

## Title

At the COP 11 meeting, the Contracting Parties to the Convention Cooperation for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern African Region (Abidjan Convention) agreed to promote blue growth as pathway to sustainable development in Africa.

The marine and coastal environment of Sub-Sahara Africa abounds with vast resources that can rank coastal countries with the developed world, but for weak governance, capacity gaps and weak regional and sectorial cooperation. The urgent need to address these gaps informed the theme of the COP meeting ?promoting blue growth in Africa: towards sustainable management of marine resources?.

*"Oceans and coasts must be seen for the potential it has to grow the prosperity of our nations and well-being of our people,"* says Honourable Edna Molewa, Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs and Head of South Africa delegation. In her words *?as the demands for energy are ever-increasing, it is imperative that we respond to this and ensure that we deliver the benefits to our people in a way that does not put them at risk.?*

The meeting was hosted by the Government of South Africa in the historic city of Cape Town, 17-21 March 2014. The record breaking participation of partner organisations at the COP meeting attests to Abidjan Convention?s drive to strengthen regional cooperation and capacity development to achieve its ambitious COP decisions.

Worth noting are COP decisions to:

- transform the Charter for Sustainable Management of Mangrove Resources signed in 2010 into a protocol for management of mangrove ecosystems.
- establish a platform of International Partner Organisation (IOP) to leverage technical and scientific support from regional and international organisations in the implementation of the Abidjan Convention.
- explore the development of a protocol that provides guidance on environmental standards for the offshore exploration and exploitation activities of mining and mineral resources off the coasts of the States Parties.
- establish an Ad Hoc Committee on Science and Technology (CST) to support reporting process and implementation of the Abidjan Convention.
- establish an Ad Hoc Committee on communication, education and public awareness to foster recognition of the importance of protecting and developing the marine environment and coastal areas of the Convention region.
- organise a regional workshop in order to finalize the description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) of the Atlantic Coast of West, Central and Southern Africa.
- promote south-south cooperation to strengthen institutional frameworks and foster technological development efforts.

BirdLife International is geared up to support the implementation of the Abidjan Convention Programme of Work for 2015-2016 in line the MoU signed with the Convention Secretariat in 2013.

Visit <http://abidjanconvention.org/> for more information on the Abidjan Convention.