

MAKING BLUE CARBON COUNT IN THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN



Governments, regional partners, conservationists and scientists met at COP12 of the Nairobi Convention in Dar es Salaam to explore how political leadership, scientific evidence and pathways to sustainable finance can accelerate blue carbon conservation across the Western Indian Ocean.

Blue carbon ecosystems such as mangroves, seagrasses and salt marshes sustain biodiversity, fisheries, livelihoods and climate resilience, yet they continue to be lost. Reversing this trend will require stronger alignment among science, policy, and sustained investment to deliver conservation outcomes at scale.

These themes shaped the regional side event, **From Commitments to Action: Upscaling Blue Carbon Ecosystem Conservation, Sustainable Management, and Investment Across the Western Indian Ocean**, held on 7 October 2026 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The event was convened by Tanzania, Kenya and Seychelles with the Nairobi Convention Secretariat, Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA), Fauna & Flora, the East African Wildlife Society, Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT), The Pew Charitable Trusts and other regional partners.

Political leadership and regional priorities

Government representatives from Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, and Tanzania highlighted a shared ambition to accelerate blue carbon conservation across the region through stronger institutional coordination, national implementation and sustained regional cooperation. Importantly the discussion moved beyond showcasing high-level ambition, to explore several key policy frameworks and implementation tools that are being put into practice: the Western Indian Ocean Regional Mangrove Action Plan, the Regional Seagrass Strategy, Kenya's Blue Carbon Ecosystems NDC Implementation and Investment Plan, and Tanzania's Blue Carbon Accounting Framework. Together, these instruments demonstrate how countries are moving to concrete actions while aligning national priorities with regional conservation and climate goals.

Strengthening the science, policy and finance interface

Bringing together experts in science, policy, finance, and country engagement, this session examined solutions for moving from knowledge to effective conservation across the region. Discussions highlighted the need for reliable, accessible data, regional information sharing and stronger science-to-policy pathways to support decisionmaking. Panelists also explored a range of financing approaches including climate

finance, blended finance, public-private partnerships and community-based financing. A clear takeaway from the session was that achieving meaningful conservation outcomes at scale will require closer collaboration and partnerships that connect knowledge, decision-making and investment. Connecting these efforts will help better safeguard blue carbon ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

Western Indian Ocean Regional Seagrass Strategy 2026–2035 adopted at COP12

A milestone for regional seagrass conservation

At the 12th Conference of the Parties (COP12) to the Nairobi Convention in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Contracting Parties adopted the *Western Indian Ocean Regional Seagrass Strategy 2026–2035* through **Decision CP12/10 on the Conservation, Restoration and Management of Critical Habitats**. The decision calls for the Strategy's implementation and stronger measures to conserve, restore and sustainably manage critical habitats, including seagrasses, mangroves and salt marshes. It also requests the Nairobi Convention Secretariat and partners to support resource mobilisation for implementation.

Developed through a regionally led, consultative process under the WIO-Consortium Seagrass Working Group, the Strategy provides a common framework

for strengthening seagrass conservation across the Western Indian Ocean. It connects four key areas – **knowledge, policy, finance and implementation** – to help countries translate scientific evidence into decisions, mobilise sustainable financing and deliver effective conservation and restoration measures.

Adoption marks an important milestone, but implementation is the next step. Priorities include developing a Regional Action Plan, assessing national needs and readiness, integrating seagrass into national planning and management, mobilising investment, and monitoring progress. The Strategy provides a shared regional direction while allowing countries to advance according to their national contexts and capacities.

