

PRESS RELEASE
ECOFISH PROGRAMME 6th STEERING COMMITTEE
under the chairmanship of the SADC

The 6th Steering Committee of the ECOFISH Programme was held in Gaborone, Botswana, on May 15. It was chaired by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), in the presence of Mr. Catalin Gherman, Deputy Head of Cooperation at the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Botswana; Mrs. Alice N'Diaye, Director at the General Secretariat of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC); and representatives of the African Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

As the ECOFISH Programme enters its final semester, emphasis will shift toward consolidation, institutional anchoring, and the strategic handover of the various work plans to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability beyond the project's end on September 12, 2025.

The Programme Steering Committee reviewed the performance of its five work plans and the actions taken in response to the recommendations from the previous 2024 session.

Of the three-day meeting, which began on May 13, the first two days were allocated to an in-depth technical review of its five work plans, addressing challenges and identifying opportunities to achieve the programme's objectives. The third day focused on deliberating the outcomes and actionable recommendations of the Technical Steering Committee.

In his speech, Mr. Catalin Gherman, from the EU Delegation, noted that intensified efforts would be required to achieve the programme's objectives especially by strengthening ecological sustainability, data-driven fisheries management along with ocean monitoring, control and surveillance. He also reckoned the strong results from small-scale sustainable projects at grassroot level which now need to be scaled up across Africa.

He stated: "For the European Union, we are at a critical moment to make the best out of this programme, by learning the lessons of these past years, focussing together on strategic actions and concretely preparing the sustainability of the programme".

Mrs. Alice N'Diaye from the IOC, presented an overview of the actions and contributions of the Ecofish programme, especially through its effort to combat Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing via the Regional Fisheries Surveillance Plan (PRSP). She highlighted the recognition and reaffirmation by Member States of their commitment to sustain the PRSP, as

expressed during the IOC 5th Summit last April and following the recommendations made at the 3rd Ministerial Conference held in Seychelles in February. Emphasis will now be placed on consolidating, sustaining, and strategically transferring the programme initiatives in order to strengthen regional and continental ownership and preserve this shared legacy.

Ecofish is a cross-regional initiative funded by the 11th EDF, leveraging regional collaboration and cooperation to enhance the sustainable management of inland and marine fisheries resources and contribute to the Blue Economy of the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) region.

The programme is promoted and managed by the EU Delegation in Mauritius and implemented by the IOC Secretariat, in partnership with four African Regional Economic Communities (RECs)—COMESA, EAC, IGAD, and SADC—and two Great Lake Fisheries Management Bodies: the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) and the Lake Tanganyika Authority (LTA).

Ecofish ensures seamless collaboration with other regional thematic and strategic agencies, such as AU-IBAR, AUDA-NEPAD, UNEP-NC, FAO, concurrent fisheries, and related projects to build momentum for transformative change in the fishing and Blue economy sectors of the region.

Ecofish programme

Ecofish programme, started in 2018, aims to enhance the sustainable management and development of fisheries to contribute to poverty alleviation food and nutrition security while addressing climate change resilience and enhancing marine biodiversity.

The programme serves eighteen island, coastal and landlocked countries within the the ESA-SA-IO region through five synergistic work plans .

Work Plans 1 and 2 are included in the shared fisheries of Africa’s two Great Lakes: LTA and Lake LVFO which are two inland Regional Fisheries Management Organisations that are institutionally connected to Eastern Africa Countries (EAC).

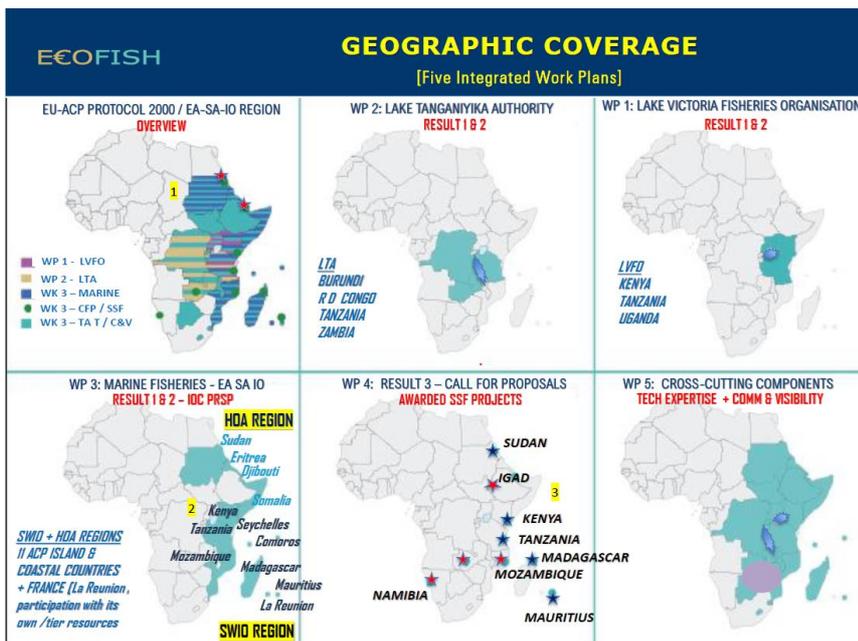
Work Plan 3 relates to the Marine Fisheries of the EA-SA-IO region, which the IOC Secretariat implements through a dedicated Integrated Project Management Unit (IPMU). It is a multi-faceted work plan that embraces all mandated strategic actions of the Ecofish programme. It also includes the IOC Regional Fisheries Surveillance Programme, commonly known as “PRSP,” which tackles monitoring, control, and surveillance to combat IUU fishing.

Work Plan 4 relates to Result 3 which demonstrate Integrated & Sustainable small-scale inland and marine fishery value chains at the community level. 9 awarded projects (3 in the EA, 4 in SA and 2 in the IO Region) are concerned. This workplan is directly managed by the EUD of Mauritius.

Work Plan 5 consists of the direct management and cross-cutting components such as the Technical Assistance and provision for External Evaluations and audits.

The programme aimed to strengthen fisheries governance, promote sustainable resource use, and enhance livelihoods through a harmonised and inclusive approach.

Ecofish promotes EA-SA-IO region as a hub through effective collaboration and cooperation to entrench result-oriented sustainable development and management of wild and farmed fisheries resources and aquatic systems to contribute to the time-bound political, social, economic and ecological goals of the African Agenda 2063.



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