|  |
| --- |
| SummaryThis report presents the strategic analysis of IOCAFRICA’s progress and institutional evolution over the intersessional period from March 2023 to April 2025. It opens with a forward-looking reflection by the Technical Secretary, highlighting the Sub-Commission’s transformation into an important strategic actor for marine science diplomacy, regional integration, and ocean governance in Africa.An addendum to this document, in English only, provides a breakdown of work accomplished across IOCAFRICA’s thematic areas and programme functions from Marcg 2023 to April 2025. In parallel, THE supplementary report—‘Report on 2024–2025 Budget Implementation—provide further detail on budget execution and funding status and complete the documentation in support of the oral presentation of the Technical Secretary to the plenary session of the Sub-Commission. Decision proposed: The Member States are invited to take note of this report and its supporting documents, and to consider the related draft decision referenced in the Provisional Action Paper (document IOCAFRICA-VIII/AP). |

**1. Strategic Outlook from the Technical Secretary**

1. As the newly appointed Technical Secretary of IOCAFRICA, I assume this role with deep conviction at a time that is both challenging and filled with transformative possibility. We find ourselves at a unique inflection point, marked by the convergence of global policy commitments, regional momentum, and the emergence of Africa as a pivotal player in ocean science and governance. The post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework underscores the urgent need to restore ocean ecosystems; the BBNJ Agreement, now legally binding, signals a new era of cooperation and responsibility for marine areas beyond national jurisdiction; and the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report underscores the profound interlinkages between the ocean and climate systems. This is not merely a moment for rhetoric—it is a decisive time for action. With the 2025 UN Ocean Conference (UNOC-3) fast approaching, expectations for Africa’s leadership have never been higher. It is a time when science must guide policy, when regional voices must influence global priorities, and when IOCAFRICA must assert its position not only as a technical convener but as a visionary actor, capable of shaping the continent’s ocean future through evidence-based, inclusive, and transformative solutions.
2. At the continental level, the African Union is advancing strategic frameworks that place the ocean at the heart of the continent’s sustainable development. These include the Africa Blue Economy Strategy, the Africa Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy (2022–2032), and Agenda 2063’s emphasis on ecosystem restoration and climate-smart resource use. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and initiatives like Africa are scaling up earth observation and marine decision-support systems, while the Nairobi and Abidjan Conventions are increasingly embedding ocean data and science into environmental management protocols. Multilateral development banks, particularly the African Development Bank (AfDB), are also increasing investment in coastal resilience, blue economy infrastructure, and knowledge-based marine planning. The World Bank’s PROBLUE initiative and growing UNDP-IOC-led Large Marine Ecosystem initiatives in Africa further reflect the growing confidence in regional scientific leadership.
3. These converging global and regional commitments demand more coordinated regional leadership, stronger scientific infrastructure, and deeper integration of Africa’s voice in global forums. IOCAFRICA is poised to meet that challenge. At the same time, Africa’s marine and coastal systems are facing unprecedented pressures—from intensifying coastal hazards and sea-level rise to biodiversity loss, resource exploitation, and rising geopolitical interests in the region’s ocean space. Yet, this is also a time of immense opportunity: the ocean economy is growing, data and forecasting systems are advancing, and a new generation of African ocean professionals, researchers, and institutions are emerging with energy and innovation.
4. Over the 2023–2025 intersessional period, IOCAFRICA emerged as a pivotal strategic actor for marine science diplomacy and regional integration in Africa. This transformation was driven not only by its coordination of the SEAWARD Africa Programme under the UN Ocean Decade, but also by its expanded role in shaping the continent’s scientific voice, policy leadership, and multilateral cooperation agenda. What made this period particularly defining was IOCAFRICA’s ability to strategically convene partners and position African institutions to lead. IOCAFRICA helped advance a shared narrative for ocean science as a vehicle for resilience, climate justice, and blue economic transformation—linking knowledge systems with investment pipelines, continental frameworks like Agenda 2063, and global processes such as UNOC, CBD, and UNFCCC. The Sub-Commission worked with Member States to institutionalize National Decade Committees in over 15 countries, steer cross-sector co-design processes, and align regional programming with blue economy and digital transformation ambitions.

Flagship events like the Mombasa Regional Decade Coordination Meeting in July 2023, and the FAIR Data training (August 2024) formed part of a broader strategy to strengthen Africa’s knowledge and innovation ecosystem. These were not standalone activities but touchpoints within a more integrated vision—where digital infrastructure, capacity sharing, and youth inclusion converge with high-level advocacy, data sovereignty, and science-policy translation.

This period marked a recalibration of IOCAFRICA’s institutional identity—from a regional coordination mechanism to a proactive facilitator and enabler of Africa’s marine science future. The Sub-Commission has moved from programme delivery to systems leadership—connecting ideas, people, and institutions to drive continent-wide impact in ocean knowledge, governance, and diplomacy.

1. IOCAFRICA’s regional engagement was reinforced through its substantive role in shaping Africa’s voice at the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) and UNOC-3. It co-led the SDG 14 session at ARFSD-11 (Kampala, April 2025) under the theme 'Advancing SDG 14 Implementation in Africa' and co-authored the background paper guiding continental engagement. Additionally, IOCAFRICA participated in the Blue Africa Summit (Tangier, November 2024), contributing to the Tangier Declaration that consolidated regional ocean priorities for UNOC-3. These platforms amplified Africa’s voice in global ocean governance dialogues. 6. This report reflects the collective effort of the Secretariat, Member States, and regional partners over the past two years, and sets the tone for what must follow: an assertive, coordinated, and well-supported African ocean science community. We must continue to evolve—more inclusive, more interconnected, and more ambitious in positioning science at the heart of governance. This report offers an opportunity to reflect not only on institutional performance but on the region’s evolving role in global ocean affairs. It invites us to consolidate IOCAFRICA’s strategic positioning, sharpen its delivery mechanisms, and mobilise collective ambition around a common purpose: ensuring that Africa is not only seen but heard, not only engaged but leading, in the Decade of Ocean Science and beyond. In the coming biennium, IOCAFRICA will consolidate its institutional role and deliver measurable value to Member States through action-oriented partnerships, digital innovation, policy alignment, and capacity strengthening.

**2. IOCAFRICA and Global Ocean Governance**

1. As Africa’s regional mechanism under the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, IOCAFRICA has grown into a dynamic and responsive platform driving science-based ocean governance across the continent. Over the past two years, IOCAFRICA has taken bold steps to position itself not only as a programme delivery entity but as a strategic enabler of regional transformation through ocean knowledge.
2. In a time of heightened global interest in the ocean—underscored by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including collaborative policy dialogues facilitated with IPBES—including a 2023 webinar jointly organized with IOCAFRICA on the relevance of ocean biodiversity science to IPBES global assessments—and with the African Group of Negotiators Experts Support (AGNES) through a series of regional climate-ocean policy dialogues and technical consultations held between 2023 and 2024 through IOCAFRICA-supported regional workshops and consultations in 2023 and 2024; the UN High Seas Treaty; the BBNJ Agreement, including IOCAFRICA’s participation in the Regional Workshop for States of the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of Africa (Rabat, December 2024); and the first Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement—IOCAFRICA has sought to anchor Africa’s voice and vision at the center of international dialogues. Africa’s extensive and diverse marine ecosystems are both highly vulnerable and rich in opportunity. The Sub-Commission has therefore prioritized collaborative approaches that enhance national capabilities, link scientific outputs to policy systems, and create the enabling conditions for long-term sustainability.
3. As the Decade Coordination Office for Africa, IOCAFRICA has shaped the strategic orientation of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development in the region. Through its stewardship of the SEAWARD Africa Programme—endorsed as the principal framework for Ocean Decade implementation in Africa—and with the support of the Africa Ocean Decade Taskforce, IOCAFRICA has mobilized stakeholders across sectors to co-design and align national and regional actions with the priorities outlined in the Africa Ocean Decade Roadmap. The SEAWARD Africa Programme has catalyzed more than 5 Decade Actions and partnerships targeting themes such as blue carbon, ecosystem restoration, marine spatial planning, digital ocean infrastructure, and climate adaptation. These initiatives are being developed through collaborative mechanisms including regional technical consultations and multi-partner platforms. IOCAFRICA has facilitated emerging partnerships with the GEOMAR-led FUTURO initiative (Call 07/2024), Oceanx's [Around Africa Expedition (2025)](https://www.oqfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/OQ-OX_Around-Africa-Expedition-2025_Leg2_Weekly_Report_01.pdf), the COESSING Summer School series in East and West Africa (2025), and a proposed Ocean Observation project under development with GOOS-Africa and GMES&Africa.

In support of outreach and strategic visibility, the Taskforce has also prepared for high-level engagement in upcoming milestones including UNOC 2025 (Nice, June 2025) and the 13th WIOMSA Symposium (Mombasa, September–October 2025). These actions collectively reflect a transition from mobilization to co-implementation, with the Taskforce playing a growing role in thematic leadership, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring of regional contributions to the global Ocean Decade.

1. At the heart of IOCAFRICA’s approach lies a commitment to equity, inclusivity, and knowledge democracy. Special focus has been placed on the active involvement of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs), the integration of women in ocean leadership, and the mainstreaming of indigenous and local knowledge. IOCAFRICA has provided strategic and financial support for ECOPs across multiple fronts, including fellowships, dedicated training opportunities, and sponsorship for participation in global and regional forums.

ECOPs have participated in regional training programmes organized by IOCAFRICA and its partners, including the FAIR Data Principles training hosted with KMFRI and OTGA in Mombasa in 2024. They were also actively involved in the 2023 workshop on ocean observation and the science-policy interface hosted in collaboration with GOOS-Africa and GMES&Africa. Furthermore, IOCAFRICA facilitated ECOP participation in international capacity-building programmes, including the International Ocean Institute's Ocean Governance Training in South Africa and the intensive on Oceanographic Survey Techniques and Data Management in Malta. ECOPs have also engaged in regional policy and knowledge exchange events such as those held in Nigeria focused on youth-led innovation and coastal resilience. Through the SEAWARD Africa Taskforce, ECOPs have contributed substantively to thematic working groups on ocean literacy, marine spatial planning, and digital ocean solutions, reinforcing the inclusion of early-career voices in Decade planning and implementation.

In a significant effort to raise their profile internationally, IOCAFRICA launched a competitive call for African ECOPs to apply for travel grants to participate in the Third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC-3) and the One Ocean Science (OOS) Congress in 2025. These grants—covering travel, accommodation, and subsistence—aim to ensure African ECOP representation in global decision-making spaces. The call, open until 31 March 2025, reflects IOCAFRICA’s commitment to scaling youth leadership and ensuring that early career voices contribute to shaping the region’s ocean future. This inclusive lens has helped IOCAFRICA build trust and legitimacy across a complex regional ecosystem.

1. The Sub-Commission has also strengthened its convening power and institutional networks. IOCAFRICA now serves as a trusted interlocutor in continental and global policy arenas—including the African Union Commission. IOCAFRICA is an active member of the African Union’s Blue Economy Reference Group (BERG), a platform coordinated by the African Union Commission and UNDP to align regional and partner support with Member States’ blue economy ambitions under the Africa Blue Economy Strategy. Through this engagement, IOCAFRICA contributes to planning, coordination, and technical dialogue, helping to bridge the gap between country needs, regional mechanisms, and global opportunities. These linkages ensure that African Member States are not passive recipients of global agendas, but co-authors of shared ocean futures.
2. Over the reporting period, IOCAFRICA positioned Africa as an emerging force in global ocean governance. Through direct participation in international dialogues and strategic programme implementation, IOCAFRICA contributed to major global frameworks including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the BBNJ Treaty, and the IPCC-led Ocean and Cryosphere assessments. In December 2024, IOCAFRICA participated in the Regional Workshop for States of the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of Africa on the BBNJ Agreement, held in Rabat, Morocco. This engagement was part of IOCAFRICA’s broader effort to ensure that African Member States are actively involved in shaping the operationalisation of the BBNJ Agreement and that regional ocean science priorities are integrated into new governance regimes. By advocating for the African voice to be heard in climate-ocean negotiations, biodiversity dialogues, and digital ocean governance, IOCAFRICA has helped secure greater attention to Africa’s priorities in global frameworks and underscored the need for investment in science-based sustainable ocean development.
3. IOCAFRICA’s work has significantly shaped global science-policy interfaces by contributing both technical expertise and strategic leadership to platforms such as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), and emerging digital ocean governance frameworks. In partnership with IPBES and AGNES, IOCAFRICA co-organized regional dialogues and knowledge exchanges linking marine biodiversity science with policy recommendations under the Global Biodiversity Framework. In the observation domain, IOCAFRICA has advanced Africa’s coordination within GOOS by supporting oceanographic surveys, data-sharing protocols, and integration of African observation nodes into global systems. Furthermore, IOCAFRICA has contributed to global discussions on digital ocean infrastructure, advocating for interoperability, data sovereignty, and the inclusion of African digital marine assets in global initiatives. Across these engagements, IOCAFRICA has consistently promoted inclusive representation, strengthened African expert participation, and ensured the visibility of regional knowledge systems in shaping global marine science and governance frameworks.
4. The Sub-Commission also contributed to critical global public goods, reinforcing Africa’s presence in international scientific reporting and assessment. IOCAFRICA provided technical input and regional perspectives to the Global Ocean Science Report (GOSR), contributing data and analysis that helped assess Africa’s capacity in ocean science, infrastructure, and investment. It supported the development of the State of the Ocean Report (StOR), aligning regional progress with the ten Ocean Decade Challenges and showcasing contributions from African Decade Actions. In addition, IOCAFRICA participated in the preparation of the Third World Ocean Assessment (WOA III) under the UN Regular Process by facilitating expert nominations, data contributions, and regional consultations. These processes enabled the inclusion of African science and experiences in global assessments, strengthening both scientific credibility and policy relevance. These contributions were amplified through IOCAFRICA’s regional ocean literacy campaigns, the mobilisation of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs), and its growing presence in cross-agency communications platforms, ensuring Africa’s visibility in shaping global ocean narratives.
5. Looking forward, IOCAFRICA will continue to evolve as a regional knowledge broker, coordination node, and investment platform for Africa’s ocean future. The Sub-Commission will build on its success in positioning marine science as a cornerstone of continental resilience, economic transformation, and multilateral influence. As Africa navigates the intersecting challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and geopolitical shifts, IOCAFRICA will lead in aligning ocean governance with broader regional development goals.

The way forward involves scaling digital and observation infrastructure, consolidating capacity-building systems, and embedding ocean priorities in the strategies of regional economic communities, AU entities, and UN frameworks. IOCAFRICA will continue to act as a bridge between science, policy, and society—ensuring African perspectives shape global marine policies while also enabling Member States to translate global norms into local benefits. This next phase demands more than continuity—it calls for ambition, coherence, and innovation. IOCAFRICA will deepen its convening role across sectors and scales, and strategically leverage its partnerships to mobilize knowledge, finance, and political will in support of a thriving, secure, and sustainable African ocean community.

**3. Partnerships, UN Coordination, and Multilateral Engagement**

1. Over the reporting period, IOCAFRICA reinforced its role as a convening platform and trusted partner in Africa’s ocean governance and science ecosystem. Its leadership extended beyond technical coordination to include high-level engagement in policy and programme delivery processes across the continent. A key example of this is IOCAFRICA’s participation in the African Union’s Blue Economy Reference Group (BERG)—a multi-stakeholder platform jointly coordinated by the African Union Commission and UNDP. The Reference Group serves as a strategic interface between regional institutions, development partners, and Member States in advancing the implementation of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy. Through its role in BERG, IOCAFRICA contributed technical input and programme perspectives that have informed regional alignment around sustainable blue economy programming. In particular, IOCAFRICA has supported the mapping of Decade Actions aligned with blue economy priorities; contributed to discussions on AU-led programme coordination and monitoring; and facilitated links between SEAWARD Africa implementation and Member State-led initiatives. Beyond BERG, IOCAFRICA has participated inAU–UNDP collaboration on knowledge-sharing events, and contributed substantively to aligning national-level marine science priorities with AU Agenda 2063 and the Blue Economy Strategy pillars. These collaborative actions have helped bridge fragmented programming efforts and mobilized coordinated responses to coastal resilience, fisheries governance, ecosystem restoration, and data infrastructure. IOCAFRICA’s integrative approach—merging science-policy dialogue, technical delivery, and strategic engagement—has not only driven collective action on shared ocean priorities but also ensured that African marine institutions are empowered to shape the continent’s ocean development agenda from within.
2. The Sub-Commission strengthened institutional partnerships with the African Union Commission (including SEBE, GMES&Africa, and AU-IBAR), regional economic communities, and multilateral partners such as UNEP (Nairobi and Abidjan Conventions), UNDP, FAO, UN-Habitat, and IUCN. These partnerships helped mainstream IOC global initiatives—including the Ocean Decade—into continental policy dialogues and programme design.
3. IOCAFRICA maintained strong working relationships with regional scientific organisations, notably WIOMSA, CORDIO East Africa, AFMESI, The Nature Conservancy, and the Benguela Current Commission. These collaborations enabled a wide range of impactful activities including the joint delivery of capacity development programmes, regional policy consultations, and scientific workshops. For instance, IOCAFRICA was part of the 12th WIOMSA Scientific Symposium planning process as a member of the steering committee and co-organized a technical side event during the event. while partnerships with CORDIO and AFMESI supported coordinated training sessions on integrated coastal management and marine spatial planning in the Western Indian Ocean region. In partnership with the Benguela Current Commission, IOCAFRICA participated in technical discussions on marine pollution monitoring frameworks and facilitated data-sharing initiatives across Angola, Namibia, and South Africa. These engagements were not limited to single events but formed part of sustained collaborative frameworks, reinforcing the integration of science-based decision-making into regional governance and supporting the scaling of best practices across coastal Member States.
4. The Sub-Commission has continued to strengthen and diversify its engagement with the donor and development community, mobilising resources for strategic initiatives through partnerships with key international actors.
* Among IOCAFRICA’s most long-standing and transformative partnerships is its collaboration with the Government of Flanders (Belgium), which supported the recently completed Ocean InfoHub (OIH) Africa project. This project led to the creation of an online database of research vessels and expeditions, as well as the African Marine Training Opportunities portal—now hosting over 270 training offerings from 18 countries. Building on this success, Flanders has committed to funding a new two-year initiative (2025–2027) that will develop and maintain low-cost sea level monitoring stations across four countries in the Western Indian Ocean—Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Seychelles—supporting Global Sea Level Observing System (GLOSS) and regional climate resilience.
* Also, funding from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) continues to support our work in ocean observation and Early Warning Systems. through this funding, IOCAFRICA partnered with the IOC Science and UNESCO teams and the National Institute of Fisheries Research (INRH) in Morocco to begin developing a national early warning system (EWS) for Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs), marking a key advancement in national ocean hazard readiness. Similarly, in Namibia, IOCAFRICA collaborated with the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources and IOC-UNESCO to conduct a national consultation to identify country-specific requirements for establishing an EWS for HABs.
* NORAD support has also enabled IOCAFRICA to expand its work in ocean observation, with funding directed toward oceanographic surveys, technical coordination with the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), and strengthening regional data collection and integration capacities.
* The Government of Sweden, through the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwAM), has been instrumental in promoting inclusive marine spatial planning (MSP) in Africa. A major outcome of this collaboration is a joint publication series focused on poverty and gender integration in MSP, including conceptual frameworks and case studies from Tanzania, Kenya, and Madagascar. Swedish support also enabled IOCAFRICA to assist the Comoros in drafting a national MSP roadmap, to be finalized at a technical workshop in late 2025.
* The First Institute of Oceanography (FIO) of China partnered with IOCAFRICA to deploy ocean buoys in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean regions. These deployments support ocean-climate forecasting and enhance real-time data availability across Africa’s coastal observation networks.
1. IOCAFRICA is also cultivating new donor engagements, including with Australia, France, Italy, and Finland. These partnerships reflect growing international confidence in IOCAFRICA’s leadership and its capacity to drive regionally grounded, globally aligned ocean science and governance agendas.
2. Academic partnerships have been deepened with universities and UNESCO Chairs in marine science. IOCAFRICA worked with tertiary institutions to expand access to OTGA training, promote co-design of Decade Actions, and support research-to-policy linkages in Member States. In collaboration with the University of Ghana and the MarCNoWA project, IOCAFRICA is co-organizing a two-phase regional training programme on the use of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) and Earth Observation technologies for marine resource monitoring and governance. Furthermore, IOCAFRICA is co-leading a consortium of academic and scientific institutions across Africa and globally under the Blue Africa initiative. This initiative includes partners from the Witwatersrand’s Global Change Institute, University of Cape Town, University of Pretoria, University of Washington, University of British Columbia, Stanford Centre for Ocean Solutions, University of Dar es Salaam, University of Saint Pedro, Federal University of Technology Akure, Eduardo Mondlane University, Université de La Réunion, and University of Cape Coast, among others. Regional scientific institutions such as CORDIO East Africa, KMFRI, SAEON, and IUCN are also engaged. The Blue Africa initiative seeks to evaluate Africa’s marine biodiversity and blue carbon potential, while assessing trade-offs and co-benefits for community livelihoods. By addressing data gaps and empowering policy dialogue, the project supports Africa’s engagement in climate and biodiversity negotiations under the UNFCCC and CBD, and contributes to sustainable development within the region’s emerging blue economy frameworks.
3. IOCAFRICA continues to play a strategic role in shaping sustainable development outcomes for African Member States by contributing to key UN coordination mechanisms. It has actively supported the rollout of the UN Common Country Analysis (CCA), which serves as the evidence base for the design of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs), notably in countries such as Mauritius and Seychelles. As UNESCO's designated technical focal point, the IOCAFRICA Technical Secretary has helped integrate ocean governance, blue economy development, and coastal resilience into the strategic priorities of UN Country Teams.
* IOCAFRICA has also contributed technical inputs to UNESCO Country Profiles and Cooperation Sheets, which serve as foundational planning tools for UNESCO’s engagement in Member States. By providing up-to-date data and insights on national ocean science capacities, institutional networks, and development challenges, IOCAFRICA ensures that marine and coastal issues are reflected in broader UN programming and that UNESCO’s comparative advantage is leveraged to support national priorities.
* In addition, IOCAFRICA plays an active role in the Opportunity and Issues-Based Coalitions (OIBCs)—inter-agency platforms established to advance shared goals under the UNSDCF. Through OIBC 3 (Education, Innovation, Digitalization, and Youth), IOCAFRICA has contributed to regional knowledge sharing on ocean education, youth empowerment, and digital tools for marine science. In OIBC 4 (Climate Action, Resilience, and Food Systems), the Sub-Commission has worked alongside UNESCO, UNEP, FAO, and WFP to elevate the role of ocean observation, forecasting, and ecosystem restoration in climate adaptation planning.
* Furthermore, IOCAFRICA supports UNESCO’s contributions to the UN Resident Coordinator system by participating in joint evaluations, sharing lessons from IOC-affiliated initiatives, and promoting regional integration of marine science in national development strategies. For instance, IOCAFRICA has advised on aligning UN contributions with long-term national plans such as Somalia’s Vision 2060. These efforts underscore IOCAFRICA’s role not only as a technical actor, but as a strategic enabler of interagency coherence and country-driven implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

**4. Institutional Priorities and Operational Needs (2025–2027)**

1. The 2023–2025 intersessional period marked a strategic turning point for IOCAFRICA, as the Sub-Commission transitioned from a coordination platform to a systems leader in marine science diplomacy, ocean data infrastructure, and integrated policy influence. Building on the transformative progress captured throughout this report, IOCAFRICA’s priorities for 2025–2027 will focus on leveraging its strengthened institutional identity and strategic partnerships to scale regional impact and consolidate Africa’s global leadership in ocean science.
2. The Sub-Commission will prioritize:
* Strengthening institutional mechanisms for Ocean Decade implementation, including the coordination of National Decade Committees, regional Decade Actions, and thematic communities of practice under the SEAWARD Africa Programme;
* Deepening engagement with the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, UN Country Teams, and science-policy platforms to ensure coherence between marine governance and continental strategies such as Agenda 2063 and the Africa Blue Economy Strategy;
* Enhancing Africa’s visibility in global ocean governance, including the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), etc through regional science contributions and strategic participation;
* Scaling up digital ocean capabilities, including sea level monitoring infrastructure, regional training platforms, interoperable data ecosystems, and alignment with global initiatives like GOOS, ODIS, and the Ocean InfoHub;
* Supporting Member States in operationalising ocean data for marine spatial planning, ecosystem management, climate adaptation, and disaster preparedness
* Expanding leadership pipelines for Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs), with a focus on equitable access to training, mobility, and participation in decision-making, while also advancing gender-responsive and youth-focused programming across all areas.
1. Despite these gains, the capacity of the IOCAFRICA Secretariat remains a structural limitation. With a small team managing an expansive and increasingly strategic portfolio—including programme delivery, policy engagement, communications, data stewardship, and technical coordination—there is a pressing need to increase staffing and diversify support functions. The limited staff structure, while committed and effective, is stretched across diverse functions that include programme management, communications, data coordination, youth engagement, and high-level policy interface.
2. To deliver on its growing mandate, IOCAFRICA will engage with IOC/UNESCO Headquarters, Member States, and development partners to explore sustainable financing models, secondment mechanisms, and technical staff deployments. Strengthening core programme teams, establishing regional liaison roles, and building internal capacity for coordination, analytics, communications, and partnership management will be essential to sustainably delivering on the Sub-Commission’s expanding portfolio. This institutional reinforcement will be essential to sustaining momentum and unlocking the next phase of IOCAFRICA’s growth and strategic delivery

**5. Closing Reflections**

1. I am deeply honoured to take on this responsibility at a time of significant momentum for ocean science and sustainable development in Africa. The accomplishments documented in this report reflect not only institutional maturity but also the extraordinary commitment and professionalism of the IOCAFRICA Secretariat staff, who continue to deliver under immense pressure with admirable focus and purpose. I also pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Mika Odido, whose visionary leadership laid a solid foundation upon which we will continue to build. I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to the Chair of IOCAFRICA, Prof. Kaudio AFFIAN, and the Vice-Chairs—Dr. Juliet Hermes, Dr. Raj Mohabeer, and Dr. Mohamed Mokrane—for their unwavering guidance, regional leadership, and service to the Sub-Commission. I also wish to acknowledge Prof. Yutaka Michida, Chair of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), and Prof. Amr Hamouda, Vice-Chair for Africa, for their continued advocacy and strategic support to the region. Finally, I am sincerely grateful to the IOC Executive Secretary, Dr. Vladimir Ryabinin, and the colleagues at IOC/UNESCO Headquarters for their steadfast cooperation, technical support, and commitment to advancing the African Ocean agenda.
2. I am especially grateful to our Member States, regional and international partners, UNESCO Chairs, UN agencies, NGOs, and Early Career Ocean Professionals who have contributed their expertise, resources, and time to the shared vision of a resilient, knowledge-driven, and inclusive ocean future for Africa. As we look to the future, IOCAFRICA stands ready to deepen its role as a credible and trusted regional platform—one that catalyzes science, shapes policy, and strengthens collaboration across scales to achieve the ocean we need for the Africa we want.
3. Looking ahead, IOCAFRICA will remain firmly anchored in its mandate while embracing innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability. We will continue to foster strong partnerships, amplify African voices in global forums, and enable science-based action that supports resilient, equitable, and prosperous ocean societies across the continent. I look forward to working with all of you as we navigate this decisive decade together.