

Ports of Genoa: a role model of sustainability. NBS-IA First Call for Proposals of Launch Event for Africa

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Genoa, 8 April 2026 - The historic headquarters of the Western Ligurian Sea Port Authority of Palazzo San Giorgio provided a distinguished backdrop to the NBS-IA launch event marking the first call for proposals for “Nature for Resilient Infrastructure: Grant Support for Sustainable Port and Logistics Infrastructure through NbS in Africa.”

The NBS-IA is an inter-agency initiative funded by the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security, in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme and in collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The hybrid event brought together senior public officials, scientists, economists and operators from the global port and supply chain industry.

This initiative represents the second call launched within the NBS-IA framework, following an initial programme dedicated to Central Asia. It offers an international platform across which public/private partnerships may submit innovative proposals to plan and pilot sustainable port and logistics infrastructure through nature-based solutions. The current call for proposals - open to Algeria, Angola, Côte d’Ivoire, Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania — provides an opportunity to address challenges in port governance and port/logistic infrastructure development, by harnessing ecosystem services, whose effects are difficult to replicate across traditional engineering solutions. The integration of NbS with grey infrastructure has the potential to enhance both the efficiency and resilience of ports, whilst simultaneously delivering wider social and environmental benefits. NbS can act as a substitute for, complement to or safeguard against conventional infrastructure, which inevitably depreciates over time. However, further work is required to identify the opportunities and unlock the potential of NbS, specifically in its application to the port industry.

The initiative comes at a time of pressing urgency. Although Africa accounts for less than 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions, it remains one of the regions most vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. By 2050, damage to coastal and port infrastructure is expected to increase significantly, driven by rising sea levels and the growing intensity of extreme weather conditions. Given that ports handle over 90% of the continent’s trade, their resilience is critical to the African economies, underscoring the need to rethink their planning and governance across a climate-conscious lens.

In his opening address, the Western Ligurian Sea Port Authority President, Matteo Paroli, highlighted the importance of the initiative, recalling how his engagement with the programme stemmed from an invitation extended by Minister Gilberto Pichetto Fratin to speak in a panel discussion at COP 30 in Belem last November. It was on that occasion, he noted, that he first became acquainted with the

initiative and promptly offered his support. The Port Authority is moving ahead with its 3.6-billion euro capital plan, with over 200 million euros alone allocated to the clean energy transition. Paroli outlined the range of projects underway across the Ports of Genoa and Savona-Vado to reduce emissions and to mitigate environmental impacts. Key measures include onshore power supply, photovoltaic installations, smart power grids delivering 15 GWh annually, LNG and hydrogen refuelling infrastructure and the application of AI to environmental monitoring systems.

“These initiatives”, Paroli observed, “represent the best practices adopted by Italy’s foremost Port Authority in terms of sustainable infrastructure and climate resilience, approaches that may be replicated worldwide in energy-intensive port environments, including in Africa. We are proud to share our expertise in pursuit of a common goal: the successful reconciliation of economic growth and environmental sustainability.”

In his closing remarks, Alessandro Guerri, Director General for European and International Affairs and Sustainable Finance of the Ministry of the Environment, emphasized the global significance of the initiative. *“Genoa, with its port and Port Authority”, he stated, “stands as a model in Europe and worldwide for advanced logistics, a symbol of both tradition and innovation, and a beacon for pioneering projects that can be replicated across the African continent. For this reason, and thanks to President Matteo Paroli, we have chosen to engage in global cooperation programmes aimed at the identification of innovative solutions capable of attracting investment in sustainable infrastructure, particularly in Africa, under the auspices of the Mattei Plan. Our Ministry,” added Guerri, “supports the strengthening of Italy’s cooperation with Africa, specifically in the fields of infrastructure and logistics, in the firm belief that international collaboration lies at the heart of economic prosperity.”*