

Concept Note

Pathways to the Blue Economy: Harnessing Economic Opportunities for Urban Youth through Innovation



23 - 24 May 2019 Nairobi, Kenya



All day



Venue : Conference Room 2 and 3

UN-Habitat will co-host with the Canadian High Commission and The Commonwealth Youth Programme, a two-day *Pathways to the Blue Economy* symposium ahead of the UN-Habitat Assembly. Pathways will focus on exploring the ways of harnessing economic opportunities for youth in the Blue Economy and Cities.

The purpose of Pathways is:

- To provide concrete and actionable information to youth on how they can prepare themselves for and engage in the Blue Economy
- Develop a framework that highlights the pathways for youth to engage in the Blue Economy and promotes youth innovation in the development of sustainable coastal cities
- Showcase and promote education and private sector opportunities related to the Blue Economy

Urbanization is the engine that propels the world towards prosperity in the 21st century and youth are the captains. Youth are society's most essential and dynamic human resource. There are more people under the age of 25 today than ever, totaling nearly three billion or almost half of the total global population; 1.8 billion of that total are between the age of 12 and 24. These youth live, by and large, in cities and towns; the cities of the developing world account for over 90% of the world's urban growth and youth account for a large percentage of those inhabitants.¹

Over 90% of all urban areas are coastal, and thus directly engaged in the blue economy. The global blue economy generates up to USD 6 trillion for the global economy and by some estimates; the African maritime industry is already worth a projected USD 1 trillion annually. If it were a country, the global blue economy would be the seventh-largest economy in the world. The Blue Economy drives economic growth and provides jobs for hundreds of millions around the world, often to

¹ *Cities of Youth, Cities of Prosperity, (UN-Habitat, 2013)*

those in the poorest communities, in industries as diverse as fishing, transport, tourism, off-shore mining and others.

According to the World Bank², the Blue Economy refers to the sustainable use of ocean and other water resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and job creation. The activities that are undertaken need to provide social and economic benefits for and should aim at restoring and protecting marine ecosystems. Furthermore, they must be based on an economic system that emphasizes clean technologies, renewable energy, waste reduction and the recycling of materials³.

The potential of the Blue Economy is not being realized, especially where it is most needed in continents such as Africa. In Africa there is over 47,000 km of coastline. Despite this, maritime trade among African countries makes up only just over 10 percent of total trade by volume. The International Energy Agency says ocean renewable energy can potentially supply more than four times current global energy demand.

The linkages between the *Blue Economy*, sustainable development and economic growth are recognized in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the *New Urban Agenda*. The *New Urban Agenda* makes explicit references to issues that are important to the Blue Economy. The most relevant refer

to sustainable water and resource management through the promotion of safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces, which include waterfront areas that are multifunctional areas for social interaction and inclusion, human health and well-being, economic exchange.

Engagement of Women and Youth

The realization of the full potential of the Blue Economy requires the effective inclusion of women and youth who face barriers when it comes to economic opportunities in coastal cities.

The case of women is telling. In various Blue Economy sectors, women are directly involved. For example, in small-scale industrial fisheries, women's most prominent role is in post-harvest activities, such as processing and marketing.

Of equal relevance is the case of youth. Africa faces a huge demographic challenge in the increasing percentage of young people under the age of 30. In order to participate in the benefits of the Blue Economy, these youth will need education, training, and job opportunities. Their effective labour force participation could be the engine that drives the Blue Economy of the future.

² United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development – UNCS D (2012). *The Future We Want: Outcome Document*

³ World Bank (2016). *Toward A Blue Economy: A Promise for Sustainable Growth in the Caribbean; An Overview*. Washington, DC: The World Bank. Retrieved 24-8-18 from here.