



23 June 2014

Dear Partners and Friends of the FIBA-MAVA family,

For nearly 30 years, FIBA has been working tirelessly to conserve the coastal and marine environment; first, in Mauritania, and then in all the countries across the West African coastline (PRCM area). Set up in 1994, the MAVA Foundation has assisted these efforts financially, strengthening my family's commitment to conserving the biodiversity of this region.

FIBA and MAVA have accomplished great things; each in their own way, and with their partners contributing actively to protecting West African natural resources. This is why today **I am pleased to inform you that FIBA and MAVA have decided to join forces and to merge. This union will enable the two sister foundations to increase their influence and improve their effectiveness** in an extremely dynamic West African context.

Looking back we can see that this is a **natural process between two organisations who share the same values and vision for West Africa's coastal zones**. In breaking new ground, FIBA has played a key role in an emerging consciousness and active movement in favour of conservation throughout the region, in particular in marine protected areas (MPAs). With its well-established presence and political influence, and its detailed knowledge of the issues at stake and of its partners, FIBA's exceptional expertise is acknowledged in the field of MPAs management. FIBA has contributed to creating and strengthening a community of stakeholders who are working together and are actively committed, whether at national or regional level. The MAVA Foundation has supported FIBA's efforts, while progressively extending its own scope through its West Africa programme. Today MAVA occupies a unique niche which allows the foundation to initiate dynamics and to build synergies between partners on a biological process level, beyond political boundaries.

In 30 years, the institutional landscape of conservation in West Africa has greatly changed. Together with other national and international stakeholders, FIBA and MAVA have contributed to this development at their own level. The stakeholders and initiatives that the two foundations have supported nationally and regionally, such as PNBA, IBAP, RAMPAO, PRCM or BACoMab, have today achieved real operational autonomy, redesigning the needs of the conservation community.

Nevertheless, **the need to mobilise actors for conservation in West Africa is more important today than ever**. Pressures have changed, dynamics have become more international and conservation initiatives more integrated into development imperatives. New issues and new opportunities are appearing, and we must reinvent how we operate to respond to this.

The alliance of FIBA's presence in the field and its credibility, together with MAVA's financial scope and its links outside the region (through its Mediterranean Basin, Alpine Arc and Sustainable Economy programmes) will give our West African partners a wider range of skills to support them in their new challenges. **The union between FIBA and MAVA will, under the aegis of MAVA, bring together all these skills, values, practices and *savoir-faire*, history and friendships, within a more coherent and effective whole.**



We are currently at the beginning of this merger process and are still discussing the exact shape that our integrated programme will take in West Africa. However, it will, of course, be built on the strengths of each organisation and we shall continue to support our priority partners to build on their achievements. We hope to be able to integrate both foundations legally and administratively by the end of this year, but programmatic integration will be done gradually over a longer period. The current initiatives supported by FIBA and MAVA will be maintained at least throughout their contract periods. During 2015, we will fine-tune our new strategy with the help of our partners, **reaffirming our commitment to protect the marine and coastal area of West Africa.**

An exciting new chapter is beginning for MAVA to strengthen and redeploy in West Africa! I wanted to share this with you as soon as possible and am sure that over the coming months, we will have the opportunity for further reflection together.

I look forward to being able to count on your support during this process, and extend my heartfelt greetings to all the members of the MAVA-FIBA family.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. Hoffmann".

André Hoffmann
FIBA President
MAVA Foundation President