

Introducing the Green Maritime Africa Coalition (GMAC): Championing a Path to Net-Zero GHG Emissions

The maritime industry is the backbone of global logistical supply chains, handling about 80% of worldwide trade and employing two million seafarers. However, it also contributes to 3% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, a figure expected to rise by 2050 if no action is taken. Decarbonising this sector is crucial to achieving the Paris Agreement's target of limiting global warming to 1.5°C and ensuring zero-emission and resilient global supply chains, essential for food, energy, medicine, and other societal needs.

In July 2023, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) committed to achieving net-zero GHG emissions by 2050, with key milestones in 2030 and 2040. In September 2023, African leaders issued the Nairobi Declaration, calling for global efforts to cut GHG emissions and align with the Paris Agreement. They stressed the importance of reducing emissions in transportation and other sectors using technologies like green hydrogen and working together across the continent.

To truly make the maritime industry sustainable, we need a comprehensive approach that covers the entire supply chain, ensures fairness, and deals with the impacts of climate change, natural disasters, and geopolitical issues. This includes making sure that everyone, especially vulnerable countries like Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), benefit from this transition.

Africa has a unique potential to lead the global transition with its vast renewable energy resources. The maritime sector's demand for green hydrogen-based fuels can bring investments, jobs, and accelerate renewable energy deployment. Market-driven incentives to reduce emissions can also help. By making this transition just and equitable, we can also benefit coastal communities, and Africa can play a vital role in training and supplying a skilled workforce for zero-emission shipping.

In 2023, we have seen some progress in Africa towards decarbonising the maritime sector. Countries like Namibia and South Africa have announced the development of green shipping corridors, while the African Union created the African Green Port Forum. There have also been green maritime conferences in Ghana and Kenya to boost collaboration among African maritime authorities. Despite these achievements, there's still a gap in progress across the African maritime sector. No effort has successfully brought together governments and organisations to work toward a sustainable and emissions-free future for Africa, tailored to the continent's unique opportunities.

To help unlock Africa's maritime potential, leading private and public sectors organisations in Africa are announcing the launch of the Green Maritime Africa Coalition (GMAC) at the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. This significant initiative aims to bring governments, the private sector, and civil society together to accelerate efforts for a cleaner and greener maritime future, aligning with the IMO's GHG emissions reduction strategy and the Paris Agreement.

GMAC's key areas of focus include maritime policy, capacity building, technology, financing, and skill development. Our mission is for Africa to lead the global energy transition, providing the necessary zero-emission fuels for the maritime industry by 2030 and implementing them in both international and domestic shipping throughout Africa. We are also dedicated to retraining and upskilling African seafarers and ensuring that maritime trade in Africa uses climate-resilient ports. By uniting African State and non-State actors, GMAC aims to amplify Africa's collective voice in global GHG emissions reduction efforts, fostering awareness, opportunities, and concrete near and long term actions for the continent.

GMAC provides an open platform for collaboration with diverse stakeholders in both the private and public sectors. We extend a call to governments, policy makers, shipping companies, shipping customers, charterers, port operators, financial institutions, academic institutions, and all other maritime players in the African continent to join this coalition and actively contribute to building a zero-emission, sustainable, and resilient maritime sector.

We also extend our invitation to international organisations, inviting them to bring their expertise, resources, and access to funding to the table. We encourage them to work with host governments and regional institutions to strengthen maritime policies, streamline processes, and align with Africa's priorities for sustainable development and economic growth.

We firmly believe that transparency and cross-sectoral collaboration between non-state and state actors are essential to ensure that Africa meets the ambitious targets set by the IMO and upholds the spirit of the call to action presented in the Nairobi Declaration by African leaders.