



República da
Guiné Bissau



Partenariat Régional pour la Conservation
de la zone côtière et Marine
en Afrique de l'Ouest

Press release

For immediate release

Guinea-Bissau hosts the 11th Regional Coastal and Marine Forum, the largest gathering of coastal zone actors in West Africa

Bissau, 18 April 2023 - From 23 to 26 April 2024, Bissau, the capital of Guinea-Bissau, will be the nerve centre of conservation in West Africa, hosting the 11th edition of the Regional Coastal and Marine Forum organised by the Regional Partnership for Coastal and Marine Conservation in West Africa (PRCM).

Under the theme “**Conservation, Resilience and Sustainable Development in the Face of Global Change**”, the Forum will address the challenges facing coastal ecosystems.

This theme focuses on mobilising stakeholders, knowledge and partnerships to strengthen the resilience, conservation and sustainable development of the coastal and marine zone in the face of regional and global challenges.

Under the aegis of Guinea Bissau's Ministry of the Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action, the opening ceremony will be presided over by the President of the Republic his Excellency **Umaro Embaló Sissoco**, signifying the State's high-level commitment to the conservation of marine ecosystems.

"Guinea-Bissau is pleased to host a significant sub-regional and international event. The government, through all the ministries, is fully committed to the organisation of this forum, and we are working to ensure that it runs smoothly and achieves its objectives. We believe that this forum will serve to strengthen the resilience of communities to the effects of climate change," said His Excellency **Mr Viriato Cassama**, Guinea Bissau's Minister of the Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action.

With nearly 400 experts, decision-makers, representatives of national and international NGOs, research institutes, members of civil society and donors expected to attend, the Forum promises to be a dynamic platform for the exchange of ideas, collaboration and concerted action to conserve our marine and coastal resources.

Participants will have the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities including conferences delivered by renowned experts, side events, technical workshops, exhibitions showcasing the latest advances in coastal management, as well as excursions to discover the specific features of Guinea-Bissau's coastal zone, including its rias, mangroves and islands.

By hosting the 11th Regional Marine and Coastal Forum, Guinea-Bissau is demonstrating its commitment to preserving natural resources, while providing an opportunity to highlight the challenges and opportunities associated with marine conservation in West Africa.

"Our country, like other coastal nations, occupies a strategic position as the meeting point of the currents from the Canary Islands and the Gulf of Guinea. This characteristic gives our coasts, and in particular our islands, an exceptional heritage status, transforming them into real sanctuaries of marine biodiversity. This forum is taking place at a crucial time, as Guinea-Bissau has just submitted the Bijagos Archipelago's application for UNESCO World Natural Heritage status. This shows that 2024 is an extremely important year for Guinea-Bissau in terms of conserving biodiversity and our heritage in general," added Mr **Viriato Cassama**.

Today, most human activities are undeniably affected by global change, forcing local communities to continue adapting and building their resilience in the face of climate disruption. Coastal erosion and flooding, two major scourges, are seeing their consequences exacerbated by unplanned urbanisation, thus jeopardising the livelihoods and safety of coastal populations.

A number of initiatives were discussed, such as the international treaty on the oceans concluded in June 2023, which aims to extend and strengthen the protection of biodiversity beyond areas under national jurisdiction. This major step forward, which will lead to the creation of marine protected areas in the high seas, highlights the importance of regional cooperation in tackling global challenges.

At the end of these five intense days, the Forum will produce strategic recommendations that will be set out in the Bissau Declaration. This declaration will serve as a roadmap to guide future actions, marking the commitment of the

participants to protect the West African coastline, its resources and its biodiversity.

About the PRCM

PRCM is a platform that brings together some 90 partners involved in marine and coastal conservation. These include civil society organisations, government institutions and sub-regional commissions, elected representatives, professional organisations, researchers and teachers, and international NGOs. PRCM covers seven countries: Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Cabo Verde, Guinea Bissau, Guinea and Sierra Leone. In Senegal, it has the status of a foreign NGO based in Dakar.

Its missions include:

- Supporting, through its network of partners, the coherence and coordination of the various interventions active at regional, national and local levels;
- Playing a role in political advocacy to strengthen the processes of conservation and integrated management of the coastal zone;
- Mobilising sustainable technical and financial resources through active representation in international institutions and cooperation agencies;
- Mobilising, capitalising on and sharing the results of research, local knowledge, and good practice.

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