**TALKING NOTES FOR NATIONAL PROJECT COORDINATOR DURING THE WORLD OCEANS DAY, 8/6/2023, MOMBASA**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to join you today for the World Fisheries Day, 2023.

We are aware that the World Ocean’s cover about 71% of the earth’s surface and provide numerous benefits to the planet and humanity. Besides being home to millions of species, the oceans regulate our climate and weather patterns, provide us with food, sink greenhouse Gases emitted by human activities and provide us with more than 50% of the universe’s oxygen. Ocean are also an important source of wealth and livelihoods in various Blue Economy sectors.

In Kenya the ocean covers almost half (42%) of our land area and is an important resource not only for food and nutrition, but also for our economic development and growth. The government has therefore set clear development milestones expected to accrue from the ocean/blue spaces; prioritizing fisheries, shipping, and tourism sectors as the initial economic drivers with potential to create job opportunities and generate much needed revenues.

The Kenya Marine Fisheries and Socio-economic Development (KEMFSED) project is one initiative by the Government of Kenya to support growth of the blue economy. Started in 2020 and co-funded by GOK and World Bank, the project’s objective is to improve the management and governance of priority fisheries and mariculture and increase access to complementary livelihoods for the coastal communities.

Top on our intervention agenda is to eradicate overfishing in the inshore waters, enable the fisher communities to access complementary livelihood options, and address the lack of fishing skills and equipment which hinder the fishers to venture into deep sea fishing in the EEZ. The projctalso aims to reduce illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing by strengthening governance tools and institutions; increase production from mariculture; increase national per capita fish consumption and reduce the high post-harvest losses exacerbated by inadequate fisheries-related cold chain infrastructure, to mention just but a few.

The project thus promotes innovative emerging best practices which encourage stewardship, conservation, sustainable ocean management and governance. The project interventions and expected outcomes align with the current World Ocean Day 2023 theme of “Tides are Changing” in several ways.

As a strategy to promote inclusive marine fisheries and ecosystem management, the project is moving away from the traditional top-down approach. Instead we are promoting community empowerment and involvement by strengthening co-management structures and helping the fisher communities to zone and manage their fishing grounds or co-management areas (CMAs) and joint co-managed areas (JCMAs). Such an intervention is expected to increase the impetus of the fisher communities to own and adopt sustainable practices and promote conservation. It is expected that 45% of our inshore fisheries will be properly managed by the end of the project.

Good governance is key for management of our fisheries resources> To this end, the project is supporting development and implementation of various policies, regulations and management plans to improve the policy environment and ensure sustainable use of fisheries resources. This we have supported through consultative processes ensuring all relevant stakeholders have a chance to play a role. The project has supported a review of the Kenya Fisheries policy and the ongoing review of the aquaculture policy and development of CMA guidelines and standard operating procedures. We are also supporting implementation of the regulations for monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) and prawn fisheries management plans.

Further, the project is supporting the marine spatial planning development process. MSP is an important tool for blue economy growth as it helps to define the economic and conservation activities which can take place in various spatial places without jeopardizing the integrity of the environment. Without MSP, conflicts, low investments and general ecosystem degradation become the norm. This support will therefore help the country move away from unplanned to planned utilization of our marine spaces and, hence, change the tide!

To improve the livelihoods of our coastal communities, the project is providing grants to support livelihood activities to reduce pressure on the nearshore fisheries. The project has so far released over KES 320 million to 143 common interest groups (CIGs) for community projects in the five counties of Kwale, Mombasa, Kilifi, Tana River and Lamu. We have approved another 470 community projects worth over KES 1.3 billion to be released in the coming months.

The community proposals include projects that promote environmental conservation by engaging in mangrove and coral reef restoration as well as marine litter and plastic management. Others will enable CIGs to procurement fishing boats and gears and promote mariculture.

To reduce fish post-harvest losses, the project is developing fisheries-related infrastructure at five key landing sites spread across the counties.

The capacity of the local coastal communities to manage their fisheries and marine resources in a sustainable manner is important. To this end, the project is providing scholarships and internships opportunities for young people as a strategy to build local capacities for sustainable management. The project is thus building the communities capability by embedding local expertise within the local coastal communities.

MCS is an important intervention that the project is strengthening as a means to internalize good governance of marine resources governance. The project has brought together agencies with different mandates and competency to form an inter-agency team to lead the MCS activities. Inclusivity is an important tenet for sustainable ocean management and governance. Working in silos has proven to be costly, time consuming and ineffective. By promoting inter-agency collaboration, the project has thus changed the tide in the way MSC conducted.

On behalf of the project team, I would like to assure you of our unwavering commitment to the realization of KEMFSED development plans for the benefit of the coastal communities and the country at large. I acknowledge the importance of the World Bank support and appreciate the support to the project from the National Government and the County Governments of the participating counties.

I wish to reiterate on the need to expand the scope of this partnership and support in blue economy development beyond the KEMFSED Project so that the country injects more resources and to spur faster development in the sector.

As I conclude, I recognise the immense optimism and support by the Government of Kenya and the political leadership of the coast region for this project and other blue economy growth initiatives. It is thus our responsibility to ensure that implementation of the project activities goes on seamlessly and ultimately meets the aspirations of the project and delivered lasting benefits to the coastal communities.

**Ladies and gentlemen,** it is evident that maintaining the status quo on ocean management and governance may not lead to the desired result of a healthy ocean for the benefit of humanity. We must embrace and accept that the tides must change for meaningful results to be realized. This calls for a change of mindset, ability to be adaptive and removal of fear for change to promote innovative ideas. We must all therefore rally together and embrace the changing tides.

**Thank you and God Bless.**