

PRESS RELEASE

EU, BMZ launch €60.5 million programme for a sustainable Western Indian Ocean *Programme focuses on ocean governance, investment in blue economy and ecosystem resilience*

18th June 2026, Mombasa, Kenya. The European Union (EU), the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), alongside its implementing partners, today launched the Sustainable Western Indian Ocean Programme (SWIOP) during the 11th Our Ocean Conference held in Mombasa, Kenya. The programme aims to strengthen ocean governance, catalyse sustainable blue economy investment and enhance marine ecosystems resilience in the Western Indian Ocean.

Over 60 million people in the region depend on coastal and marine ecosystems for food, livelihoods and development, yet climate change, unsustainable practices and growing pressure on these ecosystems put it all at risk. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing alone costs the region more than €214 million every year, depleting shared fish stocks and depriving coastal communities of income and food security. Meanwhile, fewer than one-third of small and medium enterprises can access formal finance, and the lack of robust investment pipelines and innovative financing solutions continues to hinder the growth of sustainable blue businesses.

SWIOP addresses these challenges by promoting sustainable, productive and climate-resilient governance of the Western Indian Ocean while strengthening regional cooperation and advancing environmental and economic resilience.

SWIOP capitalises on the power of regional cooperation to unlock the economic potential of a sustainable blue economy for enterprises and communities, while safeguarding the ocean's ecosystems. The European Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans, Costas Kadis, said *"This programme embodies the spirit of Global Gateway: a partnership of equals that turns common challenges into shared opportunities. By strengthening ocean governance, supporting sustainable fisheries and catalysing investment, we are helping unlock the potential of the Western Indian Ocean while protecting its ecosystems for generations to come."*

Highlighting the importance of development cooperation for a prosperous Western Indian Ocean, Head of Division, Food Security and Fisheries at BMZ, Andreas Schaumayer, highlighted that, *"SWIOP reflects a shared regional ambition to strengthen cooperation in the sustainable management of marine and coastal resources while advancing an inclusive blue economy. Through the Team Europe approach, Germany and the European Union are supporting food security, climate resilience, sustainable livelihoods, and healthy marine ecosystems. Germany brings expertise across local, regional, and international levels, from supporting community-led conservation in Gazi Bay to advancing fisheries governance through the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement and transparency initiatives such as Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI)."*

Also present at the launch, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Mining, Blue Economy and Maritime Affairs, Hassan Ali Joho, reflected on regional cooperation. He welcomed the initiative, noting

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that “This programme arrives at an opportune moment. No country can realise the full potential of the blue economy in isolation. Ocean ecosystems and maritime trade flows do not stop at national borders. Fish stocks migrate, currents carry pollutants across coastlines, ports are linked by shipping routes, and climate impacts are regional in scale. Effective governance, resilient supply chains, and sustainable investments therefore demand regional cooperation. Cooperation multiplies impact, spreads risks, builds resilience and unlocks finance and technology.”

SWIOP is the EU's flagship initiative under the Global Gateway strategy for advancing ocean governance, sustainable blue economy development and ecosystem resilience in the Western Indian Ocean. Co-funded by the EU (€58 million) and BMZ (€2.5 million), the €60.5 million programme will be implemented over five years across nine countries: Comoros, Djibouti, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia and Tanzania.

It is implemented by the Nairobi Convention, European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and Expertise France.

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