

AFRICAN UNION-INTERAFRICAN BUREAU FOR ANIMAL RESOURCES (AU-IBAR)

CALL FOR

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

AFRICAN UNION CENTRES OF EXCELLENCES FOR CONSERVATION OF AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS MANAGEMENT

Introduction

The African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) is a specialized technical office of the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Rural Economy, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (DARBE) of the African Union Commission (AUC). AU-IBAR's mandate is to support and coordinate the sustainable development and utilization of animal resources (including livestock, fisheries, aquaculture and wildlife) to enhance nutrition and food security and contribute to the wellbeing and prosperity of the people in the Member States of the African Union.

The continent is endowed with productive aquatic ecosystems (marine and freshwater) with significant fishing and aquaculture activities. The fisheries and aquaculture sector in Africa currently provides benefits in terms of economic growth, livelihoods and food security. However, the sector still has enormous potential to significantly increase its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), food security and poverty alleviation in the five regions of the continent.

Rationale

The African continent is adjacent to highly productive marine ecosystems including the seven African Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) viz., Agulhas Current LME, Benguela Current LME, Guinea Current LME, Canary current LME, Mediterranean Sea LME, Red Sea LME and Somali Current LME. The continent is also endowed with networks of rivers and lakes. The seas, oceans, lakes and rivers inhabit significant number of biodiversity and the ecosystems provide sources of livelihoods, food security and wealth. These African aquatic ecosystems are sources of both living

and non-living resources on which people depend for their livelihoods; however, the unsustainable exploitation of these resources is threatening biodiversity, marine and freshwater resources and environmental sustainability.

Several factors are threatening aquatic biodiversity in African aquatic ecosystems. These include overexploitation of living species, pollution from several sources (land-based municipal and agricultural activities), uncontrolled introduction of exotic species in aquaculture systems, effluents from mining activities. Consequently, important aquatic resources are becoming increasingly susceptible to both natural and artificial environmental changes. Thus, conservation strategies to protect and conserve aquatic life are necessary to maintain the balance of nature and support the availability of resources for future generations.

The basis of African Union's intervention in the governance of fisheries, aquaculture and aquatic ecosystems is guided by the African Union endorsed Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa (PFRS) and the Africa Blue Economy Strategy (ABES). The PFRS identified the conservation and sustainable use of aquatic resources as a key policy area for strategic interventions and actions, while, the Africa Blue Economy Strategy is consolidated based on the following five detailed thematic areas:

1. Fisheries, aquaculture, conservation and sustainable aquatic ecosystems;
2. Shipping/transportation, trade, ports, maritime security, safety and enforcement;
3. Coastal and maritime tourism, climate change, resilience, environment, infrastructure;
4. Sustainable energy and mineral resources and innovative industries; and,
5. Policies, institutional and governance, employment, job creation and poverty eradication, innovative financing.

The effective conservation of aquatic biodiversity and their ecosystems still remains a significant challenge in Africa due to, among others, a paucity of dedicated institutions to provide advanced, and training in the management of aquatic biodiversity and their ecosystems to enable rationale management in decision making. Management decisions and policies in the governance of

aquatic ecosystems in continent needs to be supported by scientific evidence. This evidence should be generated by dedicated research institutes or universities and interpreted by competent institutions mandated for aquatic ecosystems and environmental management. A more tangible solution to the problems of capacity is the establishment of African Union Centres of Excellence for training in aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems. This should be done by the identification of appropriate academic training institutions with curriculum on management of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems.

The Joint Conference of African Ministers for agriculture, rural development, fisheries and aquaculture held Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), in May 2014, recognized the need for capacity development in aquatic biodiversity, aquatic ecosystems and environment and therefore requested *'The AU Commission to establish African Centres of Excellence for aquaculture, capture fisheries, biodiversity studies and oceanography to enhance capacity for fisheries and aquaculture research.'* Accordingly, eight African institutions were identified through a rigorous process, and subsequently endorsed as African Union Centres of Excellence in fields related to Fisheries and Aquaculture by the 2019 ministerial Meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment (STC-ARDWE); and, afterwards by the Thirty-Sixth Ordinary Session Executive Council (Decision EX.CL/Dec. 1074(XXXVI)).

However, the Ministers in 2019 also **'REQUESTED the AU Commission to further identify related disciplines for which institutions will be selected as African Union Centres of Excellence'**. Thus there is an imperative need for identification of institutions with dedicated curriculum that would produce or qualify students in **conservation of aquatic biodiversity and aquatic ecosystems management**.

The Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa (PFRS) and the Africa Blue Economy Strategy (ABES) underscore enhancing human capacity development as key strategic pillar for creating an enabling environment to increase the sustainable contribution of

the aquatic living resources and ecosystems to food security, livelihoods and wealth creation. The effective implementation of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy would require institutional training in the AU Member States, regional economic communities and specialized regional institutions in order to realize the overall objectives of the AU policy instruments (PFRS and ABES) to enhance socio-economic development of Africa through the contribution of Africa's aquatic endowments.

Therefore, AU-IBAR, with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), is implementing a project on “**Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in African Blue Economy**”, for three year's period. The overall objective of the project is to enhance the policy environment, regulatory frameworks and institutional capacities of AU Member States (AU MS) and regional economic communities (RECs) to sustainably utilize and conserve aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems. The specific objectives of the project are as follows:

1. Ratify and/or align relevant international/regional instruments related to blue economy themes (with specific reference to protecting and conserving biodiversity);
2. Optimizing conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity while minimizing conflicts among blue economy sub-themes;
3. Strengthening measures for mitigating the negative impacts of coastal and marine tourism, oil, gas, deep sea mining and climate change on aquatic biodiversity and environment; and,
4. Strengthening gender inclusivity in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management.

Thus, it is crucially important to identify competent academic institutions on the continent that would provide requisite training on conservation of aquatic biodiversity and aquatic ecosystems-based management.

Objective of the call for Expression of Interest

Africa's aquatic biodiversity keeps declining rapidly, despite efforts to provide a variety of policies and legislations that identify goals for, and give directions to protecting the Africa, aquatic fauna and flora.

The objective of this announcement is therefore to call for proposals from qualified universities and specialised knowledge-based institutions to apply for consideration as African Union Centres of Excellence in the following disciplines:

- I. Aquatic ecology and biodiversity conservation; and,***
- II. Management of Aquatic ecosystems, including Environmental Protection.***

Institutions already selected as African Union Centres of Excellence in disciplines related to the above need not apply.

2. Institutional framework and sustainability

The successful Centres are expected to meet the following institutional framework and sustainability criteria. The Centres should be aligned with and serve as a platform for the Policy Research Network for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (PRNFAA) and the Africa Fisheries Reform Mechanism (AFRM). The Centre of Excellence should

- I. conduct training, research in disciplines of aquatic ecology and biodiversity conservation; or management of aquatic ecosystems
- II. be either within or affiliated with a university/research institution(s) and be available to closely work with or support AU-IBAR or any AU institution in the identified disciplines;
- III. be existing relevant accredited public institutions;
- IV. possess evidence of a sustainable self-financing mechanism; and,
- V. have proven networking and collaborative/cooperation arrangements with international, regional and national existing institutions in order to share lessons and best practices.

3. Criteria for Eligibility

The institutions to be selected as Centres for Excellence should meet the following minimum requirements:

- i. The institution should be located in Africa;
- ii. For a particular discipline, the institutions for consideration should foremost have evidence of the required modules, staff and competence in the discipline;
- iii. The institution should have at least 10 years of established history of education, research and training;
- iv. The institution should have a track record of attracting students/trainees of diverse background and nationalities in the chosen discipline;
- v. The institution should preferably be of regional relevance;
- vi. Adequate infrastructure and amenities; and,
- vii. Evidence of Official Recognition by the National Government.

4. How to apply and the procedures to follow

The proposal should include the following information:

- i. Background and introduction to the institution;
- ii. Vision and mission;
- iii. Statement of accreditation by national authority and/or regional body;
- iv. Curriculum for undergraduate and graduate training programmes;
- v. Historical records/information of students graduated from the institutions;
- vi. Research outputs;
- vii. Staffing situation and their qualifications (abbreviated resume);
- viii. Present financing arrangements of the institution and financial control systems; and,
- ix. Any other relevant information.

5. Submission Deadline

Applications must be submitted by email to: procurement@au-ibar.org within subject line including: “ **Call for Proposals: SELECTION OF INSTITUTIONS AS AFRICAN UNION CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR CONSERVATION OF AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS MANAGEMENT**”. The submission deadline is **31st October 2022**. Kindly also send the screen shot of the email you sent.

Kindly copy the email to the following:

ibar.office@au-ibar.org

The original hard copies of the applications should be sent to the following address:

The Director,

The African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources;

Kenindia Business Park, Museum Hill, Westlands Road,

P.O. Box 30786 00100, Nairobi, Kenya ;

Tel: +254 (20) 3674 000, Fax: +254 (20) 3674 341 / 2.