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Crucial meeting held on future of the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem

Ghana's Deputy Environment Minister, Omame Boamah, declared open on 30 June a technical meeting of the Interim Guinea Current Commission (IGCC). The meeting is expected to make far-reaching recommendations on the management of the marine ecosystem spanning 16 west and central African nations sharing 5,560 kilometres of coastline. He expressed satisfaction at the progress made so far.

"It is gratifying to note that our region has been able to spearhead the adoption of a holistic ecosystem approach for national resources management which has continued to gain international acceptance," he told the 37 delegates present on the first of a two-day GCLME Project Steering Committee meeting in the Ghanaian capital, Accra.



Photo: Olu Sarr/IGCC GCLME

L-R: IGCC Executive Secretary Dr. Stephen M. Donkor, Ghana Deputy Minister of Environment Omame Boamah, Chief Director Ghana Ministry of Environment George C. Scott.

He also said Ghana was ready to host the Guinea Current Commission, when fully formed.

The Committee has organized six successful meetings since 2005. This seventh meeting was a necessary step towards the finalization of draft documents, draft decisions and other policy instruments for the 2nd Meeting of the Committee of Ministers on 2 July, required for

the effective implementation of the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem (GCLME) project. This includes the Strategic Action Programme and the transition to a full Guinea Current Commission.

The Committee is a technical body which, at this meeting, is expected to recommend that the region's environment ministers turn the IGCC into a permanent body.

The Committee is made up of 16 national directors of the GCLME project. The Committee directs the activities of the GCLME project



Photo: Olu Sarr/IGCC GCLME

Delegates to the 7th IGCC/GCLME Steering Committee meeting

and the Interim Guinea Current Commission, based on the Abuja Ministerial Declaration in 2006. Since the start of Project Implementation, the Steering Committee has provided guidance for project execution on behalf of governments of the countries participating in the GCLME project.

In 2007, GCLME Member States adopted the Strategic Action Programme, which is a policy document setting out the legal and institutional reforms and investments needed to resolve the region's foremost trans-boundary marine ecosystem issues. The Guinea Current countries adopted the Strategic Action Programme in 2007, with an ultimate goal of applying it nationally and regionally. Implementation will make it easier for the integrated management of the region's coastal areas and marine ecosystem, so that its



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resources could be used sustainably to boost food security and the socio-economic wellbeing of its inhabitants.

Present at the Committee's meeting were delegates from all 16 GCLME Member States, United Nations cooperating agencies, non-governmental and civil society organizations, as well as the private sector.



Participants during a break at 7th IGCC/GCLME Steering Committee meeting. Foreground L-R: UNIDO Rep. Ghana and Togo Dr. Francis Bartels, GCLME Project Manager (Vienna, Austria) Mr. Christian Susan.

Preparation of Action Plans well underway

Countries participating in the GCLME project have started preparing their National Action Plans (NAPs) that will set out priority projects designed to protect the marine ecosystem at the country-level.

Preparation of the NAPs is aimed at achieving the goals of GCLME project's Strategic Action Programme (SAP) that is now ready for distribution to all 16 countries involved in the GCLME project. Preparation of the NAPs is organized by national coordinators for the plan with inputs from the national Steering Committee members, especially from the national socio-economic, legal as well as biodiversity specialists.

Workshops on the preparation of NAPs were launched in March. The environmental expert at the GCLME Regional Coordination Unit, Dr. Jacques Abe, represented the Unit at the launching of the workshops in Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome. He also visited Angola and Gabon to help prepare their NAPs.

When all the 16 plans are submitted, they will then form the foundation component of the SAP. Priority projects identified in the NAPs will constitute the major input for a planned GCLME Partnership Conference due to be held in Cameroon.

SAP is a negotiated policy document under the aegis of the IGCC. The SAP will aid countries to make changes to statutory policies and activities causing environmental and resources stress.

In addition, the SAP should result in the initiation of a selected number of National projects that would be identified in the National Action Plans.

The GCLME project was approved by ministers of the environment of the 16 GCLME countries in 2003. This was the continuation of a pilot project, launched eight years earlier, on water pollution control and biodiversity conservation in the Gulf of Guinea Large Marine Ecosystem. Since then the programme has evolved to the stage that will mature in July with the formation of the permanent Guinea Current Commission.

GCLME scientists survey Gabonese, Congolese waters in science-based effort to ensure sustainable management of Guinea current fisheries

Norwegian survey ship Dr. Fridtjof Nansen completed a 13-day training voyage on 30 June for 13 marine scientists from the GCLME project countries.

The scientists underwent instruction on the use of acoustics sounding methods in tracking fish spools in the West African seaboard of the Atlantic Ocean.

"I have to teach the scientists how to interpret acoustics data and use acoustics methods," Sigbjorn Mehl, the scientists' cruise leader, said on 18 June just before the launch ceremony of the training and survey cruise.



L-R: Nansen Cruise Leader Sigbjorn Mehl, ACP Fish II Regional Manager Central Africa Dr. Oumarou Njifonjou

Echo sounding is a technique already used by fishing trawlers to locate fish and maximize catches. However, speaking at the start of the voyage in Port-Gentil, Gabon, Mehl said the training cruise would enable the scientist to use their newly-acquired skills to gather hydrographical data with its environmental parameters, as well as to collect and evaluate information on pelagic fish stocks and their movement in waters off the Congo Republic and Gabonese coast. They also collected data such as fish size, sex and weight 10 nautical miles offshore in waters 20 to 500 metres deep.



Photo: Olu Sarr/IGCC GCLME

Dr. Fridtjof Nansen ready to set sail on a training cruise with 13 marine scientists.

Such essential data should enable the governments of the Republic of Congo and Gabon, amongst others, who are members of the GCLME, to make informed decisions to ensure sustainable management of their fish stocks.

The Guinea Current region is among the most productive coastal and offshore waters in the world, and is host to a vast array of fishery resources, precious minerals, as well as oil and gas reserves. The potential of the Guinea Coasts for eco-tourism is also huge, and it is an important reservoir of globally significant marine biodiversity.

However, these areas and their living resources are threatened by human activity such as over-exploitation, pollution from land and sea-based sources, and the alterations of ecosystems resulting in degraded coastal habitats because of erosion.



Photo: Olu Sarr/IGCC GCLME

Instrument Chief Tore Moerk on the Dr. Fridtjof Nansen.

The GCLME project, which is being executed by the IGCC together with the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, spearheaded this cruise. The cruise started from the Gabonese oil city of Port-Gentil and ended in the city of Pointe-Noire, Republic of Congo. The scientists taking part in the cruise came from Angola,

Republic of Congo, Congo DR, Sao Tome and Principe, Nigeria, and Ghana. The Nansen is due to survey the pelagic resources of Angola and Namibia (members of the [Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem](#)) with funding from the Angolan Government.

Maritime lawyers get training on implementing Ballast Water Management Convention

A regional workshop on the legal implementation of the Ballast Water Management Convention was held in Lagos, Nigeria, 15-17 June mostly for experienced maritime lawyers.

The training focused on the legal aspects of the Convention from the perspective of the GCLME region and its implementation regionally. The aim of the workshop was to provide an input to the Regional Strategic Action Programme on the Convention, adopted by the Regional Task Force in Abidjan, July 2009.

Each of the 16 GCLME project countries nominated one government employee to the workshop.



Photo: Jacques Abe/IGCC GCLME

Participants at the regional workshop on Ballast Water Management Convention.

A requirement for participation was that the maritime lawyers be government employees and authorized to oversee the drafting of domestic Ballast Water Management Convention legislation. This was designed to ease the implementation of the IMO [Ballast Water Management Convention](#) and to develop corresponding national legislation.

The training course was developed within the framework of the [GloBallast](#) Partnerships project, with the input from the Accra-based IGCC.

The training was organized by IMO, the IGCC, the [GloBallast](#) Partnerships Project Coordination Unit at the IMO and host country Nigeria, through the [Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency](#). Workshop Facilitators were Dr. Jacques Abe, Environment Scientist at the IGCC/GCLME Regional Coordination Unit; Mrs. J.A. Gunwa, director at [Marine Environment Management Department at NIMASA](#); and Fredrik Haag, the technical adviser of the [GloBallast](#) Partnerships Project Coordination Unit, Marine Environment Division, IMO.

IGCC/GCLME at ANBO indaba

The IGCC took part in the first meeting of the **African Network of Basin Organizations (ANBO)** held 2-5 May to plan how, individually and collectively; these bodies could be strengthened to respond to future challenges on the continent.

The indaba (the Zulu word for “business” or “matter”) in the northern Swazi town of Piggs Peak was the first by the network's Southern African chapter; it attracted seven basin organizations within the region. West and Central Africa have already held a similar gathering and a similar one for Eastern Africa will follow the Southern African event.

The IGCC/GCLME's participation served as an introduction to the various basin organizations and as a potential partner with them in undertakings where river basins and Large Marine Ecosystems interface and directly impact marine socio-economic in the region.

For the Guinea Current region, the major river basins that have a direct or potential bearing on its marine ecosystem are the Niger Basin Authority, the **Volta Basin Authority** and the **International Commission for the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha Basin** (or CICOS).

IGCC/GCLME obtained the general agreement on further collaboration from CICOS in Kinshasa, headquartered in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Niger Basin Authority on the dissemination of pertinent information.

The meeting discussed:

- How ANBO could assist in data generation and information sharing
- The role the African Ministers Council on Water can play in the inclusion of Integrated Water and Resources Management and climate change adaptation into national development planning processes
- How the river basin organizations and ANBO could position themselves to face local, regional and global challenges such as:
 - a) Climate change
 - b) Interface with other management systems
e.g. Large Marine Ecosystems
 - c) Benefit-sharing

Her Royal Highness Princess Tsandzile of Swaziland, who is also the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy, was the keynote speaker at the official opening of the two-day event in Piggs Peak. Opening remarks were made by the Chief Executive Officer of KOBWA, Dr S. Nkambule, and ANBO President Reginald Teketeka.

IGCC/GCLME at 1st Ghana Policy Fair

The IGCC/GCLME took part in Ghana's first Policy Fair held in Accra, in a bid to raise public awareness to the dangers of marine pollution in coastal regions.

The fair was a Government of Ghana initiative to bring its citizenry closer to its “Better Ghana” agenda. There were over 90 government ministries, departments and agencies that exhibited their policies, programmes and government projects. The Ministry of Environment invited the IGCC/GCLME to share a booth at the fair, which provided it with a platform to showcase the GCLME project. Visitors to the GCLME booth saw brochures, posters and pictorial boards as well as the Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analysis on display. IGCC/GCLME staff members manning the booths fielded questions.

Presenters at the ANBO Meeting

- ANBO on its strategic direction (of expanding membership and relations with the African Ministers Council on Water)
- the Orange-Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM)
- the Komati Basin Water Authority (KOBWA)
- the Zambezi River Authority
- the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM)
- the Nile Basin Initiative
- the Lake Tanganyika Authority
- CICOS
- IGCC/GCLME
- Implications of Climate Change for River Basin Organizations (meeting facilitator)



Photo: Yvonne Bawe/IGCC GCLME

GLCME booth at the 1st Ghana Policy Fair, Accra.

The five-day event kicked off on 27 April and was attended by government leaders and the Executive Secretary of the GCLME project, Dr. Stephen Maxwell Donkor. Although the fair drew a constant stream of visitors, organizers were unable to estimate the numbers.

Turnout Low at Ghana's first Live Earth Run for Water

Campaigners in Accra Ghana forming part of a worldwide effort on 18 April to draw attention to the need for water conservation and provision said they were disappointed by the low turnout locally and meagre amount of money raised in support of needy communities in the country.

"It was not patronised as we wished," Gloria Commodore, coordinator of the Ghana version of the Dow Live Earth Run for Water, said in Accra, the nation's capital



Photo: Olu Sarr/IGCC GCLME

Message from the youth at the Dow Live Earth Walk for Water in Accra, Ghana, 17 April 2010.

This was the first fundraising event of its kind in Ghana and came in response to a global call by Live Earth; 200 countries participated. Worldwide the Live Earth run is held every 18 April. This year that date fell on a Sunday and in Accra the event was held a day earlier. Organizers said they had to make the shift because Ghanaians were such devout churchgoers that a Sunday holding would have resulted in far fewer participants.



Photo: Olu Sarr/IGCC GCLME

The Dow Live Earth Walk for Water, Accra, Ghana.

Ghana's National Sports for All Association partnered with Water for Communities in organizing the event which attracted 1,000 participants, 350 of them children.

Water for Communities is a Ghanaian non-governmental organization that will use these proceeds toward construction of a borehole and shed in Takla, a village in the country's Volta Region.



***Above Photos: Olu Sarr/IGCC GCLME
Youths at the Dow Live Earth Walk for Water in Accra, Ghana.***

Upcoming Events

23-27 August - GCLME Regional Workshop on Stomach Content Analysis in Luanda, Angola.

24-27 August MARPOL Convention workshop in Lagos, Nigeria.

October - GCLME Partnership Conference in Cameroon.