

**OPENING ADDRESS BY H.E. Eng. HAMAD Y. MASAUNI, THE
MINISTER OF STATE, VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE (UNION AND
ENVIRONMENT), AT THE FOCAL POINTS AND PARTNERS
MEETING OF THE TWELFTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
TO THE NAIROBI CONVENTION, JULIUS NYERERE
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE,
DAR ES SALAAM, 6 OCTOBER 2026**

- **Hon. Hamza Hassan Juma, Minister of Second Vice President's Office, Policy Coordination and House of Representative – Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar;**
- **Hon. Mudrik Ramadhan Soraga,**
- **Honorable Ministers from the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) countries and representative of participating Member States;**
- **Dr. Richard S. Muyungi, The Permanent Secretary, Vice President's Office;**
- **Dr. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme;**
- **Dr Jared Bosire, Head of the Nairobi Convention Secretariat;**
- **Honourable Heads of Delegation;**
- **National Focal Points of the Contracting Parties;**
- **The Chief, UNEP Regional Seas Branch, Mr. Alberto Pacheco Capella,**
- **Representatives of Regional and International Organisations;**
- **Development partners;**

- **Distinguished delegates;**
- **Ladies and gentlemen;**

Good morning!

On behalf of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, I warmly welcome you to Dar es Salaam and to the Focal Points and Partners Meeting of the Twelfth Conference of the Parties to the Nairobi Convention.

Distinguished delegates,

I wish to extend a special welcome to our fellow Contracting Parties from across the Western Indian Ocean region - from Comoros, France, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia and South Africa - as well as our partners from across the globe. Your presence here is a testament to the shared commitment we all hold to the health and productivity of our ocean. We are honoured to have you as our guests and we look forward to learning from your experiences as much as we hope to share our own.

Tanzania is honoured to host this important gathering at this significant moment in the legacy of the Nairobi Convention. We assumed the chairmanship of the Nairobi Convention Bureau following our election at COP11 in Antananarivo in 22 August 2024, alongside Mauritius, South Africa and Somalia as Vice-Chairs and Madagascar as Rapporteur, and it is in that capacity, and as host of COP12, that we welcome more than 500 delegates from across the region to Dar es Salaam this week. I thank the Contracting Parties, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Nairobi Convention Secretariat and all partners for the preparation that has brought us together for what promises to be a landmark Conference.

Allow me to pay special tribute to the Republic of Madagascar, which chaired the Bureau of the Nairobi Convention before us and hosted COP11 in Antananarivo in August 2024. Under Madagascar's leadership, the Convention reached important milestones, including

the adoption of the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in 2023 and the approval of the Programme of Work for 2025–2028, which laid a strong foundation for the work we are reviewing this week. I also wish to sincerely thank my fellow members of the current Bureau: Mauritius, Vice-Chair for the Work Programme; South Africa, Vice-Chair for Resource Mobilisation; Somalia, Vice-Chair for Coordination; and Madagascar, our Rapporteur. Your guidance, cooperation and steadfast support throughout the intersessional period have been invaluable to Tanzania as Chair and in the preparations for COP12.

Distinguished delegates,

This year marks a milestone of immense significance, the fortieth anniversary of the Nairobi Convention. Since its adoption in 1985, the Convention has grown from a foundational agreement among a small group of countries into the pre-eminent regional framework for marine and coastal environmental governance in the Western Indian Ocean. Tanzania is one of ten Contracting Parties to the Convention — alongside Comoros, France, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia and South Africa — which was adopted on 21 June 1985 and entered into force on 30 May 1996. Tanzania ratified the Convention on 1 March 1996 and ratified the Amended Convention on 4 September 2017.

As we gather here today, it is worth reflecting on the journey that has brought us to this milestone. In 1985, when the Nairobi Convention was adopted, the Western Indian Ocean faced significant challenges but the recognition that these challenges required collective action was a visionary step. Over the past forty years, the Convention has facilitated the establishment of marine protected areas, the development of regional action plans on pollution and biodiversity, the strengthening of scientific capacity and the creation of a shared vision for a healthy and productive ocean. In Tanzania, this work has been anchored by the Marine Parks and Reserves Unit, established in 1996, which oversaw the gazettelement of the Mnazi Bay–Ruvuma

Estuary Marine Park in 2000 and the Tanga Coelacanth Marine Park in 2009. Tanzania has been a proud participant in this journey, contributing to and benefitting from the cooperation that the Convention has enabled.

As we reflect on this journey, we can take pride in what we have achieved together, even as we acknowledge the challenges that remain and the urgent work that lies ahead. The challenges before us are more urgent and complex than ever before. Climate change is warming and acidifying our waters, threatening coral reefs and fisheries, thus threatening the livelihoods of coastal communities and even national economies. Marine plastic pollution is choking our coasts and oceans. Unsustainable resource use is depleting fish stocks and degrading critical habitats. The demand for ocean resources is growing and the pressures on our marine and coastal ecosystems are intensifying.

During its leadership as the President to the Bureau, Tanzania has overseen major policy milestones mandated by the Parties through various COP Decisions including finalization and adoption of the Protocol on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity and Protected Areas; finalization and validation of the Regional Oils Contingency Plan; completion of the Regional Plastics and Associated Chemicals Strategy; kicked off the development of the Regional BBNJ Vision and Implementation Framework among other achievements. A number of these strategic frameworks will be considered for adoption by the Parties this week.

This meeting is therefore the working foundation of COP12. During today's sessions, the Secretariat, partners and national focal points will report on implementation of the Programme of Work for 2025–2028 and the Decisions of COP11. Much of the evidence underpinning this review has been strengthened through the SAPPHERE and WIOSAP projects, in which Tanzania was one of nine participating Western Indian Ocean countries that updated their

Marine Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis and fed data into the WIO-Symphony tool supporting our national marine spatial planning. You will also examine draft decisions for consideration by the Contracting Parties.

Distinguished Delegates,

This Focal Points and Partners Meeting is the engine room of the Conference. The quality of your technical work will determine the clarity and ambition of the Decisions that Ministers and Heads of Delegation will consider on 9th this week. Your task is to ensure that the evidence is sound, that the options are clear and that the draft decisions are both ambitious and implementable.

I wish to thank the Nairobi Convention Secretariat and all National Focal points for the groundwork that has gone into the documentation before you. The reports, assessments and draft decisions you will consider represent months of technical work and consultation. They provide a solid basis for your deliberations.

Your task is not merely to record activities. It is to establish what has changed, where implementation is progressing, where gaps remain, and what collective action is now required. This is the essential work of strengthening regional cooperation and delivering results for our people and the ocean.

Allow me to emphasise five expectations for your deliberations.

- **First**, let the reports be candid and evidence-based. Successes should be shared so that they can be adapted across the region, enabling learning and replication. Constraints should be identified clearly so that they can be addressed, whether financial, institutional, technical or regulatory in nature
- **Second**, let the draft decisions be focused and implementable. Each proposed action should have a clear purpose, an appropriate lead, realistic implementation arrangements and a

basis for monitoring progress. Decisions that cannot be translated into national and regional action will not meet the urgency before us. We should aim for fewer, clearer and more impactful decisions rather than a proliferation of well-intentioned but unimplementable commitments.

- **Third**, maintain an integrated approach. Biodiversity loss, climate impacts, marine pollution and unsustainable resource use are not separate challenges. Our responses should link ecosystem protection and restoration with livelihoods, food security, resilient infrastructure and responsible economic activity. This integrated approach is at the heart of the sustainable blue economy and must be reflected in our decisions.
- **Fourth**, keep inclusion at the centre. Coastal communities, women and young people must help shape the policies and investments that affect their lives to ensure that they are not merely beneficiaries but essential agents of change. Science and traditional knowledge should inform decisions, while public, private and community institutions should be clear about their respective responsibilities. The theme emphasizes on “People and Nature” reminding us that our decisions must serve both human well-being and environmental sustainability.
- **Fifth**, strengthen regional delivery. Shared environmental challenges require compatible standards, accessible data, joint learning and sustained cooperation among institutions. The value of this Convention will be measured by the results achieved across our coasts and seas, and not by the number of meetings held or decisions adopted.

Distinguished delegates,

As you begin your work, I encourage you to distinguish matters that can be resolved at the technical level from those requiring high-level political guidance. By doing so, you will enable the Ministerial and Heads-of-Delegation sessions to concentrate on the choices that truly require collective direction.

I also encourage you to think beyond this meeting to the legacy we want to create. As the Nairobi Convention enters its fifth decade, we have an opportunity to shape its future direction, strengthen its implementation and ensure that it remains fit for purpose in a changing world. The Decisions we take at COP12 will influence the health of our ocean and the well-being of our people for decades to come. Let us therefore be ambitious, inclusive and forward-looking in our deliberations.

Let this meeting provide COP12 with a sound factual record, mature draft decisions and a clear path from commitment to implementation. That will be a fitting contribution to the next chapter of the Nairobi Convention. This is a chapter that builds on the achievements of the past forty years and sets a bold and ambitious course for the next forty years.

Distinguished Delegates,

I conclude by thanking all Contracting Parties, partners and participants for your commitment to the Nairobi Convention and your engagement in this meeting. Your presence here demonstrates the importance you attach to regional cooperation and the health of our ocean. I look forward to the outcomes of your deliberations and to seeing the results of your work reflected in the decisions of COP12.

I wish you a productive meeting, fruitful deliberations and a successful Conference. May the next forty years of the Nairobi Convention be even more successful than the first forty.

Karibuni sana.

It is now my pleasure to declare the 12th Conference of the Parties to the Nairobi Convention and the 40th Anniversary Celebrations of the Nairobi Convention officially opened.