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JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Enhancing Livelihoods, Food Security and Maritime Safety through Increased Resilience of Fishing Communities Dependent on Coral Reef Fisheries in the African Coastal Countries of the Indian Ocean

Government of Japan funds project to make fish and shellfish value chains more efficient in Indian Ocean countries, through partnership with FAO

African coastal countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) rely heavily on fisheries and related jobs, but these livelihoods are all threatened by declining fish stocks. In these many African countries, the blue economy represents a quarter of all revenue and a third of export earnings. And the more the coastal population grows, the more overfishing, illegal fishing, pollution and the unsustainable development of tourism degrade marine and coastal biodiversity, and deepen poverty.

In 2016, at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 6) in Kenya, countries such as Japan mobilized to raise awareness of the importance of "Adopting a blue economy for development accelerated from Africa ". FAO has been contacted to prepare technical support to support the development of a sustainable blue economy.

On August 27, 2019, just before TICAD 7 (August 28-30, 2019), a new funding agreement for a blue growth initiative project was signed between Japan and FAO. This project will benefit five countries including Kenya, Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles. The project aims to improve livelihoods, food security and maritime security by strengthening the resilience of fishing communities that depend on coral reef fishing in the African part of the Indian Ocean.

Kenya, Madagascar and the Union of the Comoros have already signed the partnership agreement for the implementation of this project at their level, in August, September and October 2019 respectively. For Mauritius, an official signing ceremony of the project document by the Government through the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, which will take place on **Thursday 06 February 2020 at the Labourdonnais Hôtel Caudan**, in the presence of the Ambassador of Japan, Mr. Kato Yoshiharu.

This three (03) year project is funded to the tune of USD 4,400,000 by the Japanese government, and will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 "Conserve and use the oceans sustainably, the seas and marine resources for sustainable development "by fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and by encouraging the conservation of coral reef and mangrove / seagrass ecosystems. It harmonizes with the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, the Integrated Maritime Strategy for Africa 2050 (AIM Strategy 2050), the African Charter on Maritime Safety and Security and Development in Africa, and Pillar 1 linked to the fields of agriculture and the blue economy of the Nairobi declaration "Promoting structural economic transformation through economic diversification and industrialization".

During TICAD 7, Japan affirmed its determination to contribute to the promotion of the blue economy with Africa. "The blue economy encompasses the two aspects of economic prosperity and maritime security, we are convinced that it perfectly corresponds to our vision of the free and open indopacific" declared the Minister Delegate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

For Mauritius, the Honorable Sudheer Maudhoo stressed the importance of the blue economy [...] maritime security and agriculture.

According to Patrice Talla Takoukam, FAO Representative in Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles, "several FAO initiatives are focused on promoting good governance, participatory decision-making processes and best practices in the area of fishing and aquaculture, and on improving the quality of fishery products by reducing post-harvest losses".