

## PRESS RELEASE

### ***African scientists to showcase efforts addressing ocean acidification at high-level ocean conference***

MONROVIA, LIBERIA

*Ocean acidification, often referred to as “the other CO<sub>2</sub> problem”, is a major threat to marine ecosystems worldwide, and is the focus of the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.3. Since 2015, African scientists are actively collaborating to advance ocean acidification research throughout the continent as part of the OA-Africa network.*

Many African countries rely heavily on their coasts and rivers for economic growth and well-being. Unfortunately, the marine and coastal ecosystems of Africa are facing severe environmental threats, such as untreated waste water discharge, illegal fishing, and habitat degradation all combined with human-induced climate change. The rapidly increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) not only alters climate and the chemistry of the atmosphere, but is being absorbed by the oceans, causing a lowering of global pH levels, a process referred to as *ocean acidification*.

Past rapid ocean acidification periods in Earth history are not analogues for the present perturbation since their rates of change were far slower. The accelerated ongoing CO<sub>2</sub> ocean uptake is outpacing the ocean’s capacity to buffer oceanic pH and its carbonate chemistry and gives marine organisms, ecosystems, and humans less time to adapt to a changing environment. At the current rate of global carbon dioxide emissions, the average acidity of the surface ocean is expected to increase by 100–150 percent over pre-industrial levels by the end of this century.

Liberia is hosting the Blue Oceans Conference on 18-21 March 2019, providing a venue for stakeholders from various maritime sectors to discuss some of the main environmental threats facing African coastal countries, including climate change, pollution, unsustainable fishing practices, and maritime security. As part of this conference, members of the OA-Africa network, in cooperation with the Abidjan Convention, will organize a side event on 19 March to present the current status of ocean acidification research and awareness-raising efforts throughout Africa. White papers for three major regions of Africa (West, East and North) will be presented. This event will increase awareness about ocean acidification and research efforts in Africa and foster a dialogue with scientists attending the Blue Oceans Conference. The white papers lay out the needs and vision for future ocean acidification research in Africa and will help guide OA projects in Africa to effectively report on SDG 14.3.

Directly following the Blue Oceans Conference, the OA-Africa Steering Committee will meet to identify priorities and opportunities to advance ocean acidification monitoring, biological and societal response studies throughout Africa. The Steering Committee meeting will be hosted with support from the International Atomic Energy Agency Ocean Acidification International Coordination Centre (IAEA- OA-ICC) and The Ocean Foundation (TOF).

#### **About OA-Africa**

Ocean Acidification Africa (OA-Africa; <https://www.oa-africa.net/>) is a pan-African network working to coordinate and promote ocean acidification awareness and research in Africa. The

network is composed of more than 100 scientists interested in conducting ocean acidification research in Africa. OA- Africa is part of the wider Global Ocean Acidification Observing Network ([www.goa-on.org](http://www.goa-on.org)) as one of seven regional hubs.

### **About the Abidjan Convention**

The Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region (Abidjan Convention in short) covers a marine area from Mauritania to South Africa which has a coastline of just over 14,000 km.

The Convention provides an overarching legal framework for all marine-related programs in West, Central and Southern Africa.