

## Coast counties get Sh3.2bn to drive Blue economy projects

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A section of Mombasa, FILE PHOTO/NMG

Blue economy has received a major boost after Coast counties received Sh3.2 billion from the European Union (EU) for development projects in the sector. The initiative dubbed Go Blue will involve implementing projects in the counties of Kilifi, Kwale, Mombasa Tana River, Lamu and Taita Taveta. The six counties have so far identified projects “that will have high impact” on the region’s development on key sectors like fisheries, aquaculture, and maritime security. Other sectors include culture and tourism, spatial land-sea planning and environmental conservation. “Go Blue aims at strengthening inclusive Blue

economy value chains, creating wealth and transforming the lives of not just the people living in the coastal areas, but those of other Kenyans as well,” said EU deputy Ambassador to Kenya, Katrin Hagemann who spoke during the virtual launch of the initiative. The project is being implemented over a four-year period between January 2021 and December 2024. Ms Hagemann said Kenya’s coast is “a precious ecosystem” that has the potential to unlock opportunities for the country’s sustainable development.

The project is expected to benefit more than 3,000 youths and women. Coast region has been tapping into the Blue economy to create jobs in fisheries, tourism, maritime and shipping. Currently, Kenyan waters have been infested by foreign vessels who are exploiting the Blue economy due to lack of expertise and vessels locally. The Jumuiya Ya Kaunti za Pwani (JKP), a Coast Economic Bloc, said the money from the EU will be invested in projects that will have various employment opportunities and jobs. Ms Hagemann noted that the programme will foster economic, environment and social developments.

JKP Chief Executive Emmanuel Nzai said that the billion shilling project is “a testimony that partnership between different regional counties, communities sharing resources and the world works”. “Go Blue will change the story of more than 3,000 coast residents and align Jumuiya counties, national government and

development partners' priorities for the people of the six counties," he said. He said the initiative is in tandem with the six counties' County Integrated Plans (CIDPs), the Jumuiya 2030 regional blueprint, and Kenya's Vision 2030. The six coast governors will help residents in buying new boats, fish nets, storage facilities, training institutions, and fish farming among other developments. Go Blue is part of the overall Blue economy project, which focuses on the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and creation of jobs while preserving the health of the ocean ecosystem. Coast fishermen have welcomed the project stating that climate change has had a major influence in their fishing activities. "Due to climate change, traditional fishing can no longer sustain our livelihoods. We are now providing training in our Beach Management Units to work together with women and youth on putting in place new ocean-based value chains by keeping our culture and preserving the coastal waters," said Mohammed Idarus, the Shela BMU Chairman in Lamu. Coast leaders said the lack of cold storage facilities are the biggest challenge among fishermen in their main economic activity. The counties will also purchase improved boats that will see fishermen fish into the deeper waters.

