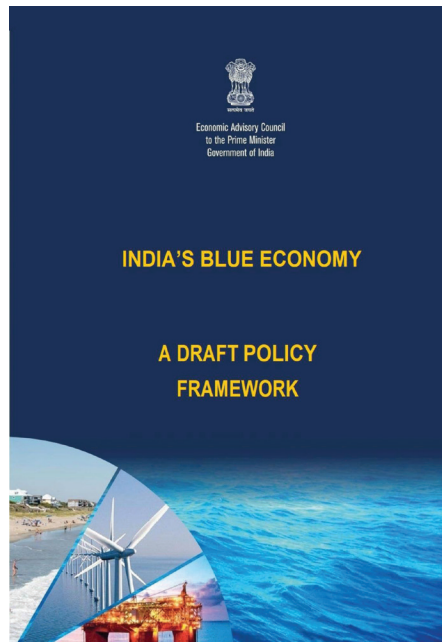




Draft Blue Economy Policy of India

The prominence of Blue Economy (BE) as an emerging development paradigm received the global attention following conclusion of the Earth Summit and inclusion of a standalone goal in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 by the UN. Several littoral countries recorded considerable level of economic accomplishment from BE. India with more than 7516.6 km of coastline with nine coastal states and 1382 islands can drive large benefits from its vast marine and coastal resources. Besides, significant section of population is dependent on their livelihood security through diverse activities associated with the oceans. The 'Draft Blue Economy Policy of India' has presented that BE contributes 4 per cent to India's GDP, which is comparable with many other countries. Though Blue GDP of India received minor setback following onset of the global recession in 2008, it demonstrated sector's resilience in mitigating the adverse effects of economic slump and resuming recovery sharply in the second phase of recession. The importance of BE in the country is well documented in the government's 'Vision of New India 2030'. This could improve lives of coastal communities, accelerating skills and employment, ocean governance, maritime security for promoting inclusive economic growth with use of new and innovative technologies.

Taking in to account booming macroeconomic implications of BE in other countries, India took a considered view to evolve an integrated policy approach on Blue Economy. In this regard, "India's Blue Economy- A Draft Policy Framework" was in the public domain for wider consultation since September 2020, based on a comprehensive report submitted by the Blue Economy Taskforce which was constituted by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister in August 2018. Recognising the fact that there has been no commonly agreed definition of Blue Economy globally, India has defined it as "a subset of the national economy



comprising of the entire system of ocean resources and man-made economic infrastructure in marine, maritime and the onshore coastal zones within India's legal jurisdiction, which aid in the production of goods and services and have clear linkages with economic growth, environmental sustainability and national security" in the Report. The committee set up seven working-groups with several priority areas concerning sectors like Accounting Framework of Blue Economy, Marine Manufacturing and Mining, Services, Fisheries, Spatial Planning, Logistics and Infrastructure and Security, Strategic Dimensions and International Engagement. All these working-groups have identified existing as well as new challenges and have provided a series of recommendations to tap potentials existing in various sub-sectors of Blue Economy.

The report highlighted Blue technology as the core in promoting Blue Economy, and therefore, creation of the state-of-the-art technology indigenously and/or collaboratively can provide a big boost to the sector. For understanding India's specific sectoral economic interest, it is recommended that a national accounting framework for Blue Econo-

my has to be evolved with reliable data collection mechanism to be undertaken by an official agency and also amending national industrial classification based on next round of UN classification of industries. Development of Coastal Marine Spatial Planning is proposed along with the coastal tourism sector. In this regard, a new National Map and Data Policy may be framed to map India's coastal regions and EEZ. The draft policy lend support to issue like 'Blue Flag Certification' to develop cleaned and pollution free beach to attract tourists. A National Marine Litter Policy is suggested to eliminate plastic litters and micro plastics with use of advanced technology. For efficient management of capture marine fisheries, appropriate legal and institutional frameworks are to be evolved under a new national policy in the marine sector. It is also proposed to encourage mariculture through establishment of a new authority. The committee has felt that several age-old legislations need to be abrogated and replaced with new legal and regulatory reforms. Besides, the draft report has several recommendations to promote marine manufacturing, encourage high-tech marine MSMEs, marine R&D development, human resources planning, ship and port building, development of marine clusters, establishment of a maritime development fund for marine infrastructure, development of blue diplomacy, etc. among others. The Report suggested a Blue Economy governance framework for India in which the apex body – the National Blue Economy Council – is to be headed by the Union Minister of Ministry of Earth Sciences, accompanied by ministers from several key Ministries as members, Chief Ministers of the Coastal provinces and heads of three Industry Association Bodies. The governing structure of the Council should be strong enough to keep the political balance of the council and also able to mobilise resources effectively to implement numerous technology intensive projects.