



**COMMISSION SOUS-RÉGIONALE DES PÊCHES  
SUB-REGIONAL FISHERIES COMMISSION**

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

# **SRFC**

**2025  
2029**





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## Vision

Sub-regional governance based on solidarity, guaranteeing the sustainability of fishery resources, food sovereignty, ecosystem resilience and the well-being of the citizens of Member States.

## Mission

To ensure the coordination, harmonisation, and implementation of concerted sub-regional policies on fisheries, aquaculture, and the blue economy,

based on cooperation, legal integration, and solidarity among Member States.

## Preamble

The Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC), established in 1985, plays a central role in coordinating fisheries policies among its seven member states. It serves as a platform for consultation, harmonisation, and integration for the sustainable management of fisheries, marine, and continental resources in a strategic area that is heavily dependent on fisheries products for food security and sovereignty.

The Strategic Plan 2025–2029 was developed in a context marked by growing challenges: resource scarcity, the aggravated effects of climate change, the expansion of IUU fishing, the multiplication of coastal and water uses, rising social and economic inequalities, population growth and coastal infrastructure development, and increasing pressure from external actors. In response to these changes, the SRFC aims to assert its leading role in dynamic cooperation for the sustainable, equitable, and resilient governance of fisheries and aquaculture in the subregion.

This strategic document aims to guide the collective action of SRFC Member States for the next five years, based on a common vision, shared principles and clearly defined priorities. It incorporates major cross-cutting dimensions, including food sovereignty, gender promotion, and the ecological and climate resilience of coastal socio-ecosystems.

This strategic plan aligns with the sub-regional, continental, and international commitments made by SRFC member states, particularly under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the ECOWAS "Detailed Strategic Framework for the Development of Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture".

This strategic document serves as a collective roadmap, a steering tool, a lever for cooperation, and an instrument for political advocacy in favour of sustainable fisheries management and a sustainable and equitable blue economy for the peoples of the sub-region.

## Justification for the strategic plan

The North-West African sub-region is one of the most productive maritime areas on the continent, with prolific biological diversity and abundant resources. However, it faces a growing combination of threats whose dynamics directly affect the food security, livelihoods and economic and social balance of Member States. In the face of these challenges, cooperation between SRFC member states is more essential than ever to ensure the sound management and concerted and effective governance of both maritime and continental fisheries.

The Strategic Plan (2025-2029) responds to the need to provide the SRFC with a coherent and mobilising framework for action to address current and future challenges. It aims to strengthen the shared vision of sustainable fisheries management, promote a fair and sustainable blue economy, and guarantee food sovereignty for populations.

This plan also serves as a sub-regional coordination tool for mobilising partners and providing a strategic framework for national fisheries policies.



## Message from the President of the Conference of Ministers

Dear partners, dear citizens of the SRFC Member States,



**S**ince its inception, the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission has consistently demonstrated its relevance as a forum for consultation and solidarity in addressing common challenges in fisheries governance.

Today, more than ever, the complexity of issues such as food security, climate change, resource pressure, sub-regional cohesion, and the expansion of IUU fishing requires a common, ambitious, and structured vision.

The Strategic Plan 2025–2029 embodies this shared vision. It places food sovereignty, ecological resilience and sub-regional cooperation at the heart of our action. It also affirms the political will of our States to make the SRFC a central actor in sub-regional integration, sustainability and peace in our shared maritime and continental space.

This plan is the result of a collective effort, to which national institutions, technical and scientific partners, professionals and civil society have contributed. As such, it should be understood as a strategic contract that is binding not only on the SRFC but on all Member States.

I hope that this document will inspire hope, strengthen the coherence of our policies and contribute to building sustainable, equitable and sovereign fisheries for present and future generations.

**Fassou THEA**  
**Chair of the Conference of Ministers of the SRFC**





## Message from the Permanent Secretary



**T**he Strategic Plan 2025–2029 represents a decisive step in the evolution of our organisation and in the collective response that SRFC Member States aim to bring to the multiple challenges affecting fishery resources, aquatic ecosystems, and coastal and continental communities.

This document is the culmination of a comprehensive analysis, consultation, and dialogue process. It reflects the aspirations of governments, scientists, professionals in the sector and citizens who expect concrete, practical and structural action from the SRFC.

As Permanent Secretary, I am delighted to see that this plan sets the SRFC on a path of strategic transformation. It strengthens our collective capacity to understand, value, and protect the shared resources on which the future of millions of our fellow citizens depends.

This plan, which strives to ensure the sustainable exploitation of fishery resources, fully integrates the environmental dimensions of ecosystem preservation. It offers a clear and shared vision for reconciling the protection of aquatic environments, food security and socio-economic development for the benefit of present and future generations.

I invite all stakeholders to take ownership of this plan and make it a tool for mobilisation, coherence and shared ambition. It is through our collective commitment that we will be able to implement the guidelines set out here and make our shared space a model of sustainable and equitable fisheries governance.

**Dr Khallahi BRAHIM**  
Permanent Secretary of the SRFC



# I. Introduction

**T**he Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) is a unique intergovernmental cooperation framework in West Africa, bringing together seven Member States united by a common ambition: to ensure the concerted, sustainable and equitable management of shared fisheries resources and aquatic ecosystems. Since its creation in 1985, the SRFC has evolved into a strategic player in the sub-regional institutional landscape, playing a pivotal role between national policies, continental commitments, and international initiatives.

To fully play its role at the sub-regional and international levels and achieve its objectives, the SRFC has developed several strategic plans, the most recent of which is for the period 2019-2023. The latter was intended as a continuation of the previous plan and sets out similar objectives aimed at consolidating the organisation's position in strengthening sub-regional integration to address better the challenges facing the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

The present Strategic Plan builds on new concepts and initiatives in the fisheries sector to enable the SRFC to become a benchmark and innovative institution for cooperation, ensuring the sustainable management of fishery resources. These primarily encompass concepts and initiatives related to blue growth, transparency in the fisheries sector, climate change, voluntary guidelines for small-scale fisheries, and GEF initiatives focused on coastal fishing. In addition, the previous Strategic Plan (2019-2023) included aquaculture, intra-regional trade in fishery products, fisher migration and the prospects for the possible evolution of the SRFC's mandate towards a Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO).

The Strategic Plan (2025-2029) takes a more comprehensive approach to addressing the significant issues facing the sub-region. It builds on the achievements of the previous SP, reaffirming or refocusing the most structural objectives. It lays the foundations for a shared strategic commitment, rooted in sub-regional realities and geared towards the significant contemporary challenges.

## 1.1. Presentation of the SRFC

The Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) aims to contribute to the sustainable conservation, responsible management, and equitable development of marine and inland fisheries resources in the sub-region through enhanced institutional cooperation among its member states.

The SRFC's strategic vision for 2030 is that of an integrated, sovereign and resilient North-West African fisheries area, where aquatic resources are managed sustainably in the interests of food sovereignty, social equity and local economic development.

The values that guide the SRFC's actions and underpin this Strategic Plan are cooperation, sustainability, transparency and scientific foundations.

These values are reflected in eight commitments. Strengthen sub-regional solidarity and integration in the face of everyday challenges. Ensure that resources are exploited in a manner that respects ecological and social balances.

Ensure that all actions are within the limits of ecosystem renewal capacities. Promote the inclusion of all stakeholders, particularly those who are most vulnerable. Promote accountability, information flow and citizen participation.

Base decisions on the best available knowledge, through dialogue between scientific and local knowledge. Develop aquaculture as an alternative to overfishing, which affects stocks in the subregion, particularly those shared among countries.

## 1.2. Evolution of sub-regional fisheries governance

Since the 1980s, fisheries governance in West Africa has gradually evolved from a strictly national approach to concerted approaches that recognise the transboundary nature of fishery resources and the interdependencies between marine ecosystems. The SRFC has thus established itself as a reference framework for policy dialogue, legislative harmonisation and technical cooperation between member states.

Primary legal instruments, such as the Convention on the Exercise of the Right of Pursuit and the Convention on Minimum Access Conditions (CMA),

have helped to establish a standard set of principles and practices. At the same time, the SRFC has strengthened its role in combating IUU fishing, managing shared stocks and facilitating a sub-regional scientific community.

Growing recognition of the challenges linked to overfishing, climate change, the blue economy, and inclusive governance now calls for a new phase: one of strengthened, integrated governance focused on innovation, sustainability, and food sovereignty. The Strategic Plan 2025–2029 is part of this approach.

## 1.3. Summary of previous plans

The Strategic Plan (2019–2023), extended to 2024 by decision of the Special Conference of Ministers (Tangier, Morocco), has consolidated the political legitimacy of the SRFC, structured the fight against IUU fishing, and laid the foundations for more coherent sub-regional governance. It has contributed to the establishment of shared tools, improved monitoring, control and surveillance capacities, and strengthened coordination between Member States. However, several limitations have been identified. These include incomplete coverage of emerging issues such as climate change, marine pollution,

interference of uses and the blue economy, as well as weak integration of aquaculture and inland fisheries. Finally, there is still limited coordination between science and policymaking, as well as difficulties in mobilising funding and ensuring the sustainability of actions.

These findings have fed into the development of this strategic plan, which aims for a more ambitious transformation that is integrated and aligned with the current priorities of Member States, while ensuring the continuity of previous achievements.

## 1.4. Objectives of the new Strategic Plan

The SRFC Strategic Plan (2025–2029) responds to a dual imperative: on the one hand, to strengthen the collective capacity to address the complex challenges of fisheries sustainability, food sovereignty and climate change; on the other hand, to reposition the SRFC as a key player in sub-regional governance and political integration in West Africa. The main objectives of this plan are to:

- Consolidate the institutional and legal achievements of the SRFC.
- Improve shared governance of fisheries resources and aquatic ecosystems.
- Optimise the social and economic benefits of the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

- Promote the ecological, social and economic sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture.
- Strengthen the scientific, technical and human capacities of the sub-region.
- Promote the integration of the blue economy and climate adaptation into national and regional policies.
- Ensure that food sovereignty is better considered in all aspects of fisheries development.
- Promote greater economic and social stability in this sector.

This plan thus provides a structured and evolving framework for collective action, institutional innovation, and multi-stakeholder cooperation,

benefiting aquatic resources and the populations that depend on them.



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Artisanal fishing port of Tarrafal, Santiago, Cabo Verde

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Bolon and mangrove, Sine Saloum, Senegal

## 2. Sub-regional challenges and context

**T**he SRFC member countries share a strategic fisheries area that is both rich in resources and vulnerable to multiple pressures. The land-sea interface, continental aquatic environments and the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of the States constitute interconnected systems that are exposed to intensified use and increased competition for access to resources.

In this context, fisheries and aquaculture play a fundamental role in national economies, food security, employment and local cultures. However, these functions are threatened by a combination of internal and external factors: fishing overcapacity, population growth, rural poverty, illegal fishing (due to weak control and surveillance), the impacts of climate change, pollution, and social conflicts.

This section provides an overview of the main challenges affecting the sustainability of fisheries resources, the resilience of coastal communities and the capacity of Member States to respond collectively to environmental, economic and social difficulties. It forms the basis for the strategic priorities of this plan.

### 2.1. Socio-economic challenges: jobs, food security and sovereignty, inclusion

In the subregion, the fisheries and aquaculture sector is a key source of employment, income as well as food and nutrition security for more than 50 million people, particularly in coastal areas and river basins. It plays a crucial role in local economies, while also fulfilling essential social and cultural functions. However, rapid population growth, persistent poverty and unequal access to resources are increasing the vulnerability of populations dependent on fishing activities. Access to fish as a source of animal protein is increasingly threatened, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, due to overfishing, competing uses and climate disruption.

Food security remains a key priority for SRFC member states. This involves not only ensuring the supply of fish products to markets, but also monitoring supply chains and promoting local development. Furthermore, the low inclusion of women, young people and community actors in governance bodies and value chains limits the positive impact of fisheries policies.

Reducing these inequalities and strengthening the capacities of these vulnerable groups is a strategic lever for improving the social and economic resilience of our Member States. Through this plan, the SRFC intends to support equitable and structuring approaches that place social and food issues at the heart of sub-regional and regional fisheries and aquaculture policies, making sustainable exploitation the norm for the various policy orientations.

### 2.2. Ecological challenges: declining stocks, habitat degradation and pollution

Marine ecosystems in particular, and aquatic ecosystems in general, in the West African sub-region are under increasing anthropogenic pressure, jeopardising their capacity for renewal and the services they provide to populations. The decline in fish stocks observed over the last two decades is symptomatic of multifaceted overexploitation, exacerbated by inadequate monitoring, control and surveillance systems, the expansion of IUU fishing and the weakness of specific management policies.

Uncoordinated management systems for shared stocks can have serious consequences for their productivity and resilience. Optimising exploitation by rethinking practices for accessing and using marine and continental resources is now a necessity. It requires improvements in monitoring, control and surveillance tools, fishing and aquaculture practices, and governance methods.

Ecosystem degradation threatens their productivity and, in the long term, risks disrupting fragile balances and reducing their functional capacity. The effects of climate change, combined with environmentally unsound practices, are leading to biodiversity loss and the loss of essential habitats, thereby altering the ecosystem functions that are essential for resource renewal.



At the same time, coastal erosion poses a significant threat to fisheries infrastructure, essential habitats for particular species that are exploited, and the livelihoods of coastal communities. Accelerated by the effects of climate change and unplanned coastal development, this erosion is undermining ecological and socio-economic balances.

Pollution, particularly from land-based sources (such as plastics, hydrocarbons, and urban and industrial waste), affects water quality, biodiversity, and human health. Although still overlooked mainly in fisheries management measures, it is a critical factor in the degradation of habitats that are sometimes essential for the reproduction and development of fish species.

In response to these challenges, the SRFC advocates for strengthened ecosystem-based management that integrates environmental degradation factors, restores essential habitats, and enhances the resilience of the environments and communities that depend on them. However, rapid population growth, persistent poverty and unequal access to resources are increasing the vulnerability of populations dependent on fishing activities.

Access to fish as a source of animal protein is increasingly threatened, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, due to overfishing, competing uses and climate disruption.

### 2.3. Geopolitical challenges: pressure on resources, fishing agreements, blue diplomacy

The subregion's fishery resources are at the heart of growing geopolitical issues. They are attracting the interest of multiple actors (third countries, foreign industrial fleets, regional and multinational organisations) which are converging on the SRFC subregion due to its high biological productivity and highly strategic position.

This results in increasing fishing pressure, which in turn leads to the overexploitation of several stocks in the subregion. This is causing a gradual decline in the most iconic resources. This pressure is exerted in a context of increased competition for access to resources, which can exacerbate tensions among users, Member States, and various categories of actors. The management of shared stocks and overlapping areas is becoming a strategic challenge, both to preserve ecological balance and to ensure equity between coastal countries.

In this context, blue diplomacy is taking on strategic importance. The SRFC is positioning itself as an essential interface between its Member States and regional, continental and international bodies, defending collective interests, sovereignty over resources and sub-regional integration.



### 2.3.1. Cross-cutting challenges: climate change, coexistence of uses, crime in the fisheries sector

Beyond sectoral issues, the subregion faces significant cross-cutting challenges, the cumulative effects of which undermine efforts to achieve sustainable governance of fishery resources. Climate change is disrupting ocean and hydrological systems, altering species distributions, increasing ecosystem instability and exacerbating socio-economic risks. Coastal communities, which are heavily dependent on aquatic resources, are among those most exposed to these impacts.

The coexistence of different uses at sea and in coastal areas is becoming an increasingly sensitive issue, encompassing port infrastructure, oil exploration, maritime transport, tourism, industrial aquaculture, and marine conservation. Without concerted planning, these activities conflict with the interests of small-scale fisheries and environmental conservation. Finally, the rise of illegal activities, such as IUU fishing, trafficking in marine resources and unregulated flows of seafood products, calls for enhanced cooperation in fisheries control and surveillance.

These challenges require a coordinated, multisectoral response rooted in the realities of Member States. They justify the need to integrate resilience, spatial planning, and inclusive governance fully into sub-regional and regional fisheries strategies.

### 2.3.2. Alignment with international legal frameworks

The fisheries challenges facing the subregion align entirely with the priorities expressed at the continental and global levels. The SRFC Strategic Plan (2025–2029) aligns its objectives and guidelines with several major international frameworks to ensure consistency, clarity, and the ability to mobilise technical and financial partnerships. These frameworks include:

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDGs 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 8 (decent work), 13 (climate action) and 14 (life below water);
- The African Union’s Agenda 2063, which places the blue economy, regional integration, environmental governance and food security at the heart of continental development;
- The ECOWAS Detailed Strategic Framework for the Development of Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture;
- Commitments made within the framework of ECOWAS and the FAO (e.g. Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Compliance Agreement, IUU Action Plan, and PSMA);
- The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).



This strategic positioning enables the SRFC to act as a relay and catalyst between national policies

and international commitments, while strengthening its visibility and influence in multilateral arenas.



## 3. SRFC's Strategic Vision for 2030



In a context marked by intensifying pressure on fishery resources, accelerating climate change and rising societal expectations for social justice and food sovereignty, the SRFC proposes a strategic vision adapted to current challenges. This vision is based on a common ambition shared by its Member States: to make the subregion a benchmark for sustainable, equitable and resilient governance of shared aquatic resources.

The foundations of this strategic vision propose, through a reformulation of the SRFC's mission, a clarification of the long-term transformation objectives and a reaffirmation of the values that will guide the implementation of the Strategic Plan (2025–2029).

### 3.1. Vision statement

By 2030, the SRFC aims to make the Member States' fisheries area a model of concerted, sustainable and inclusive governance of aquatic resources, guaranteeing food security, the prosperity of the communities that depend on it and the preservation of ecosystems.

This vision is based on strengthened solidarity between Member States, the integration of science into political decisions, and a shared commitment to ensuring the ecological, social and economic sustainability of the sub-region's fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

### 3.2. Renewed mission

The renewed mission of the SRFC is to promote governance based on consultation, solidarity and efficiency, to ensure the equitable, sustainable and sovereign management of the subregion's fisheries and aquatic resources.

It aims to strengthen cooperation and coordination between Member States, support the development and harmonisation of fisheries policies, produce and mobilise scientific knowledge, and ensure the inclusion of local stakeholders in decision-making processes. Through this mission, the SRFC intends to act as a sub-regional and operational platform for building a common future for fisheries, serving the well-being of populations and the resilience of ecosystems.

### 3.3. Core values: cooperation, science, sustainability, integration, equity, and transparency

The founding values that underpin the SRFC's vision and mission, and which will guide the implementation of the Strategic Plan (2025–2029), are :

- Cooperation through the promotion of sub-regional solidarity and collective action to address shared challenges through the implementation of joint projects.
- Sustainability by ensuring that resources are exploited in a manner that respects natural and social balances.
- Sustainability by ensuring that all fisheries policies are within ecological limits and the renewal capacity of ecosystems.



- Science, by basing public decisions on reliable data and information, shared knowledge and appropriate innovations.
- Equity, by ensuring the inclusive participation of all stakeholders, particularly the most vulnerable.
- Transparency, by improving the availability and sharing of information.
- Sub-regional integration by affirming unity of action, policy convergence and the common identity of Member States in the management and governance of fishery resources.



## 4. Structuring principles of the plan

The implementation of the Strategic Plan (2025–2029) is based on a set of fundamental principles that reflect the political, technical and ethical commitments of the SRFC member states. These principles form the methodological and operational basis of the plan. They ensure the coherence of sub-regional action, the sustainability of results and the clarity of guidelines for national and international partners.

- Promote a coordinated approach among Member States, strengthen the convergence of public policies and consolidate institutional cooperation mechanisms towards integrated sub-regional governance.
- Support the development of participatory management plans, supported by reliable and up-to-date data, and integrating ecosystem and socio-economic dimensions. For science- and data-based fisheries management.
- Enhance the value of aquatic resources, considering the specific characteristics of Member States, involving community stakeholders and ensuring the equitable distribution of economic benefits, towards an inclusive blue economy.
- Integrate interactions within ecosystems, land use and climate into management strategies, strengthening the resilience of aquatic habitats and communities. For an ecosystem-based approach and climate adaptation.
- Encourage cooperation between countries in the South, while mobilising international partnerships based on mutual respect and co-development for a fair partnership.
- Promote access to information, dissemination of results and stakeholder involvement at all stages of the management cycle, for transparent communication.

### 4.1. Integrated sub-regional governance

Integrated sub-regional governance is the very foundation of the collective action promoted by the SRFC. It aims to move beyond purely national approaches to establish a shared, coherent and united vision of fisheries resource management and the blue economy among Member States.

This principle is based on several key dimensions :

- Harmonisation of legal and policy frameworks: encouraging the adoption of common standards, conventions and concerted mechanisms that facilitate cross-border cooperation, reduce regulatory asymmetries and strengthen legal certainty for stakeholders.
- Strengthening sub-regional institutions: consolidate the SRFC's governance bodies, in particular the Conference of Ministers, the Coordination Committee and the Permanent Secretariat, to enable them to fully exercise their respective roles of steering, coordination, implementation and representation.
- Alignment with regional and continental frameworks: ensure smooth coordination between SRFC actions and the policies of ECOWAS, the African Union and other relevant mechanisms.
- Support for fisheries and environmental diplomacy: make the SRFC a lever for a common voice in international negotiations on oceans, biodiversity, fisheries, climate and fisheries governance.

This principle also involves promoting inclusive, transparent and trust-based dialogue mechanisms between Member States, highlighting good practices, feedback and respective capacities. The aim is to establish a robust institutional architecture that can effectively respond to the complex and evolving challenges of sustainable aquatic resource management.

### 4.2. Fisheries management, science-based and data-driven

Effective fisheries governance relies on planning based on robust data, scientific understanding of ecosystem dynamics and participatory decision-making mechanisms. With this in mind, the SRFC



supports Member States in developing integrated approaches to marine and inland fisheries management, ensuring the ecological and socio-economic sustainability of fisheries. This support focuses on the following priorities:

- Support for the modernisation of Member States’ fisheries information systems;
- Support for the development of management plans based on scientific advice;
- Facilitating data collection, harmonisation and sharing;
- Contributing to the regular assessment of the state of stocks and anthropogenic pressures, in coordination with the competent institutions of Member States.

### 4.3. Inclusive blue economy

The blue economy is only sustainable if it is rooted in local realities and benefits all Member States and their populations. This principle aims to ensure the equitable distribution of economic benefits, the active inclusion of vulnerable actors, and the sustainable development of local potential. This translates into promoting fair value chains and access to finance for small operators, women, and young people. But also, through the integration of the blue economy into national development strategies.

### 4.4. Ecosystem approach and climate adaptation

Fisheries resources must be managed with a comprehensive understanding of ecosystems, considering the impacts of climate change, pollution, spatial pressures and social dynamics. This approach aims to strengthen the resilience of coastal and marine socio-ecosystems. This requires:

- Applying the precautionary principle in planning.
- Integrating ecosystem services into public policy.
- The development of nature-based adaptation strategies.
- Internalising climate risks in fisheries management.

### 4.5. Equitable partnerships

The plan will be implemented through joint efforts with regional, African and international partners. The aim is to create partnerships based on trust, mutual respect, complementary knowledge and equitable benefit sharing. This includes South-South regional technical and scientific cooperation. It also includes promoting local expertise in programmes funded by the North.

### 4.6. Communication and transparency

Visibility and participation are pillars of sustainable governance. This principle aims to establish a culture of information sharing, dissemination of results and transparency in decision-making and financial processes. It relies on the development of accessible, multilingual communication tools, the regular production of reports, reviews and dashboards, and the organisation of forums, multi-stakeholder dialogues and public consultations.



Artisanal fishing port in Conakry, Guinea



Traditional fishing boat, Free Town, Sierra Leone

## 5. Strategic priorities for 2025–2029

**T**he Strategic Plan (2025–2029) is structured around eight priority areas designed to respond in an integrated manner to the challenges identified and to translate the organisation’s strategic vision into concrete action. Each of these priorities corresponds to a broad structural orientation that is political, technical and operational. These priorities should not be seen as independent silos, but as interdependent components of an overall strategy aimed at strengthening fisheries governance, ensuring food and nutritional sovereignty, promoting a fair and sustainable blue economy, and guaranteeing the ecological and social resilience of the territories.

Each strategic priority gives rise to specific objectives and levers for action, which will be detailed in the Annual Budgeted Work Plans (ABWP) presented to the SRFC Coordination Committee. They are designed to promote complementarity between national and regional policies, cross-cutting themes and consistency with the international commitments of the Member States, in particular with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Activities will be implemented annually through programmes and projects developed with SRFC partners.

### 5.1. Axis 1. Sub-regional governance and policy harmonisation

This priority aims to consolidate the strategic role of the SRFC as a framework for cooperation, regulation and regional integration in the field of fisheries and the blue economy. The aim is to strengthen the effectiveness of existing institutional mechanisms, harmonise legal and regulatory frameworks and ensure greater convergence of fisheries policies between Member States.

#### Priorities

- Update, finalise and facilitate the signing of conventions, protocols and legal texts governing sub-regional cooperation in the fisheries sector.
- Develop harmonised legal instruments between Member States for the sustainable management of marine and continental resources.
- Promote the integration of fisheries policies into the strategic frameworks and governance mechanisms of ECOWAS, the African Union and other relevant regional and continental frameworks.

- Support the effective implementation of relevant international legal instruments.
- Strengthen the role of the SRFC’s governing bodies (Conference of Ministers, Coordination Committee, Permanent Secretariat) and consultative bodies (Scientific and Technical Committees/Working Groups).

This priority contributes to establishing the political legitimacy of the SRFC, increasing its strategic influence, and ensuring the coherence of national efforts through a shared and supportive governance approach that integrates national, sub-regional, and regional policies, cross-cutting themes, and consistency with the international commitments of Member States.

### 5.2. Axis 2. Sustainable fisheries management

Fisheries management is an essential lever for ensuring the biological sustainability, social acceptability and economic viability of fisheries. In a context of high pressure on stocks, habitat degradation and changing fishing practices, it is imperative to develop and implement management measures based on science, consultation and equity.

#### Priorities

- Support the development or updating of management plans (particularly for transboundary/shared stocks) based on scientific data and concerted approaches.
- Promote inclusive forms of governance and participatory approaches, supporting the recognition of usage rights, local knowledge, community empowerment and social justice in access to resources.



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- Encourage the harmonisation of management and governance mechanisms between Member States for marine and inland fisheries.
- Strengthen mechanisms for sharing fisheries and socio-economic data.
- Support the definition of resource allocation mechanisms based on ecological sustainability and food security.
- Promote an inclusive approach to management mechanisms, ensuring the active participation of women in governance, co-management and plan formulation.
- Support the establishment of a sub-regional observatory for fisheries and marine environment management, linked to thematic groups.
- Develop SCS systems, in particular VMS and AIS, to optimise inspection and SCS operations.
- Strengthen the human, technical and institutional capacities of UCOS and national SCS authorities.
- Promote information and data sharing mechanisms between Member States.
- Strengthen inter-administrative and inter-departmental synergy within Member States.
- Support the traceability of seafood products and the fight against informal channels.
- Harmonise sanctions regimes applicable to IUU fishing at the sub-regional level and strengthen judicial cooperation.
- Promote joint fisheries control and surveillance operations.

This priority aims to promote the rational exploitation of resources, adapted to the renewal capacity of ecosystems, and to secure the livelihoods of communities dependent on fishing.

This priority aims to assert zero tolerance for IUU fishing and strengthen the credibility of the SRFC as a forum for vigilance, accountability and protection of the interests of its member states.

### 5.3. Axis 3. Combating IUU fishing

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is one of the main factors destabilising sustainable management efforts in the subregion. It causes considerable economic losses, weakens ecosystems, compromises food sovereignty and undermines the competitiveness of legal fisheries, both artisanal and industrial.

This priority area aims to strengthen collective capacity to combat IUU fishing through coordinated monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) mechanisms, the harmonisation of national systems and cross-border cooperation between Member States.

#### Priorities

- Revitalise and operationalise the UCOS based in Gambia.

### 5.4. Axis 4. Science, innovation and information systems

Effective and credible governance and management of fishery resources rely on sound scientific bases, reliable data and shared analysis mechanisms. Knowledge integration, information flow and technological innovation are essential levers for improving public policy, anticipating change and enhancing transparency.

This priority aims to structure the functions of research, monitoring, modelling and knowledge dissemination within the SRFC area in a sustainable manner by strengthening cooperation between national scientific institutions responsible for fisheries, universities in the sub-region and international partners.



### Priorities

- Establish a sub-regional network of SRFC partner scientific institutions.
- Develop an interdisciplinary sub-regional observatory (focusing on fisheries, oceans, climate and society).
- Improve data collection, processing, analysis and sharing capacities, particularly fisheries information systems.
- Strengthen warning, forecasting and decision support systems.
- Expand South-South and South-North scientific collaboration.
- Promote innovation, applied research and technology.
- Support improvements in the safety of fishing activities at sea, particularly by supporting the safety of small-scale fishing vessels.
- Strengthen the integration of gender issues into fisheries research programs.
- Support dialogue between science and policy.

This priority supports the emergence of evidence-based fisheries governance that is grounded in reality and responsive to technological and societal advancements.

## 5.5. Axis 5. Aquaculture & Inland Fisheries

Faced with growing pressure on marine fishery resources, the sustainable development of aquaculture and inland fisheries is a strategic priority for our Member States, as it diversifies production sources, strengthens food and nutritional security, and creates local economic opportunities.

These sectors offer significant potential, provided they are supported by inclusive policies tailored to national and regional contexts.

This priority aims to promote sustainable, socially equitable and environmentally responsible aquaculture, while supporting the recognition and enhancement of inland fisheries practices, which are often neglected in fisheries policies. In a spirit of complementarity with national initiatives, the SRFC supports coordination and the sub-regional dimension.

### Priorities

- Support the development and consistent implementation of a sub-regional strategy for sustainable and resilient aquaculture.
- Support the development of pilot aquaculture projects, promoting multi-stakeholder dialogue, participatory planning and the inclusion of small-scale producers.
- Support the development and implementation of a sub-regional strategy for the development of inland fisheries as a lever for poverty reduction and food security.
- Promote nature-based solutions and techniques adapted to local ecosystems.
- Promote women's entrepreneurship and strengthen women's access to innovation, training and financing mechanisms in the aquaculture sector.
- Encourage the integration of aquaculture and inland fisheries into national and sub-regional policies.

This priority aims to contribute to the food and nutritional sovereignty of Member States, while stimulating innovation and diversification of aquatic production systems.

## 5.6. Axis 6. Blue economy, food and employment

The transition to a fair, inclusive and sustainable blue economy is a strategic pillar for SRFC Member States. It requires a profound transformation of the fisheries, marine, and inland fisheries sectors, through the better use of aquatic resources, support for local employment, and the strengthening of food sovereignty.

The SRFC supports Member States in the coordinated implementation of policies that promote economic autonomy, food security and regional integration in value chains. It supports equitable access to safe, affordable and responsibly sourced fishery products for populations.

### Priorities

- Strengthen fisheries value chains, from production to consumption, by integrating quality, traceability and competitiveness issues.
- Support local processing and sustainable industrialisation.
- Promote decent jobs in the aquatic sectors, particularly for young people, women and coastal communities.
- Develop financing mechanisms tailored to the blue economy, including public finance, microfinance, climate funds and public-private partnerships.
- Support the structuring of national fisheries markets and the regulation of trade flows to improve equitable access to products and strengthen food and nutritional security.
- Supporting the economic empowerment of women, particularly fishmongers and processors, in fisheries value chains.

This priority contributes to making the blue economy a lever for shared prosperity, social justice and sustainability in the SRFC area.



## 5.7. Axis 7. Climate resilience and marine ecosystem health

The subregion's marine and coastal ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, pollution, coastal urbanisation, and unsustainable resource exploitation. Biodiversity loss, habitat loss and degradation affect fish productivity and ecosystem services that are essential to populations. This priority aims to strengthen the resilience of ecosystems and communities to environmental shocks through an integrated approach to the protection, restoration and governance of marine and coastal environments.

## Priorities

- Promote the adoption of ecosystem-friendly fishing gear and techniques, with a particular focus on equipment that has a lower impact on benthic habitats and vulnerable species.
- Develop climate resilience projects for vulnerable coastal communities, particularly highly exposed artisanal fishing communities.
- Promote marine spatial planning as a tool for integrated use management, incorporating the needs of small-scale fisheries.
- Understand the effects of marine pollution that impact fish productivity or compromise the development of aquaculture.
- Preserve ecosystems, particularly essential sites such as mangroves, seagrass beds, reefs and spawning grounds.
- Integrate ocean health issues into fisheries and maritime policies.
- Strengthen the resilience and sustainability of small-scale fisheries by supporting the modernisation of equipment, secure access to fishing areas, local product development and improved working conditions.

This priority contributes to preserving the subregion's natural capital, securing long-term livelihoods, and positioning the SRFC as a committed player in climate action and ecosystem governance.

## 5.8. Axis 8. Institutional strengthening and strategic positioning

The effective and sustainable implementation of the SRFC's strategic ambitions depends on its ability to address current challenges, secure adequate resources, and assert its place in regional and international arenas. A strengthened Permanent Secretariat, modernised governance, and an active communication strategy are all necessary conditions for the plan's success.

This priority aims to develop the institution towards a strengthened operational status, rooted in the needs of Member States, capable of mobilising and coordinating actors, and providing a strong political voice for shared resources.

### Priorities

- Promote transparency in the fisheries and aquaculture sector to ensure better resource management and governance.
- Strengthen coordination between national governance bodies and the Permanent Secretariat.
- Define a sustainable financing strategy aligned with strategic priorities.
- Promote the SRFC as a strategic interface for technical, scientific and financial partners.
- Consolidate the SRFC's image, visibility and influence at the sub-regional and international levels.

This priority affirms the SRFC's central role in the fisheries governance architecture in West Africa and lays the foundations for coherent, resilient and proactive institutional development.



Man of war Bay, phare Aberdeen, Free Town, Sierra Leone

## 6. Implementation mechanism



**T**he implementation of the Strategic Plan (2025–2029) is based on the institutional architecture formally defined by the SRFC’s Constitutive Agreement (1985). This mechanism respects the roles assigned to the Commission’s statutory bodies and ensures the coherence of actions at the sub-regional level. This mechanism must ensure coherence between the sub-regional and national levels, as well as at the continental and international levels, and provide rigorous monitoring of actions. It must also mobilise the human, technical, and financial resources necessary to achieve the set objectives.

In the interests of institutional flexibility, the SRFC intends to promote the organisation of special meetings of the Conference of Ministers on the sidelines of major international or regional forums (e.g. COP on climate change ‘UNFCCC’, AU Conferences). These special meetings, limited to less than half a day, are not a substitute for extraordinary sessions of the Conferences of Ministers.

Although the 1985 Convention does not impose a formal quorum, the SRFC will endeavour to ensure balanced representation of Member States in all decision-making, by the principle of unanimity, to provide the political legitimacy and collective ownership of strategic guidelines.

### 6.1. SRFC bodies mobilised

#### Conference of Ministers

The Conference of Ministers, the supreme body of the SRFC, defines the objectives of sub-regional

cooperation and takes decisions relating to the preservation, conservation and exploitation of fishery resources. It adopts the Strategic Plan, ensures its political ownership by Member States, and monitors its implementation. Its decisions are taken by unanimous vote of the representatives of Member States.

#### Coordination Committee

The Coordinating Committee, composed of the directors of fisheries or their designated representatives, acts as a link between the Conference of Ministers and the Permanent Secretariat. It guides the work of the Secretariat, makes recommendations, organises technical meetings and ensures the operational coherence of implementation.

#### Permanent Secretariat

The Permanent Secretariat, the executive body of the SRFC, is responsible for coordinating, monitoring,

communicating, and managing the technical aspects of the Strategic Plan. Under the authority of the Conference of Ministers, and the supervision of the Coordination Committee, it leads sub-regional actions, mobilises partners, prepares meetings and provides strategic reporting.

Each Member State, through its designated national correspondents, participates in implementation by ensuring:

- The integration of sub-regional priorities into its national fisheries policies.
- The reporting of information and data.
- Active participation in SRFC committees, technical meetings and governance bodies.

## 6.2. Functional organisation of implementation

To ensure the effective, coherent and structured implementation of its 2025–2029 Strategic Plan, the SRFC will rely on three operational technical hubs, reflecting the organisation’s structural priorities:

- **Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (FAD)**

This hub brings together the functions of fisheries planning, promoting sustainable aquaculture, and producing scientific data. It integrates fisheries information systems, applied research and knowledge management, in conjunction with sub-regional scientific institutions.

- **Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS)**

The main instrument for combating IUU fishing, this division coordinates monitoring mechanisms, cross-border cooperation, the interoperability of tracking systems (VMS and AIS), and the pooling of control capacities.

- **Policy and Legislation Harmonisation Unit (HPL)**

This hub supports the legal and regulatory convergence of national frameworks, facilitates the development of sub-regional standards and assists Member States in adapting their legislation to sub-regional, regional and international conventions and agreements. It also acts as a link between the CSRP and continental frameworks (ECOWAS, AU) and international forums.

Each hub will work in collaboration with Member States, technical partners, and experts under the coordination of the Permanent Secretariat.

## 6.3. Financial management and compliance

The SRFC’s Finance and Accounting Department (SFC) plays a central role in the governance and implementation of the Strategic Plan. Operational since the organisation’s creation, this department has seen its capacities strengthened by the adoption in 2015 of an internal procedures manual that complies with international standards of financial management, transparency and accountability. This foundation of accounting rigour enables the SRFC to ensure the prudent, traceable, and transparent management of resources, meeting the due diligence requirements of development partners, while also positioning itself as a trusted institution for hosting and executing large-scale sub-regional projects. As part of the 2025–2029 Plan, the SRFC is committed to:

- Update its administrative, accounting and financial procedures manual, considering regulatory developments, donor requirements (*e.g.* EU, AFD, World Bank, GEF, USAID, JICA) and multi-stakeholder accountability needs.
- Strengthen the department’s human resources, particularly in budget monitoring, financial analysis and multi-project management.
- Conduct regular audits to ensure good governance and transparency.

Strengthening the SFC is a strategic lever for mobilising structural financing and reaffirming the SRFC as the lead agency for sub-regional fisheries governance.

## 6.4. Multi-level coordination and partnerships

Although the SRFC’s actions are anchored at the sub-regional level, they are coordinated with regional, continental and international frameworks to ensure coherence, synergy and recognition.

The Permanent Secretariat works closely with scientific institutions, professional organisations, NGOs, development partners and the private sector, in a spirit of complementarity, subsidiarity and accountability. These partnerships aim to strengthen collective ownership of the Strategic Plan, broaden its scope and ensure its sustainability.

The SRFC will seek to strengthen its participation and visibility in key international forums for the governance of fisheries resources, biodiversity and climate, including:

- United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), in line with its ecosystem approaches.
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), about coastal resilience, mitigation and adaptation strategies.

- Global maritime initiatives such as BBNJ, the Decade of Ocean Science (UNESCO), and the Blue Belt Initiative (BBI).

The Permanent Secretariat acts as a strategic interface between Member States and these mechanisms, mobilising sub-regional scientific expertise, contributing to global policy dialogues, and facilitating access to multilateral financing, such as climate, biodiversity, and now, ocean funds.



## Glossary of acronyms

<b>AFD :</b>	French Development Agency
<b>AIS :</b>	Automatic Identification System
<b>BBI :</b>	Blue Belt Initiative
<b>BBNJ :</b>	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction
<b>CBD :</b>	Convention on Biological Diversity
<b>ECOWAS :</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>UNFCCC :</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>COP :</b>	Conference of the Parties
<b>CPCO :</b>	Committee for Fisheries in the Central West Gulf of Guinea
<b>SRFC :</b>	Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission
<b>FAO :</b>	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
<b>IFAD :</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>GEF :</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>GIZ</b>	German Society for International Cooperation
<b>IRD :</b>	French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development
<b>JICA :</b>	Japan International Cooperation Agency
<b>SDG :</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UN :</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP :</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>PSMA :</b>	Port State Measures Agreement
<b>SFC :</b>	Financial and Accounting Service
<b>AU :</b>	African Union
<b>IUCN :</b>	International Union for Conservation of Nature
<b>UNCLOS :</b>	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
<b>UCOS :</b>	Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Operations Coordination Unit
<b>EEZ :</b>	Exclusive Economic Zones
<b>USAID :</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>VMS :</b>	Vessel Monitoring System

## Call for development partners

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**T**he Conference of Ministers, meeting at its 22nd Ordinary Session, notes with satisfaction the development of the new five-year Strategic Plan of the SRFC, aligned with its guidelines as defined at the meeting of the members of the Conference of Ministers on 9 October 2024 in Tangier (Morocco).

Aware of the challenges facing the fisheries and aquaculture sector, the Conference affirms its commitment to the practical, coherent and ambitious implementation of this plan. In this spirit, and convinced that the challenges ahead require renewed international solidarity and a sub-regional approach, the Conference of Ministers solemnly calls on all development partners to provide the necessary support to the CSRP in the implementation of this Plan.

This support, which is essential for consolidating sub-regional fisheries governance, will strengthen actions to promote the sustainability of the sector, the resilience of aquatic ecosystems, sub-regional integration and the well-being of the populations of its Member States.





Fish market, Bissau, Guinea-Bissau



Artisan fishing village, The Gambia



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