

## Energy independence cape verde

How can a country secure a sustainable future if 99.3 per cent of its territory is water? UN Secretary-General António Guterres on Saturday arrived in Cabo Verde, the 10-island archipelago off West Africa's Atlantic coast that is exploring innovative solutions to help answer that important question.

The answer goes back to 2015, when the national Government detailed a strategic plan on how the blue economy would be a central part of the island nation's future, as well as to a series of investments that have been made since then.

But this evening, looking out at nearly a dozen boats participating in the Ocean Race docked in the port of Mindelo, their 10-storey high masts slicing the sky above the island of São Vicente, Mr. Guterres was witness to one of the most visible ways this bet has paid off.

The Secretary-General called the blue economy "a fundamental opportunity to promote sustainable development in the archipelago" and said the UN looks forward to working with its government and people to "translate this ambition into reality."

The Prime Minister of Cape Verde, José Ulisses Correia e Silva, said that his country wants to be "better known and have more relevance" in the international arena, and the Ocean is the sector where they want their voice to be heard.

In the past five years, as part of this effort, the country has held an "Ocean Week" every year and, on this coming Monday, Cabo Verde is partnering with the Ocean Race to hold a summit that will feature speakers from all over the world, including the Secretary-General.

"Sea level rise and the loss of biodiversity and ecosystems pose existential threats to the archipelago," he explained. "I am deeply frustrated that world leaders are not giving this life-and-death emergency the necessary action and investment."

Some of these consequences can already be felt at the port hosting the Race, one of the best in all of Africa's west coast, the reason it attracted merchants and pirates centuries ago and now welcomes sailing's greatest around-the-world challenge.

In the last few years, Cabo Verde fishermen have noted a drop in the capture of black mackerel, one of the most popular fish among the locals. In 2022, the packaging industry reported a reduction in the capture of tuna and absence of black mackerel, raw material for the industry.

According to the preliminary results of a UN-led assessment that should be presented and discussed with key

national stakeholders early this year, by 2100, the biomass of large pelagic fish - those that live in the pelagic zone of ocean or lake waters, being neither close to the bottom nor near the shore - such as albacora, a species of tuna, is expected to decrease by up to 45 per cent. In the neighboring Senegalo-Mauritanian basin, the reduction will be even greater.

Changes like this can have a profound impact on the islands' economy. In 2018, the fishing sector provided employment to 6,283 people, and was a touchstone in the diet of the 588,00 population. These products also accounted for almost 80 percent of the country's exports.

"Climate change is an obvious threat to the future of fishing, but also all biodiversity," said the Secretary-General later in the evening, as he participated in the Speaker Series promoted by the Prime Minister, at the Cabo Verde National Center for Art, Crafts and Design.

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