
- **The blue innovation, also known as ocean innovation**

Before ending, Two very important final points:

- I wish to particularly make a pledge for the mobilization of development aid support in favour of regional initiatives towards green transition and the circular economy, such as the NDICI to consider the specific priorities of the African and Indian Ocean Island States.
- Finally, we recognize the potential of young people as agents of change, and where young people are not only the recipients of policy changes but participate

in decision-making at all levels and as regards the IOC, regional issues. In this regard, the IOC has already presented a policy to its member States to establish a platform for the youth. I think this is an area where we can work together to prepare the youth of tomorrow, whether as future policy makers or entrepreneurs, towards the reorientation to green industrialization.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your attention.