

## 'Blue economy' focus puts small fishers at risk – UN

Fishing communities along Africa's coastline are at a greater risk of extinction as countries eye oceans for tourism, industrial fishing and exploration revenue to jumpstart their 'blue economies,' UN experts and activists said last week. According to a **Mining Weekly** report, the continent's 38 coastal and island states have in recent years moved to tap ocean resources through commercial fishing, marine tourism and sea-bed mining, according to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (Uneca). 'There is a great risk and a great danger that those communities will be marginalised,' said Joseph Zelasney, a Fishery Officer at UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation. 'The resources that they depend on will be decimated,' he added at a side event at the Blue Economy Conference organised by Kenya, Canada and Japan in Nairobi. The world's poorest continent hosts a blue economy estimated at \$1trn but loses \$42bn a year to illegal fishing and logging of mangroves along the coast, according to Uneca estimates. Growth of blue economies in Africa could also take away common rights to land and water along the coastline and transfer them to corporations and a few individuals, said Andre Standing, advisor with the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements. **'There is a great worry that we could see privatisation of areas that were previously open to these communities,'** Standing said. 'We need to have a radical vision that values communities and livelihoods or they will become extinct.'

*The prospects of harnessing ocean and other water resources for economic growth could be endangered if plastic pollution, overfishing and other maritime threats such as piracy are not properly tackled.* According to a report on the **allAfrica** site, experts in the blue economy sector have cautioned governments to develop workable solutions to these challenges as the world gradually looks towards this part of the earth that previously seemed inhospitable and inaccessible. Speakers on the second day of the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference in Nairobi last week raised concerns that land-based resources are becoming more stressed and, therefore, the need for countries to quickly address environmental and ecological sustainability. **The issue of plastic pollution in oceans dominated panel discussions, with the growing human population singled out as one of its drivers.** The United Nations Environment Programme (Unep) has found that marine litter costs a minimum of \$8bn annually in damage to marine ecosystems.

*The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) said last week it would help the African Union (AU) develop a policy to enhance the continent's wildlife protection.* According to a report in **The Mercury**, Kaddu Sebunya, the AWF's president, speaking in Nairobi, said **in most African countries wildlife crime was not treated seriously.** 'Our aim is for African governments to strengthen penalties for wildlife crime as a way to promote wildlife conservation,' Sebunya said during the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference. Sebunya said a draft policy had already been developed, and further input would be received from all key stakeholders before its adoption by the AU by the end of 2019.