

# Seychelles hosts talks on shared marine ecosystems

Representatives from Western Indian Ocean countries are discussing ways of effectively managing shared coastal and marine ecosystems.

The meeting, at the International Conference, is being held to review the Agulhas Somali Current Large Marine Ecosystems (ASCLME) as well as the project to address land-based activities in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO-Lab).

It was officially opened by principal secretary for environment Didier Dogley, in the presence of Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Transport Joel Morgan as well as other government officials and representatives of the United

Delegates in a souvenir photograph with Minister Morgan and Mr Dogley (respectively 6th and 4th from right)



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Nations Development Fund (UNDP).

Nine countries in the region – including Mozambique, Tanzania and Mauritius – have sent their representatives to the meeting; it is also the first time all member countries have met at such a forum.

Launching the event, Mr Dogley said: "I firmly believe that our countries have already recognised their collective responsibilities towards these shared marine resources and towards what we believe are extremely beneficial regional initiatives."

About four million tonnes of fish are harvested off the East African coast every year, bringing in US \$943 million to the economies of the region.

"It is therefore clear that sustainable use of our marine resources can be a major exit point out of poverty and a gateway to prosperity for most of our countries," said Mr Dogley.

Research shows 80% of sea pollution happens as a result of land-based activities, and so the forum is a chance for all those concerned to find ways to focus their efforts on saving marine ecology, he added.

Both projects – sponsored by the

UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Global Environment Facility – aim to introduce an ecosystem-based approach to managing African marine resources.

This approach involves scientists carrying out the necessary research and advising all the governments on how to manage their own ecosystems.

As part of the ASCLME project, a Norwegian research vessel – the Fridtjof Nansen – was in Seychelles last year gathering biological data on life under the sea.

It gathered information on the salinity of Seychelles' waters and on new marine species.

"The anticipated outcomes and actions of the ASCLME and WIO-Lab projects in the nine countries of the region must benefit our people and our economies in better managing our resources collectively," said Mr Dogley.

WIO-Lab has carried out a demonstration project at the Brillant housing complex to help deal with waste water produced there.

It involves sending the waste water through a wetland, which filters it and stops polluted liquid from getting into the ground.