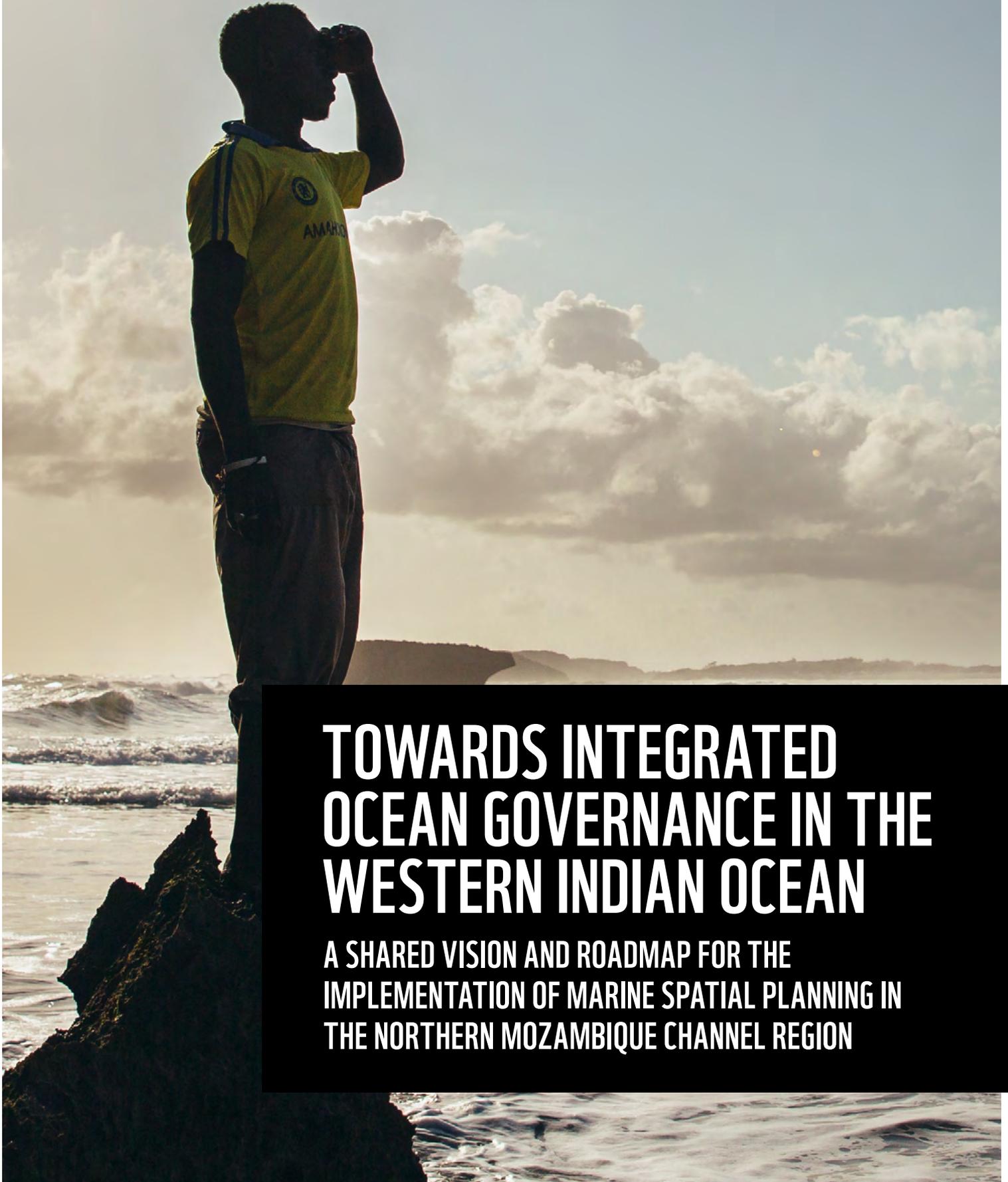




Restoring the
Northern Mozambique
Channel Region



TOWARDS INTEGRATED OCEAN GOVERNANCE IN THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN

A SHARED VISION AND ROADMAP FOR THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING IN
THE NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE CHANNEL REGION



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This document reflects a collaborative effort and is intended to serve as a valuable resource in informing policy and decision-making for advancing marine spatial planning in the NMC region.



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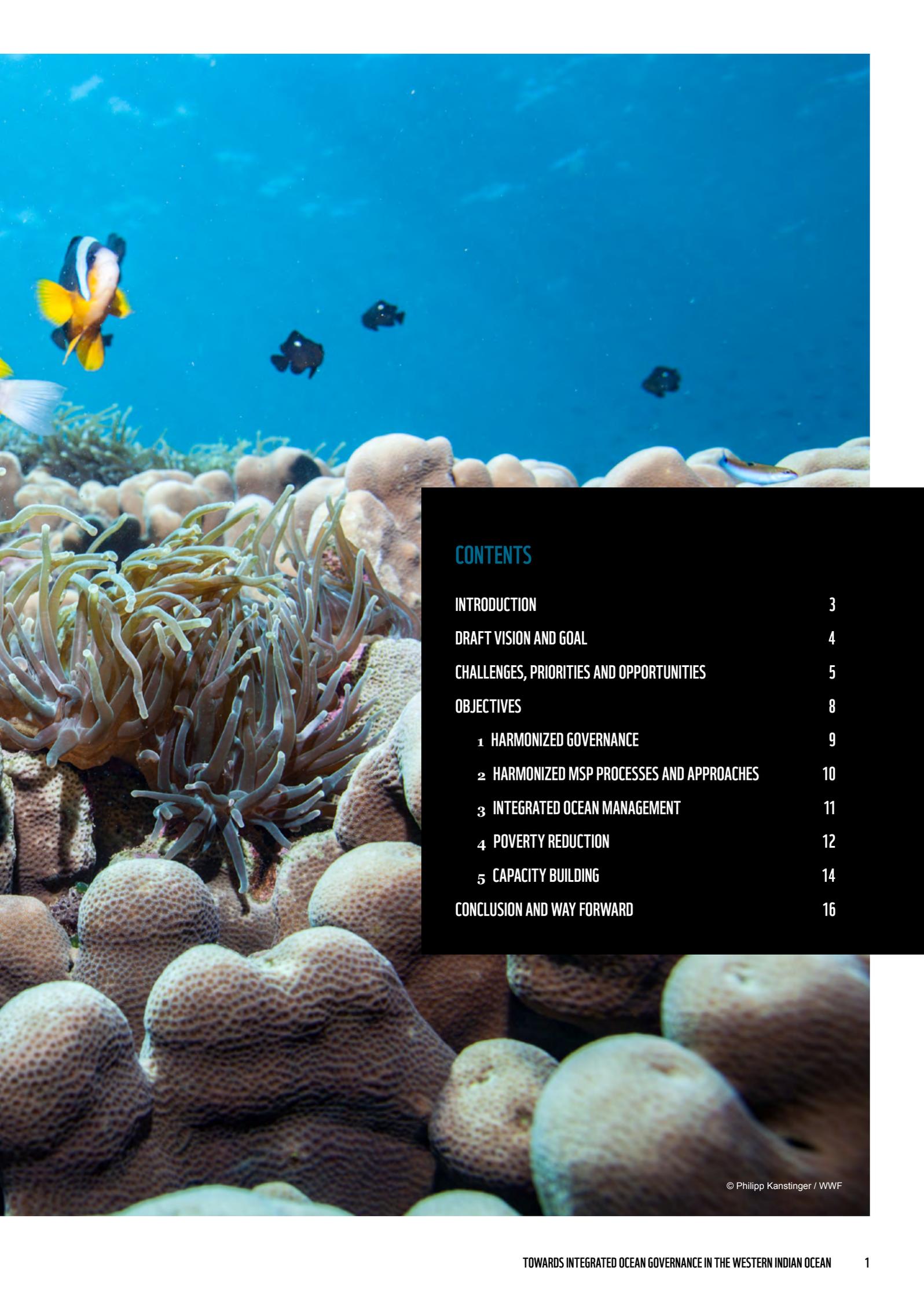
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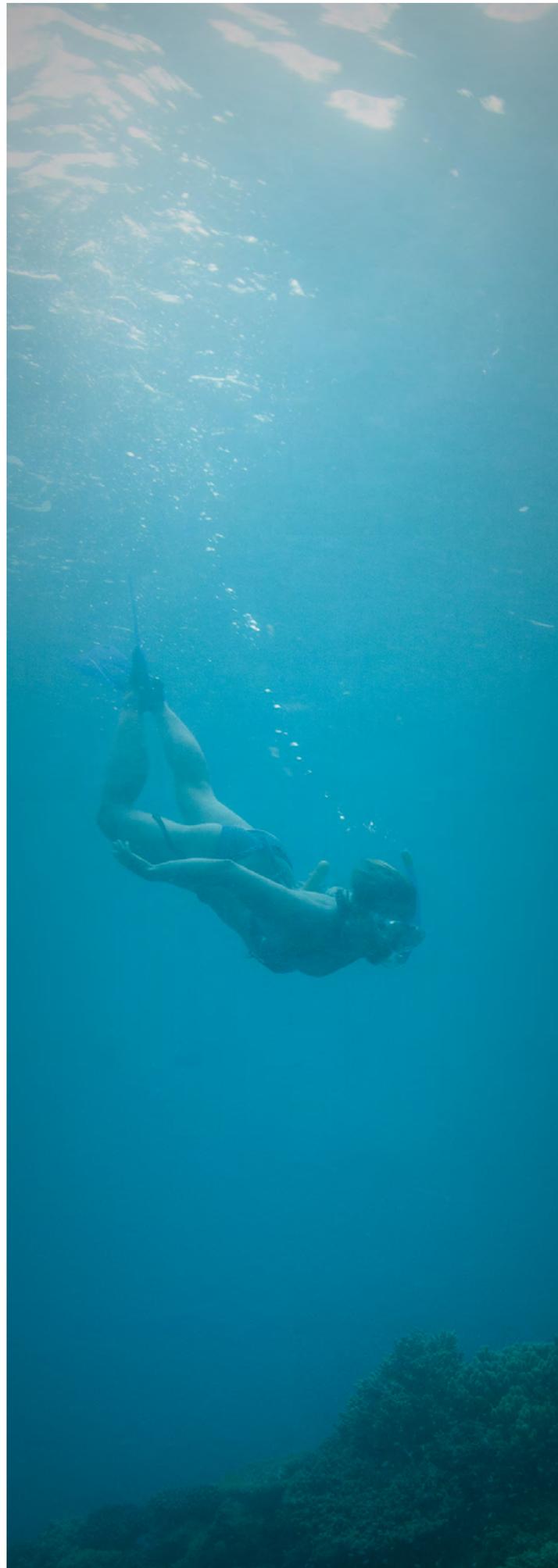
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PREAMBLE

The 11th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Nairobi Convention (Antananarivo, 22 August 2024) recognized the need for an integrated regional programme moving forward from 2025 to 2035. This included the request for strengthening Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in the region, specifically to “develop a regional vision and roadmap for MSP that would guide sub-regional, national and local marine spatial plans through the implementation of the regional MSP strategy”. The Parties further requested the Secretariat to support the implementation of ongoing projects – including the Consortium for the Conservation of the Coastal and Marine Ecosystems in the Western Indian Ocean region (WIO-C) projects in the Northern Mozambique Channel (NMC) – through the Integrated Management of the Marine and Coastal Resources of the NMC (NoCaMo) Project and the development of a second phase of the project. During phase one of this project, in collaboration with WWF, a draft roadmap, vision and goal for the NMC region have been developed in line with the objectives detailed in the report.

This builds on previous decisions by the 8th, 9th and 10th Conference of Parties at the Nairobi Convention through Decision CP8/6(b) and Decision CP9/7(b) on supporting the implementation of projects in the NMC, and Decision CP8/10(4), Decision CP9/10 and Decision CP10/8 on supporting the development of marine spatial planning tools. These decisions identified the need for mainstreaming marine spatial planning into national development processes and highlighted the NMC as a good example for an integrated ocean management approach.

To support the countries of the NMC region, WWF and the Nairobi Convention (NC) Secretariat, in collaboration with Nelson Mandela University, hosted two in-person workshops to bring the NMC countries together to develop a regional MSP vision and roadmap for the NMC and to align this vision and roadmap with existing frameworks and strategies for the WIO that are endorsed by the NC. This report shares the outcomes of the collaboration with the NC focal points from the NMC countries and with other relevant stakeholders during the workshops. The draft vision and roadmap presented here will still need to be endorsed by NC member states prior to its formal adoption. The purpose of this document is to support consultations on outputs from these workshops at the country-level prior to formal adoption by member states.



INTRODUCTION

In response to the global increase in ocean use, Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) has been established as a tool to holistically manage ocean space across sectors to find a sustainable balance between conservation and exploitation. MSP has been defined by UNESCO as a “public process of analysing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic and social objectives that have been specified through a political process”.¹ The marine environment is important for various aspects of human well-being, including cultural, social and economic dimensions such as job creation, with more than three billion people directly reliant on the ocean for their livelihoods. Marine economic sectors are estimated to generate between US\$3 trillion and US\$6 trillion annually.² The ocean holds value not just for humans, but for life itself, and setting a robust plan in place to protect it highlights the importance of sustainable ocean governance that considers all aspects – ecological, social and economic. While MSP can play a role in marine protection, it is a multi-objective, multi-use planning process that seeks to manage conflicting marine uses.³ Recognizing that the ocean is interconnected and that the movement of its resources is not restricted to political boundaries, transboundary and regional MSP frameworks and roadmaps have been developed across the globe to harmonize the governance of marine spaces and coordinate sustainable blue economy pathways.⁴ The blue economy refers to the sustainable use of ocean resources that fosters economic growth and improves livelihoods and jobs while preserving the health of ocean ecosystem.⁵

The Northern Mozambique Channel (NMC) region – which includes Mozambique, Madagascar, United Republic of Tanzania, Union of Comoros, and Seychelles – is a recognized area of significant ecological and biological importance (EBSA), and has long been a hotspot of marine and coastal biodiversity.⁶ The growing demand to “unlock” ocean

economies by exploiting both living and non-living resources such as fisheries resources and the recently discovered offshore oil, gas and mining reserves has created the need for NMC countries to urgently develop legislation and policies to guide how their countries will govern the blue economy sustainably so that all sectors can benefit from the long-term yields provided by healthy marine ecosystems. Collaborative work in the region has drawn on the principles of transformative integrated ocean governance⁷ to actively include all stakeholders in policy dialogues seeking commonly agreed decisions on blue resources, with the ultimate aim of ensuring that the inherent value of the NMC is optimized for the benefit of the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) and society as a whole. Building on the strong foundations of regional cooperation and partnerships and on the development of an MSP strategy for the WIO,⁸ there has been a call through the WIO Science-to-policy Platform,⁹ to develop a regional common vision and roadmap for MSP in the NMC. The goal is that the countries in the region agree on the collaborative management of the NMC to protect its biodiversity and cultural heritage; ensure the equitable and sustainable ocean use by key sectors and secure their significant contribution to the national economies; and to limit the conflicts of use.

¹ Ehler, C. and Douvère, F. 2009. Marine spatial planning: a step-by-step approach. Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and Man and the Biosphere Programme. IOC Manual and Guides No. 53, ICAM Dossier No. 6. Paris. UNESCO.

² Sumaila, U.R., Walsh, M., Hoareau, K., Cox, A., et al. 2020. Ocean finance: Financing the transition to a sustainable ocean economy. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute.

³ Santos, C.F., Agardy, T., Andrade, F., Crowder, L.B., Ehler, C.N., and Orbach, M.K. 2021. Major challenges in developing marine spatial planning. *Marine Policy*. 132.

⁴ UNEP. 2021. Making Peace with Nature: A scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity, and pollution emergencies. Nairobi, Kenya: United Nations Environment Programme.

⁵ World Bank and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2017. The Potential of the Blue Economy: Increasing Long-term Benefits of the Sustainable Use of Marine Resources for Small Island Developing States and Coastal Least Developed Countries. Washington, DC: World Bank.

⁶ Convention on Biological Diversity Ecologically or biologically significant marine areas website, available at www.cbd.int/ebsa

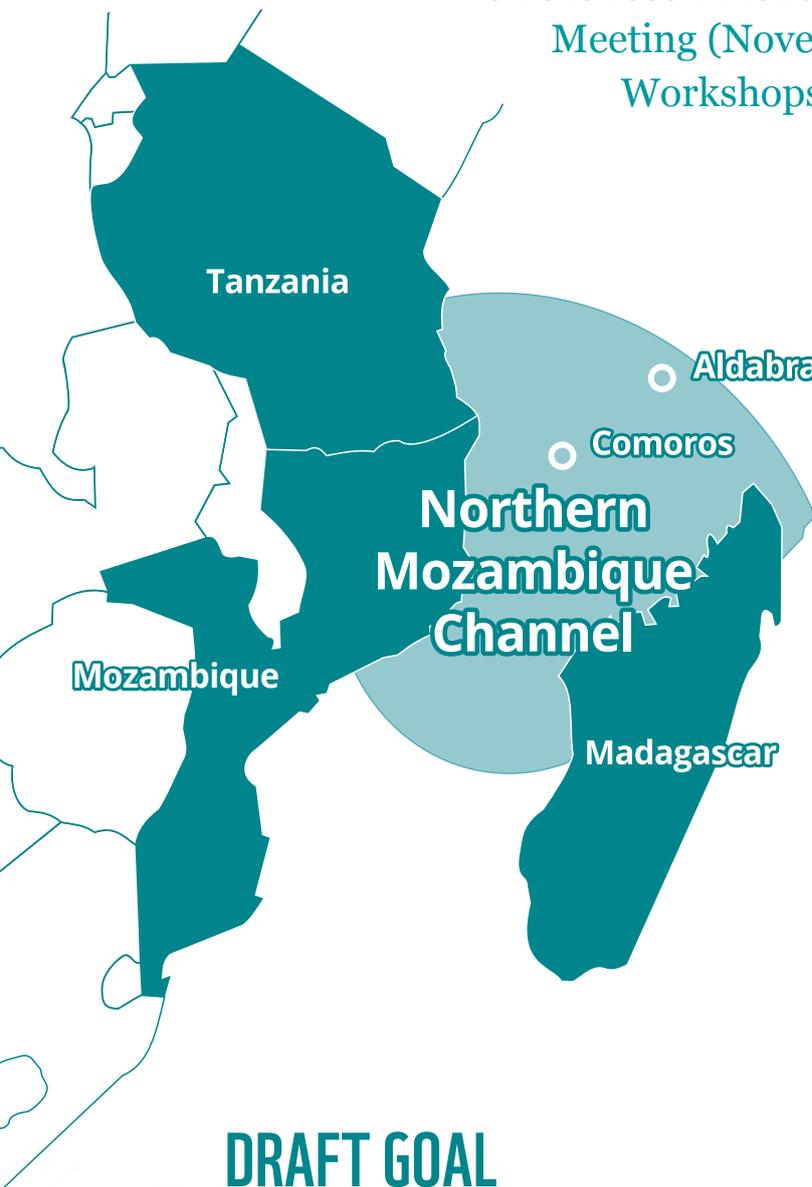
⁷ Lombard, A.T., Clifford-Holmes, J., Goodall, V., Snow, B., et al. 2023. Principles for transformative ocean governance. *Nature Sustainability*. 6, 1587–1599.

⁸ UNEP-Nairobi Convention, WIOMSA, Nelson Mandela University and Macquarie University. 2022. A regional marine spatial planning strategy for the Western Indian Ocean. UNEP-Nairobi Convention, WIOMSA, Nelson Mandela University and Macquarie University, 82 pp.

⁹ See the Nairobi Convention's 2023 Western Indian Ocean Regional Science to Policy Platform (SPP) meeting report for more information.

MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING SHARED VISION AND GOAL FOR THE NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE CHANNEL REGION

The following vision and goal have been developed based on the recommendations of the Science to Policy Meeting (November 2023) and the Focal Point Workshops (May and August 2024):



○ Seychelles

DRAFT VISION

A sustainable future where healthy ecosystems support – and are supported by – thriving local communities and a vibrant blue economy which optimizes the value of ocean resources within the NMC over the long term without jeopardizing the use for future generations.

DRAFT GOAL

An inclusive and holistic regional process that produces a sub-regional marine spatial plan in alignment with national MSP processes to support the sustainable management and conservation of key biodiversity areas and ecosystems within the NMC for all.



CHALLENGES, PRIORITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING IN THE NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE CHANNEL REGION

Developing MSP objectives that speak and respond to the contextual realities of the NMC require that the challenges and opportunities for MSP development in the region are identified.

CHALLENGES TO DEVELOPING AN MSP PROCESS FOR REGIONAL HARMONIZATION

- **Poor or limited stakeholder engagement and inclusivity in decision making, including multi-country and multi-sectoral coordination (within government) and political will**
Given the urgency that these plans are often placed under by project funding and timelines, stakeholder engagement can be limited by constraints on time, finances or human resources. National processes frequently overlook certain stakeholders by targeting only some sectors, therefore neglecting individuals who may rely solely on the marine space for their livelihoods or well-being, along with other vulnerable groups such as women, youth and persons with disabilities.
- **Limited data and data sharing**
Several countries within the NMC have limited resources available for research on the marine environment, resulting in a scarcity of data on certain aspects of the marine social-ecological system. Data are often restricted by private companies that have completed surveys within the country's ocean space, and minimal infrastructure for data sharing is available.
- **The need for MSP legal frameworks**
Strong legal and institutional frameworks are needed as enabling mechanisms to support the MSP process and secure the success of a regional MSP for the NMC. Policies within each country may conflict in terms of conservation and resource extraction, leading to tensions for management and implementation.

- **Balancing economic development and ecosystem health**

Countries within the NMC are often constrained by inadequate financial investments and the need to balance marine resource exploitation with conservation. Some countries have access to oil, gas and mineral resources within their marine jurisdiction that can support their short-term economic development, whereas others may rely on the ocean solely for fishing and tourism. While the extractive activities in both cases may pressure the health of the ecosystem and other socio-cultural connections to the ocean, oil and gas production have further implications for carbon emission reduction targets. The political will of the country to invest in sustainable management of the ocean will also directly impact MSP within the region.

- **High levels of poverty, increasing population growth and high levels of dependence on coastal ecosystems**

It can be difficult to prioritize MSP in countries with high levels of poverty and unemployment. With the increasing pressure on coastal ecosystems for food, livelihoods and economic activities, managing these spaces and placing restrictions on resource extraction requires intensive stakeholder engagement to ensure sustainable use and that communities who rely on these resources are not further marginalized.

- **Negative climate impacts and environmental trends**

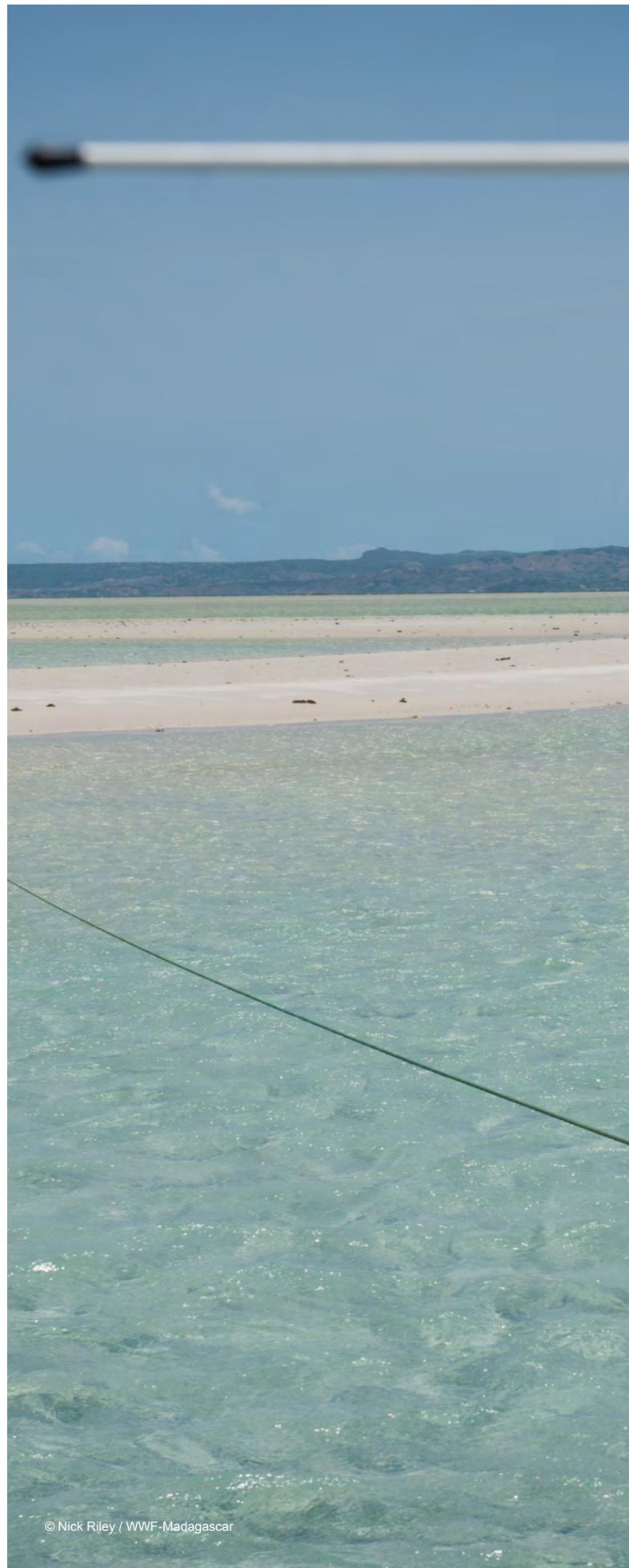
Climate change is an ever-increasing threat to the maintenance of healthy marine ecosystem structure and function and, therefore, sustainable ocean governance. For example, fish stock numbers are in decline, and, in order to remain within their environmental tolerances, fish populations are moving to other areas further offshore as changes in the ocean occur. Coral bleaching and other changes in reef habitats – important nursery areas to many fish species – are further negatively impacting the fish stocks and tourism activities that support local community livelihoods.

- **Undefined and disputed maritime boundaries**

In the context of this report and project, an ecological boundary for the NMC was agreed upon at the Focal Points Workshop in August. The exact extent of the NMC needs to be agreed upon for spatial planning purposes – what space in each country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) falls within the NMC. This may also have implications for how countries manage the rest of their ocean space, should a part of their EEZ fall outside of the NMC area.

- **Limited capacity**

National governments are at different stages in the MSP process and are facing constraints, with limited and unbalanced capacity in terms of both human and financial resources. Additionally, there is a general lack of awareness of MSP concepts at all levels.



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PRIORITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE CHANNEL REGION

- **Using existing regional mechanisms and strategies**
Utilizing and building on existing regional coordination mechanisms and strategies (for example, the Nairobi Convention, the Information Management Strategy, the Regional Ocean Governance Strategy, the Regional [WIO] MSP Strategy and MSP Technical Working Group and the Africa Blue Economy Strategy) can increase collaboration and cooperation across the NMC region.
- **Building on existing data platforms**
Successful MSP will require regional data sharing, which could build on the Information Management Strategy developed under the NC and the existing [WIO Symphony](#) data platform, and utilize the data management systems of each NMC country.
- **Implementing the local sustainable blue economy**
To ensure that the conceptualization and implementation of blue economy activities benefit local communities, doing so could first be piloted at a local scale, considering aspects such as diversified livelihoods and equitable benefit sharing.
- **Protecting ecosystems through systematic conservation planning and training**
Developing a systematic conservation plan for the region could be a significant contribution to the Global Biodiversity Framework (recognized by the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework). Systematic conservation planning is a process and methodology that focuses on providing decision support for the allocation of resources for spatial biodiversity conservation (for example, the [Algoa Bay SCP](#)). This could also be supported by training and capacity development in systematic conservation planning at both national and regional scales.
- **Building on existing civil society organizations' platforms to ensure inclusivity and coordination in decision making**
To enhance stakeholder engagement and inclusive planning, the regional MSP process can partner with, and build on, existing civil society organizations' platforms at local, national and regional scales – for example, [MIHARI](#) (Madagascar's network of Locally Managed Marine Areas [LMMAs]), the [South West Indian Ocean Tuna forum](#), the [Western Indian Ocean Mangrove Network](#) and the [Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association](#).
- **Building on indigenous knowledge systems**
Accessing and benefiting from local knowledge would involve capacity building and awareness raising to local communities regarding MSP and developing stakeholder engagement. Developing MSP objectives that speak and respond to the contextual realities of the NMC require that the challenges and opportunities for MSP development in the region are identified.



OBJECTIVES

Based on the identified challenges, priorities and opportunities, five objectives were developed, along with corresponding actions, to enable and promote MSP in the NMC region.



1. HARMONIZED GOVERNANCE

Rationale

The success of regional MSP for the NMC hinges on an enabling mechanism that includes a strong supporting legal framework. Not only should each country have its own legal and institutional MSP frameworks, but these should also align with transboundary regional frameworks. Cumulative impacts and common threats can then be addressed to improve harmonization, connectivity and enforcement within the region.

Establish a shared governance mechanism for the NMC

To ensure inclusive and equitable decision making, existing regional groups (e.g. WIO MSP technical working group) could include two or more high-level decision makers or representatives from each NMC country. This governance mechanism could support cross-learning and agreements of cooperation between countries, as well as provide principles of inclusive stakeholder engagement at a local and national level. The desired impact would be to increase harmonization of governance in the NMC and enable inclusive and equitable decision making.

Conduct inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement

Identifying key stakeholders, including marginalized groups, and establishing a regional engagement platform would provide previously marginalized individuals in the region with the opportunity to participate in regional MSP development, support co-development of a regional stakeholder engagement plan and ensure integration of traditional knowledge in the MSP process. Doing so would require building the capacity of government entities at various scales and non-governmental and civil society organizations to engage with stakeholders. Moreover, opportunities for cross-learning activities between countries and sectors would also need to be provided. Outputs from this action include a regional stakeholder database, co-developed stakeholder engagement plans at both national and regional levels, and the development of collaborative projects across national borders of jurisdiction. The desired impact would be increased and more inclusive and meaningful stakeholder engagement; cross-country learning and connections; and an increased sense of belonging to the NMC – as opposed to merely operating as individual countries.

Develop mechanisms for resolving conflicts

Develop mechanisms for resolving conflicts and disputes that may arise in the context of MSP implementation, including mechanisms for addressing competing interests and priorities among stakeholders.

2. HARMONIZED MSP PROCESSES AND APPROACHES AMONG NMC COUNTRIES, INCLUDING DATA CONSIDERATIONS

Rationale

In line with the regional WIO-MSP strategy,¹⁰ harmonizing MSP processes across the NMC sub-region would address transboundary and cross-sectoral marine management challenges such as protecting marine biophysical and ecological processes that transcend political boundaries. Furthermore, developing data collection guidelines and standards for the region will assist data gathering, storage, sharing and collaboration across NMC countries.

Develop MSP guidelines

The development of MSP guidelines should include collaboration between government, academia, civil society, the private sector and community representatives in each respective country. Regional workshops should take place to develop a Terms of Reference (ToR) that can guide the

development of the regional MSP guidelines, which should ideally include both technical and financial proposals to provide a clear roadmap for the harmonization of the regional MSP process.

Exchange experiences and technical know-how

Relying on existing technical working groups – or developing new ones – will facilitate knowledge sharing and improve understanding of the MSP process within the NMC context. This will provide opportunities to improve national MSP regional networks, share lessons learned and develop project collaborations across national borders.

Improve access to data

Standardizing data collection and curation methods, along with provisions for data sharing, can improve

collaboration across the NMC and support countries in assessing and defining data needs and developing databases and connectivity across the region. This would require investment from each country into infrastructure, financial and technical support to properly manage these databases, supported by government, academia, civil society and the private sector. The outputs from this investment would include data-sharing centres and data and information reports on both national and regional marine biodiversity and human uses, leading to improved local, national and sub-regional MSP. The desired impact of this action includes stronger policies and regulations, improved technical networks and increased database capacity.

¹⁰ UNEP-Nairobi Convention, WIOMSA, Nelson Mandela University and Macquarie University. 2022. A regional marine spatial planning strategy for the Western Indian Ocean. UNEP-Nairobi Convention, WIOMSA, Nelson Mandela University and Macquarie University, 82 pp.



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3. INTEGRATED OCEAN MANAGEMENT

Rationale

Integrated ocean management aims to support blue economy initiatives that use ocean resources in ways that preserve the health and resilience of marine ecosystems and improve livelihoods and jobs, balancing protection and production to achieve prosperity. With a strong drive towards blue economy development in the NMC region, integrated ocean management will be an essential part in conserving coastal and marine habitats and biodiversity and in protecting the coastal and marine environment from land-based pollution, fisheries, tourism, ocean acidification and the impacts of climate change.

Increase protection of the marine environment

Systematic conservation plans should be developed for each country to work towards a regional conservation plan, which will enable the development of a cross-boundary conservation and management strategy. This should ideally be supported by the identification of additional EBSAs, Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), and Culturally Significant Areas (CSAs). Moreover, systematic conservation planning analyses should be conducted to support the proclamation of new – or expansion of existing – protected areas within the region. Each country within the region should further focus on strengthening the recognition of existing community-managed areas such as LMMAs, Community Conservation Areas (CCAs), Collaborative Fisheries Management Areas (CFMAs), Community Managed Fishing Areas (CMFAs) and small-scale fisheries management units such as Beach Management Units (BMUs) or Community Fishing Councils (CCPs). Countries within the NMC region should develop cross-boundary conservation and use-management strategies, publish commitments towards the Global Biodiversity Framework and ratify their support of the areas Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement). Implementing these actions would improve the management of marine ecosystems and resources across the NMC region.

Sustainably manage marine resources

Building intersectoral strategic partnerships and implementing best practices across the NMC region will support cooperation between cross-border countries. Formal agreements such as Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) should be created between strategic partners within and between countries to strengthen collaboration within the region. There should be a focus on strengthening the legislation of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Strategic Environmental and Social Assessments (SESAs) to ensure the sustainable management of marine resources.

Facilitate adaptation to climate change

Initiatives and programmes should be developed to build climate-smart and climate-resilient coastal communities. Countries within the NMC region should ratify their agreement towards addressing climate change and focus their efforts on these commitments.



4. POVERTY REDUCTION THROUGH AN INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY

Rationale

Marine spatial plans are expected to build the basis for achieving the objectives of sustainable blue economy strategies, and this includes reducing poverty.

Focus on blue entrepreneurship to strengthen supplementary livelihoods

Countries within the NMC region should facilitate access to financial resources; provide grants or loans for blue start-ups such as new fisheries, aquaculture ventures or ocean-related tourism ventures; and support research and development of innovative technologies for sustainable ocean-based industries. They should encourage collaboration and networking among blue entrepreneurs and stakeholders on both a national and regional level by, for example, implementing the [SWIO Venture Builder](#). This would require

funding, education and training, networking opportunities and access to key skills with market research and support. The desired impact of this action would be more equitable economic growth, sustainable conservation of marine resources, development of diversified income opportunities and reduced resource overexploitation.

Secure community access rights

Communities often have limited knowledge pertaining to their rights to the use of the ocean space. Due to this lack of knowledge, they stand to lose access to resources that they previously used for livelihood purposes. As such, this action should include building capacity within local communities across the NMC region to advocate for their ocean rights and develop income-generating activities to increase the standard of living while reducing pressure on natural resources, so paving the way for sustainable development.



Develop incentives to grow a sustainable blue economy

Identifying suitable incentives and providing improved national infrastructure and equitable means to access finance, subsidies and grants can assist in creating wealth and job opportunities in the region. Key to this would be financial regulation that ensures the Sustainable Blue Economy principles are adopted with sufficient Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) safeguards in place to secure a sustainable and inclusive blue economy. The desired impact from this would include the creation of inclusive wealth and job opportunities within the region, sustainable availability of fishery resources and the development of other sustainable blue economy activities such as tourism and transport.

Develop innovative and sustainable financing mechanisms

This requires engagement with stakeholders to identify needs and gaps for funding and collaboration with financial institutions and investors for innovative funding options in the NMC region. Developing capacity-building programmes to enhance financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills should be part of this process of organizing knowledge exchange

between countries. Countries should undertake a natural capital assessment and explore the cost of protection and financial mechanisms that can support it.

This action requires data and information on the current state of the blue economy; poverty levels and potential financing options as solutions; policy and regulatory frameworks to ensure supportive policies; and regulations encouraging sustainable financing. An efficient monitoring and evaluation system should be initiated to evaluate the impact of financing mechanisms on poverty reduction and sustainable blue economy development.

5. CAPACITY BUILDING

Rationale

An effective MSP process requires trained planning teams and increased public awareness and stakeholder engagement on the MSP process and its benefits. The degree of MSP development and its implementation across the NMC region is not currently uniform, nor are the levels of institutional, technical and human capacity. Therefore, this objective aims to build capacity at a regional level so that all countries can learn from each other and grow together towards improved MSP implementation. Capacity building should be consistent and transboundary within the region.

Strengthen research for MSP development

Dedicated research programmes should be initiated by regional bodies, such as the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) and the NC, and further supported by national governments, aimed at providing grants geared towards responding to MSP-related research gaps. This research will provide knowledge and guidance for informed decision making in the NMC region.

Build capacity to facilitate stakeholder re-engagement

Strengthening civil society voices through improved institutional structures and capacity building will increase stakeholder inclusion in the MSP process. Moreover, training programmes should be developed for effective stakeholder engagement, as it is not only ethical but also increases the equity and relevance of MSP processes. This action ultimately increases the probability of buy-in and effective implementation of a regional MSP by all relevant stakeholders and sectors.

Build capacity to support science-to-policy gaps

The translation of key scientific findings into policy recommendations plays an important role in narrowing the gap between research and implementation. Bridging this gap between research and policy will facilitate the endorsement of key scientific recommendations to support science-based, informed decision making in the MSP process.

Empower communities to advocate for their rights

Educating communities on their rights and providing them with a platform to voice their concerns, desires and aspirations with regards to MSP in a systematic way will provide transparency in the MSP process and increase local support when plans reach the implementation stage. This action aims to build lasting coastal community capacity at scale and support their role as ocean stewards. Community needs can then be reflected comprehensively in marine spatial plans and blue economy plans.





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CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) is a strategic tool that unlocks integrated ocean governance in the Northern Mozambique Channel, and in the wider Western Indian Ocean region. Through a shared vision and roadmap, MSP provides a common framework to ensure NMC countries (Comoros, Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania and Seychelles) work in a sustainable and coordinated approach. The graph below provides a summary of the roadmap, highlighting recommended actions for a sustainable MSP for the

Northern Mozambique Channel. It is important to note that the actions are not linear and can often take place in a concurrent manner.

As a next step, the development of technical guidelines will support national level MSP implementation. These technical guidelines will serve as practical tools for policymakers, members of government and other stakeholders to make well informed decisions. These tools will also guide stakeholder engagement at the national

level. As such, a monitoring and evaluation mechanism needs to be co-developed in order to ensure that diverse perspectives are integrated into the planning process, which in turn strengthens governance mechanisms and regional cooperation.

By aligning regional efforts with national priorities, MSP fosters collaboration while meeting conservation, social and economic objectives across the Northern Mozambique Channel region.







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