Concept Note for 8th AAMA Conference:

Theme:

"Safeguarding Our Ocean, Promoting Decarbonization in Shipping, Exploring Africa's Blue Economy Potential"

1. Introduction

The Association of African Maritime Administrations (AAMA) will convene its 8th Conference in Liberia from Tuesday 30th September to Friday 3rd October 2025, inclusive. The conference will address the current challenges and opportunities within Africa's maritime sector. The conference will be set against a backdrop of rapid technological advancements in the maritime sector, the continued necessity for sustainable development, the imperative to enhance safety, security, and environmental protection in the continent's maritime space.

The conference will serve as a platform not only for sharing knowledge and experiences but also for engaging in strategic discussions that will shape the future of Africa's maritime sector and identify the priorities for collaboration, partnership, capacity development and financing in line with the resolutions of the 7th AAMA Conference and General Assembly which was held from 29th November to 1st December 2024 at the Julius Nyerere International Convention Centre, Dar es Salaam, the United Republic of Tanzania.

The aim this year is to move beyond information exchange through presentations and panel discussions and to navigate towards developing actionable roadmaps and deliverables that align with the broader 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS 2050), the revised African Maritime Transport Charter, the Blue Economy, Lome Charter, IMO strategic focus including Shipping Decarbonization (2050) and contribute to the achievement of the overall objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This conference will be a pivotal opportunity for Africa to define its maritime future. By blending informative presentations with strategic discussions through focused groups engagements, to ensure that all participants leave with a clear understanding of the steps and those to be tasked with the steps needed to achieve sustainable development in the maritime sector and the roles they must play in this journey.

This year's conference will be a **four-day** practical conference paving way for continental commemorations of both the "Africa Day of Seas and Oceans" and the "World Maritime Day" in line with the IMO's 2025 Theme: **"Our Ocean, Our Obligation, Our Opportunity".**

Proposed Theme –

"Safeguarding Our Ocean, Promoting Decarbonization in Shipping, Exploring Africa's Blue Economy Potential".

2. About the Theme

"Safeguarding Our Ocean Heritage, Embracing Collective Responsibility: Advancing Maritime Decarbonization Strategies and Blue Economy Potentials in Africa" is a theme that resonates with the IMO 2025 theme, "Our Ocean, Our Obligation, Our Opportunity". This theme underscores the importance of preserving Africa's rich ocean heritage, while promoting sustainable maritime development. It highlights the importance of collective action and shared responsibility among Governments, private sectors, and communities in protecting the ocean and its resources.

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the health of our oceans has emerged as a pressing global priority. This theme advocates for a unified African voice and vision for sustainable maritime development, where stakeholders collaborate as co-stewards of the marine environment. By focusing on unlocking opportunities within Africa's blue economy, this theme aligns with international sustainability commitments, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want

The aim of this theme is to explore innovative solutions, best practices, and partnerships that can advance sustainable maritime development in Africa, while ensuring the long-term health

and productivity of our oceans. By working together, we can harness the vast potential of Africa's blue economy to drive economic growth, reduce poverty, and promote sustainable development.

Sub-Theme 1

Title: Financing Sustainable Blue Economy sector and Maritime Transport in Africa,

Background

Recalling AAMA 7: Member States resolved that there is a need for the development of a sustainable financing framework for Africa's maritime sector. Member states welcomed the commitment from financial institutions to finance Africa's maritime projects through concessional lending, among others.

Maritime Administrations were encouraged to develop the required capacity for producing bankable proposals and capability to absorb the financing. Member States are encouraged to explore other financial facilities currently available.

Introduction

This sub-theme aims to contribute to the development of new economic business models and strategies that prioritize sustainability, circular economy, and environmental stewardship, while ensuring economic viability and competitiveness in African and global markets. Sustainable business models are essential for promoting sustainable maritime development and protecting the ocean.

Key Focus Areas

- Update on Financing for sustainable Blue economy and Maritime transport including resource mobilization initiatives by the Member States.
- Partnership opportunities for financing sustainable Blue economy and maritime transport: Discussing financing mechanisms, such as blue bonds, ESG investment criteria, and blended finance, to support the transition to sustainable maritime enterprises, finance sustainable maritime projects and all in all, support sustainable maritime development. (Exploring innovative business models that prioritize sustainability, circular economy, and environmental stewardship. Presenting a case study on the establishment of the Maritime Bank in Nigeria.

- Promoting Trade and Supporting Maritime Businesses: Discussing the African Continental Free Trade Area's (AfCFTA) maritime strategy and transport policy framework. Examining strategies to promote trade and support maritime businesses, including the role of AfCFTA and the Revised African Maritime Transport Charter.

Sub-Theme 2

Title: Facilitation of Maritime Development and Trade in Africa and Maritime Governance

Background

Recalling the 7th AAMA Conference, Member States reaffirmed the need to strengthen maritime governance and infrastructure development as key enablers of Africa's maritime growth. To this end, they resolved to identify priority areas and develop concrete action plans that advance sustainable maritime development across the continent.

Member States called upon the **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** to support African countries in the development of National Maritime Transport Policies (NMTPs) and encouraged the mobilization of donor support where necessary. They also took note of ongoing continental efforts to enhance maritime governance, including the call to **fast-track the ratification** of the Revised African Maritime Transport Charter (2010) and the need to bolster the African Union's capacity to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS 2050).

Additionally, Member States acknowledged the entry into force of the mandatory implementation of the Maritime Single Window (MSW) under the IMO FAL Convention. In response, they are encouraged to adopt and implement MSW systems to streamline maritime trade processes, improve port efficiency, and facilitate cross-border trade. Technical assistance should be sought where necessary to support full and effective implementation.

Considering the broad nature of this subject matter of "Facilitation of Maritime Development and Trade in Africa and Maritime Governance" which involved 3 important aspects of the industry: Trade Facilitation, Maritime Development and Maritime Governance, it was determined that for

ease of detailed discussion of the topic, it would be appropriate to split topic into two sub-themes: (a) Facilitation of Maritime Development and Trade in Africa and (b) Maritime Governance.

Sub-Theme 2 (a) Facilitation of Maritime Development and Trade in Africa

Focus:

This sub-theme emphasizes the need for improving maritime infrastructure, streamlining trade processes, and leveraging policy instruments to support Africa's participation in global and intra-continental maritime trade.

Sub-Thematic Areas:

- Development and Implementation of National Maritime Transport Policies (NMTPs):

    o   Encouraging Member States to adopt comprehensive NMTPs with IMO support.

- Infrastructure and Connectivity:

    o   Facilitating port infrastructure development and intermodal transport systems to improve connectivity.

- Trade Facilitation and Digitalization:

    o   Implementing Maritime Single Window (MSW) systems to streamline trade processes and improve port efficiency.

- Harmonization with AfCFTA:

    o   Aligning maritime development strategies with the African Continental Free Trade Area to reduce trade barriers.

- Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:

    o   Mobilizing donor and technical support for infrastructure development and policy implementation.

- Partnership Opportunities:

    o   Identifying investment and collaboration opportunities with development partners and private sector.

Expected Outcomes:

- Improved port and trade infrastructure.

- Increased efficiency in cross-border maritime trade.

- Greater alignment of maritime transport strategies with continental economic integration goals.

Sub-Theme 2(b) Maritime Governance

Focus:

This sub-theme addresses the strengthening of maritime legal, institutional, and policy frameworks to promote safe, secure, and environmentally responsible maritime development.

Sub-Thematic Areas:

- Legal and Institutional Frameworks:
  - Identifying and addressing gaps in national and regional maritime governance systems.
- Implementation of Regional and Global Instruments:
  - Fast-tracking the ratification of the Revised African Maritime Transport Charter and implementation of AIMS 2050.
- Inclusive Governance:
  - Promoting participation of all stakeholders, including women, youth, civil society, and marginalized coastal communities.
- Accountability and Coordination:
  - Enhancing shared responsibility among Member States for protecting ocean resources and enforcing regulations.
- Knowledge Exchange and Decision-Making:
  - Institutionalizing platforms for participatory governance and knowledge-sharing.
- Monitoring and Evaluation:
  - Strengthening AU capacity for oversight and coordination of maritime governance efforts.

Expected Outcomes:

- Strengthened regional and international maritime governance frameworks.
- Inclusive and transparent maritime policy development.
- Enhanced compliance with international maritime standards.

Sub-Theme 3

Title: Capacity Development and Training for Future Maritime Challenges:

Background:

Recalling AAMA 7: Member States resolved to develop a maritime workforce training roadmap to accommodate upcoming technological changes in the maritime sector. In addition, member states welcomed the IMO's potential contribution and support through the Integrated Technical Cooperation Program. Member states are encouraged to commit more resources to capacity building and leverage on the existing vast capacities within the continent.

Introduction

This sub-theme aims to contribute to the development of ocean literacy programs, capacity development initiatives, and education frameworks that promote sustainable maritime development and protect the ocean for future generations. It focuses on promoting awareness and education about ocean conservation and sustainability, highlighting the importance of ocean literacy in shaping the future of Africa and the world. Ocean literacy is essential for promoting sustainable development and protecting the ocean. This sub-theme will explore ways to develop and implement ocean literacy programs, leveraging digital media, storytelling, and education to engage youth and communities in marine protection.

Key Focus Areas

Ocean Literacy: Integrating Ocean science into school curricula, promoting awareness and education about ocean conservation and sustainability. Integrating ocean science and

sustainability into school curricula or educational frameworks. Leveraging digital platforms to raise awareness and promote ocean conservation.

Capacity Improvement: Developing training and skill development programs for maritime professionals, aligning with regional skills centers, and promoting collaboration. The use of Ocean Ambassador Programs to engage youth and communities in marine protection, promoting ocean literacy and stewardship.

Developing Africa's Capacity: Fostering Africa's role as a sustainable supplier of seafarers, enhancing skills and knowledge to meet global demands.

Sub-Theme 4

Title: Environmental Protection and Sustainable Green Shipping Within the Context of a Just & Equitable Transition

• **Other theme under Sub-Theme:** Science, Technology, and Innovation

Background

Recalling AAMA 7: Member states resolved to actively engage in GHG discussions at IMO to ensure measures adopted are just and equitable. Thus, the ratification of MARPOL Annex VI by member states that have not yet ratified should be fast-tracked to keep up with IMO GHG 2050 agenda, and the role of stakeholders be more defined. The IMO Greenhouse Gas Strategy should consider measures on how to mitigate the impact on food security in Africa; ensure technology transfer and capacity building and develop renewable energy potentials of the continent. Member states are encouraged to develop national implementation action plans to fully actualize their obligations.

Concept Notes: This sub-theme aims to contribute to the development of sustainable green shipping practices, reducing the environmental impact of maritime industries and promoting a just and equitable transition to a low-carbon economy. It focuses on innovative solutions and best practices for reducing the environmental impact of shipping in African waters and international seas. As a critical component of global trade, shipping poses significant environmental risks. Recognizing the centrality of shipping to global trade—and the significant environmental risks it poses—this sub-theme will explore innovative, science-based approaches to mitigate the sector's environmental impact while promoting inclusive economic growth.

This sub-theme aims to advance the development and implementation of **sustainable green shipping practices**, reduce the environmental footprint of maritime industries, and support a **just and equitable transition** to a **low-carbon, climate-resilient economy.**

The discussions will highlight **cutting-edge technologies**, **policy frameworks**, and **regional cooperation mechanisms** that can support Africa's transition towards cleaner, more sustainable

maritime operations. Emphasis will be placed on aligning maritime growth with **ecological responsibility** through integrated approaches that promote **ocean health, biodiversity conservation**, and adherence to **Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)** standards.

By positioning the maritime industry as a leader in **ocean stewardship**, this sub-theme invites critical reflection on the challenges and opportunities in achieving sustainability, and aims to showcase practical, scalable solutions that support **sustainable ocean management** across African waters and beyond.

Key Focus Areas

- **Decarbonization:** Discussing strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from shipping, Development of **green shipping corridors** and adoption of **low- and zero-carbon fuels**.

- **Green Maritime Technologies:** Showcasing innovations such as renewable energy, green ships, and sustainable port operations. Showcasing innovations in sustainable port operations, including energy-efficient terminals and green infrastructure. Exploring the development and adoption of green ships, including those powered by sustainable fuels. Discussing the potential of renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power, to reduce the environmental impact of shipping.

- **Science, Technology, and Innovation:** Highlighting the role of technological innovation in transforming shipping logistics, including smart shipping, automation, and data-driven monitoring through the use of **big data**, remote sensing, and AI for efficient maritime logistics and emission tracking.

- **Practical Implementation Strategies for Green Transition:** Exploring policy frameworks that support the adoption of green maritime practices.

  Discussing mechanisms for scaling up green maritime practices through **regional cooperation**, financing, and capacity building. Showcasing successful examples of green maritime technology adoption in Africa and globally.

- **Environmental Protection**: Discussing the impact of maritime industries on ocean ecosystems and exploring ways to mitigate negative effects and promote ocean conservation. Highlighting examples where the maritime industry has taken a leadership role in environmental rehabilitation and marine conservation initiatives. Aligning industrial growth with ecological responsibility, and integrating environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards across maritime operations.

- **Innovative Solutions**: Showcasing cutting-edge technologies and innovations that can help reduce the environmental footprint of maritime industries. Exploring the implementation of marine spatial planning, biodiversity offsets, and circular management of ship waste and emissions. Discussing the use of artificial intelligence for ocean monitoring and management. Exploring the potential of nature-based solutions for ocean conservation and sustainability.

Sub-Theme 5

Title: Gender and Diversity in the Maritime Sector

Background

The Maritime sector has historically been characterized by gender disparities, with women and diverse groups significantly underrepresented in technical, operational, and leadership roles. Recognizing the vital importance of inclusivity, the 7th AAMA Conference highlighted the urgent need to address gender inequality and promote diversity as foundational elements for sustainable development within Africa's maritime industry.

Rationale

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are fundamental to the maritime sector's innovation, growth, and resilience. Women's enhanced participation not only broadens the talent pool but also enriches decision-making, fosters creativity, and aligns the sector with international frameworks, such as CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration, and the African Maritime Transport Charter. Despite commendable initiatives by regional and global bodies—including WIMOWCA, WOMESA,

WISTA, and the IMO—women remain significantly underrepresented, constituting only a small fraction of the global maritime workforce.

Objectives

The sub-theme on Gender and Diversity aims to:

- Evaluate progress on gender equality commitments since the 7th AAMA Conference.

- Share best practices and success stories from member states and regional organizations.

- Discuss actionable strategies to overcome persistent cultural, educational, and workplace barriers.

- Develop a comprehensive Gender and Diversity Action Plan as resolved in the 7th AAMA Conference.

Key Issues for Discussion

- Impact assessment of existing gender-inclusive policies and programs within the maritime sector.

- The effectiveness of current capacity-building initiatives such as training, mentorship, and scholarships.

- Measures for strengthening data collection to inform evidence-based policies and track progress.

- Strategies to tackle workplace discrimination, unequal pay, and limited career advancement opportunities.

- Innovations in technology and digital transformation as opportunities for enhancing women's participation.

- The role of men and institutional leaders in advocating and advancing gender equality.

Expected Outcomes

- An actionable Gender and Diversity Action Plan, clearly outlining objectives, timelines, and measurable targets.

- Recommendations for policy reforms to further integrate gender and diversity considerations into national maritime policies.

- A framework for ongoing collaboration among maritime administrations, regional organizations, and international bodies to promote inclusivity.

- Commitment by member states to adopt specific measures for promoting gender equality and diversity in maritime roles.

Conclusion

Addressing gender inequality and promoting diversity are essential not only for social justice but also for optimizing Africa's maritime potential. The 8th AAMA Conference represents a critical opportunity to transform dialogue into concrete actions, ensuring a vibrant, inclusive, and equitable maritime sector.

Sub-Theme 6

Title: Maritime Safety and Security

Background

Recalling AAMA 7: Member States resolved to develop a Strategic Action Plan aimed at strengthening maritime safety and security across the region. AAMA adopted an **Action Plan for the Safety of Domestic Ferries** and committed to the implementation of the IMO Model Regulations on Domestic Ferry Safety (Resolution MSC.518(105)). The goal of this action plan is to provide a clear, actionable roadmap that outlines the steps required to enhance the safety of domestic ferry operations throughout Africa.

Member States are encouraged to seek support from international partners and donors for the development and implementation of maritime safety regulations under existing partnership frameworks. Additionally, Member States should actively work on implementing Corrective Action Plans arising from the IMO Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS) and are encouraged to request technical assistance from IMO where challenges persist.

Furthermore, AAMA agreed to proactively support the work of IMO, IMLI, and WMU by contributing African best practices and lessons learned to global initiatives that aim to improve the safety of domestic ferries and maritime operations more broadly.

Introduction

This sub-theme aims to contribute to the development of practical solutions and best practices for enhancing maritime safety and security in African waters. Maritime safety and security are critical components of sustainable ocean governance and and are critical for protecting lives, property, and the marine environment.

in this regard, this sub-theme will examine the importance of safety and security in African waters and explore ways to enhance maritime safety and security. Effective maritime safety and security measures help prevent marine accidents, minimize operational risks, and address threats such as piracy, armed robbery, and other forms of maritime crime.

In line with this, the sub-theme will examine the importance of safety and security in African waters and explore ways to enhance maritime safety and security. It will also discuss best practices and innovative solutions for improving maritime safety and security, including the use of technology, strengthening regional and international cooperation, mechanisms for sharing best practices across countries and capacity development.

Key Focus Areas

- **Domestic Ferry Safety**

Domestic ferry transport is vital to many African countries and regions as a lifeline for mobility, trade, and economic development, in archipelagic, riverine, and lake-based communities. However, it remains one of the most accident-prone segments of the maritime sector. Frequent incidents of overloading, vessel unseaworthiness, poor hydrographic and weather preparedness, and weak enforcement mechanisms continue to cost lives and erode public trust.

This sub-theme will focus on enhancing safety, reliability, and regulatory oversight of domestic ferry services. It aims to support regional collaboration in addressing the unique challenges of domestic ferry operations and to identify scalable solutions through best practices, targeted capacity building, and innovative policy instruments. It contributes to both the IMO's regulatory initiatives (Model Regulations on Domestic Ferry Safety) and the African Union's Agenda 2063 goals for integrated transport and safety, in cooperation with IMO's specific partners (e.g. Interferry, LRF, WMU and IMLI).

Key Focus Areas

- **Regulatory Strengthening and Compliance:** Aligning national frameworks with international conventions, through the Model Regulations, and implementing risk-based survey, certification, and inspection regimes.

- **Passenger Safety and Vessel Standards**: Ensuring vessel design, maintenance, and operation meet minimum safety thresholds; integrating safety technologies, such as passenger counting systems and addressing stability failures.

- **Data, Risk Assessment, and Incident Reporting**: Developing centralized databases to track and investigate accidents and analyse risk factors to inform policy and emergency response.

- **Institutional Capacity and Enforcement**: Strengthening maritime Administrations' implementation and enforcement capabilities of relevant standards , training surveyors and

inspectors, delegating to, overseeing the work of, classification societies/recognized organizations, and building interagency coordination (e.g. with disaster management bodies, flag States MoU).

- **Community Awareness and Engagement**: Promoting safety awareness campaigns for ferry users and operators, including simplified safety messages for local communities.

- **Infrastructure and Climate Resilience**: Improving ferry terminals, weather monitoring, and early warning systems to ensure continuity and resilience amid climate-induced risks.

- **Regional Collaboration**: Sharing experiences and tools across river and lake systems in Africa (e.g. African lakes, Congo River, Niger Delta), and harmonizing safety standards.