# **Context**

Despite increasing recognition of the ocean’s role in sustainable development, Africa continues to face significant human and institutional capacity gaps in ocean science, policy, technology, and governance. Many coastal and island nations lack the trained personnel, institutional infrastructure, and long-term strategies to sustainably manage ocean and coastal resources, particularly in the context of climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, and increasing maritime activity.  
  
However, Africa is not starting from a vacuum. Various regional institutions, networks, and national agencies have accumulated considerable experience in training, research, and collaboration. What is needed now is a coherent, well-resourced approach to capacity development that is inclusive, future-oriented, and aligned with the IOC Capacity Development Strategy (2023–2030), the UN Decade of Ocean Science, and the African Union’s Agenda 2063.

# **Purpose**

To guide the sessional working group in identifying priority capacity gaps, developing impactful training and outreach initiatives, catalyzing partnerships, and mobilizing financial and technical resources in support of Africa’s ocean agenda.

# **1. Theme Overview**

This theme encompasses actions that enhance individual, institutional, and systemic capacity for ocean governance, science, innovation, and stewardship. It supports skills development, knowledge exchange, infrastructure improvement, career pathway strengthening, and intergenerational and gender-equitable participation in the ocean sector. It also facilitates the creation of strategic partnerships at national, regional, and global levels to pool expertise, mobilize resources, and co-design impactful initiatives. It emphasizes the importance of forging strong and sustained partnerships—with governments, academia, NGOs, development banks, the private sector, and especially universities and research institutions both within and outside Africa—to co-develop and co-deliver impactful capacity development programmes, facilitate knowledge exchange, and strengthen scientific collaboration. Resource mobilization is also central to this theme, calling for proactive engagement with funding mechanisms, innovative financing models, and alignment with donor priorities to ensure sustainable implementation.  
  
Moreover, it embraces a broader view of capacity that includes ocean literacy, cultural connections, indigenous knowledge, and public engagement. This theme underpins the successful implementation of all other priority areas—observation, data management, ecosystem protection—by ensuring that human and financial capital are available and sustainably deployed.

# **2. Sub-Themes to Cover**

* Skills development and human capacity building (training, mentoring, internships)
* Institutional strengthening and infrastructure support
* Strategic partnerships and networks (South-South, North-South, intra-Africa)
* Ocean literacy, education, and youth engagement
* Gender and equity mainstreaming
* Mobilization of financial and technical resources
* Integration of culture, underwater heritage, and indigenous knowledge

# 3. Guiding Questions

* What are the major capacity gaps hindering effective ocean governance and innovation in Africa?
* How can we design long-term, demand-driven training and mentorship programmes?
* Which institutional partnerships and regional platforms can be leveraged or strengthened?
* What mechanisms can enhance funding for national and regional ocean initiatives?  
  - How can culture, traditional knowledge, and youth engagement be embedded into capacity building?

# **4. Proposed Activities for 2026–2027**

## Capacity Building & Training

* Develop a modular training curriculum on ocean governance, blue economy, and climate adaptation.
* Deliver a multi-cohort regional training programme on marine science tools and digital technologies (e.g., ocean modelling, GIS, AI).
* Launch a Pan-African mentorship scheme for early-career ocean professionals.

## Institutional Support

* Support national ocean institutions to develop strategic capacity development plans.
* Equip marine training institutes with digital and field-based equipment.
* Strengthen coordination between ministries, research institutes, and universities on ocean science.

## Partnerships & Networks

* Establish an African Ocean Science and Innovation Alliance to connect stakeholders.
* Facilitate partnership dialogues with private sector, development partners, philanthropic foundations, and regional and international universities and research institutions.
* Promote South-South exchanges and collaborative research projects.

## Resource Mobilization

* Organize a regional ocean investment forum to match projects with funding.
* Develop investment cases and bankable proposals for capacity initiatives.
* Map financing opportunities from global climate, biodiversity, and development funds.

## Outreach, Culture & Education

* Integrate ocean literacy and underwater cultural heritage in national curricula.
* Develop creative youth-led awareness campaigns using digital storytelling.
* Support national ocean days, festivals, and exhibitions celebrating ocean heritage.

# **5. Coordination with Other WGs**

* Support WG 5.2.1 on workforce training for observational systems.
* Collaborate with WG 5.2.2 to build biodiversity science capacity.
* Align with WG 5.2.3 on digital skills and data management training.

# **6. Monitoring & Evaluation Considerations**

* Number of partnership dialogues, joint initiatives, or strategic MOUs with public and private sector partners.
* Total funding mobilized or committed for capacity development and infrastructure.
* Number of professionals trained (disaggregated by gender, region, level).
* Number of partnerships and MOUs signed or renewed.
* Funding mobilized for capacity and institutional support.
* Number of active mentorships and exchange programmes.
* National ocean education initiatives or outreach campaigns launched.

# **7.** **Expected Outputs from the WG**

* Comprehensive list of priority capacity needs and training topics.
* Proposed regional action plan on capacity development.
* Inventory of key regional partnerships and financing sources.
* Recommendations for strengthening national institutional capabilities.