



# The blue economy in Tunisia :

## Opportunity for an integrated and sustainable development of the sea and coastal areas



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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# » THE BLUE ECONOMY IN TUNISIA :

## OPPORTUNITY FOR AN INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEA AND COASTAL AREAS

Due to its privileged position at the center of the southern shore of the Mediterranean, Tunisia enjoys undeniable assets with its 1300 km of continental coastline—home to 7.6 million people (more than two-thirds of its population), who depend heavily on the exploitation of coastal and marine resources for their livelihood. The blue economy, which refers to the sustainable use of maritime resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and healthy maritime ecosystems, represents an opportunity for sustainable development and wealth creation for Tunisia, especially in the context of the post-COVID-19 recovery.

Recognizing the importance of Tunisia's unique coastal and marine resources and seeking to develop an integrated and sustainable strategy to increase their economic contribution, the Tunisian Government, represented by the Ministry of Environment and the General Secretariat of Maritime Affairs, in partnership with the World Bank, has been engaged since 2020 in the process of identifying opportunities for the development of the blue economy in Tunisia.

This process has been based mainly on an expert diagnosis, using the most recent documentation and statistics, and enriched by a questionnaire and a broad consultation with the various actors involved in managing the country's coast and sea. The objective of the diagnosis was to make an inventory of the existing resources and to lay the foundations of the future national strategy for the blue economy. This has helped define a strategic vision from which a set of key traditional or established activities, developed sustainably, along with emerging activities, will play a significant role in the development of a blue economy in Tunisia. At the same time, well thought-out and sustained activities related to the protection of the marine and coastal ecosystems will be required.

## VISION, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIC AXES OF THE BLUE ECONOMY IN TUNISIA

The discussions carried out during the consultation process with the stakeholders have made it possible to identify a consensual concept and a common and shared vision of the blue economy. The target is an economy that creates wealth and jobs, guaranteeing both the environmental balance of the natural capital and the social inclusion of the populations concerned. The blue economy thus promotes economic growth, social inclusion, and preservation or improvement of livelihoods while ensuring the environmental sustainability of the sea and coastal areas. It should also provide the best conditions for greater resilience and adaptation to climate change. It will also promote the articulation and coordination of different sectoral strategies.

This vision will have to respond to three major challenges: (i) the creation of wealth with socio-economic benefits for current and future generations; (ii) the preservation of natural capital through the protection and restoration of biological diversity and marine ecosystems; and (iii) adaptation and resilience to the growing impacts of climate change.

Three strategic objectives will underpin this vision: (i) promotion of the growth of traditional and new maritime economic activities, (ii) social inclusion and gender equality through the creation of sustainable jobs, and the preservation and improvement of livelihoods, and (iii) sustainability of natural resources and ecosystem services.

Six strategic axes, which together should lead to the achievement of these objectives, have been identified as follows: (i) set up institutional governance involving all stakeholders; (ii) ensure the coordination and coherence of public policies, strategies, and sectoral plans and programs; (iii) promote resources and appropriate and innovative financing mechanisms for programs and projects of the blue economy (e.g., public and private investments, public-private partnerships, issuance of Blue Bonds); (iv) promote job creation, poverty alleviation, gender inclusion and involvement of vulnerable groups; (v) develop knowledge of marine and coastal capital, both natural and cultural; and, (vi) increase resilience to climate change through the strengthening of mitigation and adaptation measures.

The development of this vision and its objectives will need to be supported by an institutional framework through which stakeholders can consult and have input into government decision-making. Three key actors should be at the center of this framework: the General Secretariat for Maritime Affairs (SGAM) of the Ministerial Commission for Maritime Affairs (CMAM); the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Economy and Planning, both members of the Ministerial

Commission for Maritime Affairs. While roles and responsibilities need to be refined as part of implementing a solid coordination function for the moves towards a blue economy, this will have to be carried out from the national level to the regional and even local level in an intersectoral manner. The coordination mechanism to be established must be cross-cutting, intersectoral, and both horizontal and vertical. An integrated and intersectoral approach will be even more beneficial when anchored in the strategy carried out by the CMAM. The ultimate objective of this strong coordination is to ensure the environmental sustainability of the natural capital on which socioeconomic development relies.



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