



SPECIAL ROUND TABLE

Blue Economy: which development opportunities in Africa?

CONCEPT NOTE

PREAMBLE

The sea and oceans occupy **over 70% of the Earth's surface** and host 80% of all forms of life on the planet. They provide a range of 'services' on which both aquatic and terrestrial life depend, such as the storing of about 25% of excess carbon dioxide and the production of 50% of the oxygen we breathe. Moreover, they offer a thermoregulatory action on the world's climate. At the same time, the seas provide a source of jobs and livelihoods for more than **4.3 billion people**. On this basis, over the last few years, awareness of the relevance of sea-related activities in the world economy has grown significantly and has acquired a decisive role as a driver for a smart, sustainable and inclusive global development.

The World Bank defines **Blue Economy** as "*sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and ocean ecosystems health*". It is therefore a concept that encompasses the full range of productive sectors and related policies on which the sustainability – or not – of the use of marine resources depends. The concept of Blue Economy therefore includes both **traditional economic activities** – such as fishing, maritime transport, tourism – and **more recent and diversified ones**, such as aquaculture, off-shore renewable energy plants, scientific research. The concept is also linked to cross-cutting issues such as waste management, climate change and all the other challenges related to the ecological transition.

Blue Economy has been defined as "**the Future of Africa**" and "the new frontier of the African Renaissance" by, respectively, Agenda 2063 of the African Union and Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy. They both confirm the crucial role that the oceans and seas can play as catalysts for the **socio-economic transformation** of a continent in which 38 out of 54 countries are either coastal states or islands. However, there are many challenges associated with the African transition towards a blue economy: geopolitical, social, regulatory and in terms of human capital. These challenges can, however, constitute **opportunities for growth and development** for the continent.

PURPOSE OF THE SPECIAL ROUND TABLE

The aim of the Round Table is to share ideas, guidelines and best practices to identify solutions that will contribute to consolidate Africa's path towards a blue economy.

The debate will be organized around three macro-themes:

- 1) **Maritime sector**, understood as innovation aimed at reducing environmental impact and improving the management of a strategic field in support of the economic and social growth of the African continent.
- 2) **Sustainable seafood products**, understood as improvement of production, processing and marketing of seafood resources aimed at guaranteeing food security, strengthening local,



national and international partnerships and trade networks, creating opportunities for social growth and fair and inclusive employment.

- 3) **Management of coastal areas**, understood as the involvement of coastal communities in the processes of definition and implementation of coastal strip's developmental strategies, for a profitable sectoral integration (tourism-fishing-environment-craft-culture), a concrete protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services, for example by the creation of marine parks, which represent an effective reduction of anthropogenic impacts on the shores and seas.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- *38 African countries belong to the category of coastal states and another 4 are included, if large rivers and inland lakes are also considered. 6 of them also belong to the SIDS group. Many are here today. What are the challenges and opportunities that your countries are facing in developing the blue economy sector?*
- *How could Italy's cooperation with African countries become more effective in order to accelerate together on the path to maritime development?*