

African Island Nations Launch £7.2 Million Blue Economy Initiative

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Six African Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have launched a new £7.2 million (\$9 million) project to build sustainable and climate-resilient blue economies. The initiative, officially unveiled at a workshop in Mauritius, will support Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, Comoros, Mauritius, and Seychelles.

Advancing Sustainability and Resilience

The project, which will run for 42 months, is being led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The [Global Water Partnership Southern Africa \(GWPSA\)](#) will serve as the executing agency, while the African Union Commission (AUC) will act as the project's custodian.

Its core objectives include strengthening governance frameworks, implementing on-the-ground projects to address unsustainable coastal practices, and promoting integrated land management and knowledge sharing across the participating nations.

Mr Oocheetsing Sadasing, Acting Principal Research Scientist at the Mauritian Oceanography Institute, highlighted the urgency of the initiative. **“As Island States, we rely heavily on the ocean for food, jobs and economic development. Yet we are also highly vulnerable to marine pollution, overfishing, land degradation, and increasing impacts of climate change,”** he said. **“This workshop is an opportunity for us to come together, better understand the objectives of the project, agree on modes of collaboration, and clarify the rules of partners. It is an important step towards building stronger cooperation among countries, institutions, and communities.”**

Overcoming Challenges for a Sustainable Future

Dr Olivier Pasnin, Programme Technical Specialist at the UNDP Mauritius and Seychelles, underscored the immense potential of African SIDS to lead in blue economy transformation, noting their vast marine territories and rich ecosystems. However, he also pointed out the significant hurdles they face.

“Today marks a pivotal moment in our shared journey, a moment that underscores our collective ambition, as African SIDS, to transition towards a sustainable, inclusive, and climate-resilient blue socio-economic future,” he stated. He added that turning this potential into prosperity is **“neither automatic nor guaranteed,”** citing **“fragmented governance, limited technical capacity, insufficient investment, and the escalating impacts of climate change”** as key challenges hindering progress.

The inception workshop brought together governments, regional partners, and civil society to finalise the first-year work plan and establish a steering committee. Delegates reviewed strategies for stakeholder engagement, monitoring and evaluation, and co-financing commitments. The project is built on three interconnected pillars:

- **Improved governance frameworks** to enable a sustainable blue economy.
- **On-the-ground investments** to address unsustainable practices.
- **Knowledge management** to facilitate learning and scale up successful approaches.

Mrs Francina Phakameya, GWPSA Finance and Administration Director, stressed that the project’s success will depend on **“strong partnerships, continuous innovation, and the engagement of communities, governments, and the private sector alike.”**

Through this collaborative effort, the participating countries will engage in policy discussions at a continental level to manage the growing demand for ocean resources while protecting the environment and including local communities.