

Conservation of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems in Western Indian Ocean Streamlined through a New Consortium Launched Today in Johannesburg

Johannesburg / Nairobi, 6 November 2007- A strong Consortium has just been launched today at the on going Conference of parties to the Nairobi and Abidjan Convention in Johannesburg by Dr. Rolph Payet, the Interim Regional Coordinator of the Nairobi Convention. The “Consortium for Conservation of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems in Western Indian Ocean”, (WIO-C) is a joint initiative by IUCN, WWF, WIOMSA, CORDIO, WCS, UNEP-Nairobi Convention, IOC-Indian Ocean Commission, NEPAD and IOC-UNESCO, aimed at developing synergistic partnerships that will advance marine research, conservation and management in the Western Indian Ocean region.



Over the years, the governments of the Western Indian Ocean have voiced concern over the continued degradation of the marine and coastal environment; consequently, several regional organizations have developed coastal and marine conservation programmes in the Eastern and Southern Africa including the Island States of the West Indian Ocean (WIO). These programmes include the WWF coordinated Eastern African Marine Ecoregion (EAME), IUCN’s Eastern Africa Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Programme and other projects implemented by CORDIO, WIOMSA, WCS, UNEP and UNESCO.

Due to the multiplicity of projects and programmes, a number of key stakeholders have come together to discuss and agree on how the initiatives can be more effective in influencing decision making and changing the face of natural resource management in Western Indian Ocean. WIO-C has been formed to rationalize these efforts.

It is recognized that such collaboration will not only advance the sustainable use and conservation of coastal and marine ecosystems and associated resources, but that it will also contribute to sustainable livelihood and poverty reduction in the region.

The mission of WIO-C is to become the principle mechanism for reaching a broad stakeholder engagement in the formulation and implementation of the programme of Work for the Nairobi Convention. The nine founding members are therefore committed to anchor the Consortium in the Nairobi Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the marine and coastal environment of the Eastern and Southern Africa (Western Indian Ocean) Region. The Consortium consists of a highly credible network of organizations that will be able to provide decision support, share information and management experiences, mobilize resources and develop collaborative programmes. In particular these activities will relate to the regional and transboundary issues.

The main purpose of the Consortium is to support synergy and strengthen coordination in the implementation of activities and programmes related to marine and coastal ecosystem management, research and development. The consortium will also be instrumental in promoting knowledge and

information sharing amongst stakeholders in the Western Indian Ocean region with a view to anchoring activities within the framework of the Nairobi Convention.

While the nine-member leadership group will steer the Consortium, the day-to-day secretariat functions will be a revolving responsibility – initially undertaken by the WWF-Eastern African Marine Ecoregion Team based in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.

Note to Editors:

The consortium was established at the Meeting of the Partners that was held in Nairobi, Kenya from 31st August to 1st September 2006. The core group of the founding members of the Consortium include the CORDIO - Coral Reef Degradation in the Indian Ocean; COI - Indian Ocean Commission; IOC-UNESCO - Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; IUCN – The World Conservation Union; NEPAD COSMAR-New Partnership for Africa's Development Coastal and Marine sub-Programme; UNEP - Nairobi Convention; Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA); Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS); and World Wide Fund for Nature Eastern African Marine Ecoregion (WWF-EAME).

WIO-C will focus on a few key areas. These include sharing of information, lessons and best practices; monitoring for improved management and capacity Building. Through the promotion of sustainable development and sustainable use, the Consortium will also seek to influence the development of policies that balance conservation and development needs through high profile and high-level engagement.

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