Eminent Persons Meeting on Sustainable Blue Economies and Food Security in Africa
Nikko, Tochigi, Japan, 23 – 25 June 2026

Africa, endowed with rich natural resources, continues robust economic growth with a rapidly expanding population. Surrounded by the ocean, the continent ttaahas significant potential to benefit from sustainable blue economies that will enhance food security and support overall sustainable development. Africa with gaps and inequality in socio-economic terms, at the same time, must tackle complex and interrelated challenges to realize this potential. It is therefore recommended to pursue the following actions to promote sustainable blue economies, improve food security, and foster international partnerships, particularly between Japan and Africa.

1. Conserving the ocean, marine and coastal ecosystems for the present and future generations

The ocean covers approximately 71 per cent of the Earth's surface, and the seafloor extends to depths of over 11,000 meters. 28.7 per cent of the global seafloor has been mapped to modern standards. The ocean is a life-supporting biosphere that sustains biodiversity and human livelihoods. However, a large proportion of the ocean, particularly the deep sea, remains to be understood. It is vital to facilitate actions to conserve marine and coastal biodiversity and ecosystems, while supporting the sustainable use of marine resources for present and future generations. It is important to facilitate policy measures in line with international policy frameworks including the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement).

2. Promoting co-benefit in sustainable blue economies

A co-benefit approach is a key factor in promoting sustainable blue economies. The synergistic implementation of multiple policy objectives can enhance the overall impact of policy measures while optimizing trade-offs. It is important to support multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration, cross-sectoral partnerships, and innovation across multiple dimensions, including social engagement, technological applications, financing, and international cooperation.

3. Properly valuating coastal and marine ecosystems and their services as nature capital

It is vital to value coastal and marine ecosystems as nature capital. The undervaluation of natural capital is detrimental to the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and their proper benefit sharing in Africa. Carbon credit schemes are instrumental; however, their benefits for local communities and stakeholders must be placed at the center of such initiatives. Carbon, biodiversity, and other ecological and socio-economic benefits of mangrove, seagrass and salt marsh should be further explored through blue carbon initiatives. J-Blue Credit, a Japanese national scheme for quantifying carbon and enabling financial transactions based on certified carbon credits, provides a useful perspective for valuing ecological assets and fostering social collaboration and partnership.

4. Scaling up sustainable commercial aquaculture

There are untapped potentials of promoting sustainable aquaculture in a commercial term. It is a priority to accelerate efforts to scale up commercial aquaculture systems to boost domestic fish supply, with particular focus on supporting aquaculture and blue economy entrepreneurship. Exchange of experimentations help assessing the potential and feasibility and exploring approaches applicable, sustainable and economically viable aquaculture.

5. Combating and eliminating IUU fishing

Combating and eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing must be pursued as a policy priority. IUU fishing undermines the sustainable management of fish stocks and entails significant economic losses for legitimate fishers and their respective countries, while also being associated with other crimes and illegal activities. Increased efforts are needed to promote the effective use of satellite data, aerial and maritime surveillance, as well as aerial and underwater drones, alongside the implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), catch documentation schemes, and sustainability and traceability certification. It should be recognized that measures to combat IUU fishing can also reduce the risks of forced labor, human rights violations, human and drug trafficking, organized crime, and illegal migration. Transboundary, sub-regional, and regional cooperation must be strengthened to enhance the effectiveness of IUU fishing countermeasures. Collaboration must be advanced under the reginal fishery management organizations (RFMOs) and other multilateral fishery agreements. It is useful to examine the feasibility of issuing an IUU fishing index bond to mobilize resources and strengthen institutional capability of eliminating IUU fishing and excluding seafood of IUU fishing from markets.

6. Enhancing disaster preparedness and building climate resilient communities

Coastal and island communities with the great potential of benefit sustainable blue economies remain susceptible and vulnerable to disasters and climate change impacts. Enhancing disaster preparedness including early warning systems is essential. It is also vital to promote resilient development to climate change and extreme climatic events including rainstorms, sea level rise and coastal erosion. Nature/ecosystem-based approaches should be a main pillar in such efforts. Lessons, experiences and innovative approaches in Japan should be shared with African stakeholders.

7. Building upon regional and sub-regional policy and institutional frameworks for promoting sustainable blue economies in Africa

The African Union provides an important policy and institutional framework for promoting sustainable blue economies in Africa, including through the Africa Blue Economy Strategy (2019). The African Development Bank supports these efforts by providing financial resources for initiatives aimed at advancing sustainable blue economies. In relation to capacity development, maritime corridors and connectivity, and transboundary coastal and marine ecosystem management, it is important to facilitate activities through sub-regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Indian Ocean Commission, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, and the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC).

8. Developing human resource, leadership and entrepreneurship

Human resources must be developed through the provision of practical knowledge and skills required to engage in activities that promote sustainable blue economies. This contributes to job creation, enhanced employment opportunities, and income generation, particularly for young people. Vocational training should therefore be promoted. Innovative approaches are also essential for advancing sustainable blue economies. It is important to pursue pragmatic and interdisciplinary leadership and entrepreneurship development programs with the design of financing mechanisms to support start-ups and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

9. Fostering science and technology

Sustainable blue economies need to be pursued based on science-based approaches with the engagement of local stakeholders. Educational and academic exchanges are beneficial to facilitating capacity development and international partnership. A Japan -Africa partnership platform for sustainable blue economies can be pursued such as a Japan – Africa blue economy academy.

10. Unlocking financing and investment

The African Development Bank (AfDB) is a pivotal regional financing institution for sustainable development. It is important that AfDB increases and diversify its portfolio to support sustainable blue economies including through financing windows and supporting schemes such as Youth Entrepreneurship and Innovation Multi-Donor Trust Fund (YEI MDTF), Innovation and Entrepreneurship Lab, African Education, Science and Technology Innovation Fund (AESTIF), and Venture Capital & Seed Funding. It is important to promote the development of sovereign blue-economy asset-backed financial securities and list them on national and regional capital markets to mobilize institutional capital to unlock the value of Africa's vast Blue-economy assets. It is also a key to facilitate the scaling-up of youth entrepreneurship investment banks across Africa to accelerate access to finance in support of the businesses of the youth in Africa. It is proposed to examine the modalities of setting up an Africa blue innovation fund and/or establishing a Japan-Africa blue economy fund and invites the Government of Japan and its partners to do so.

11. Enhancing the effectiveness of TICAD

The Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) continues to serve as an important platform for fostering partnerships between Japan and Africa in pursuit of sustainable development. A sustainable blue economy should be identified as a key theme for the upcoming TICAD 10. The practice of alternating the TICAD venue between Japan and African countries is deemed sensible. Direct, hands-on learning experiences are invaluable in inspiring stakeholders, strengthening partnerships, and facilitating concrete actions. It is therefore important to invite African private sector representatives and other stakeholders to Japan to observe and engage in practical learning opportunities when TICAD is held in Japan. Likewise, it is equally important to encourage the active participation of Japanese business leaders and other stakeholders in initiatives in Africa when TICAD takes place there.

12. Future steps

Concrete measures should be pursued to materialize the potential of promoting sustainable blue economies in Africa and to promote partnership between Japan and Africa in this respect through partnership between governments, private sector and relevant organizations in both Japan and Africa. The Sasakawa Peace Foundation through is Ocean Policy Research Institute is encouraged with the support of its partners including the Nippon Foundation to continue to undertake research, policy dialogues, good practice sharing, experimental activities in leadership/entrepreneurship development, and others relevant to promoting sustainable blue economies. SPF is encouraged to report its activities, their progress and future perspectives at relevant meetings including the Third Eminent Persons Meeting on Sustainable Blue Economies and Food Security in Africa to be held in 2027.

Adopted at Nikko, Tochigi, Japan on 25 June 2026

H.E. Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, Former President of Mauritius

H.E. Mr. Souleymane Ndéné Ndiaye, Former Prime Minister of Senegal
H.E. Dr. Ibrahim Hassane Mayaki, Former Prime Minister of Niger
H.E. Mr. Mehdi Jomaa Former Prime Minister of Tunisia
Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, former President of the African Development Bank
Dr. Yohei Sasakawa, Honorary Chairman, The Nippon Foundation and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation
Dr. Asushi Sunami, President, Sasakawa Peace Foundation
Mr. Shuichi Suzuki, President, Sasakawa Africa Association