

African Group Input into the Zero Draft of the UNEA 4 Ministerial Declaration

The African Group wishes to thank the President of UNEA for his efforts in culminating a zero draft of the UNEA 4 Ministerial Declaration. The Group wishes to reiterate its commitment to a negotiated ministerial declaration as one of the outcomes of the Session and expresses its support for the President in his process for attaining consensus in this regard.

The African Group has thoroughly studied the zero draft, and wishes to put forward the following observations, requests for clarification and suggestions:

(A) General Observations on the entire document:

- 1- The draft in its current form lacks balance as it does not fully consider the concept of innovative solutions or approaches, notwithstanding that the concept is fully captured in the title of the main theme of the UNEA 4. It is therefore important to strike a balance between the two components of the theme.
- 2- The current draft tends to go into technicalities with specific binding commitments and deadlines. The Group expects a Ministerial Declaration to be presented in more general and simple terms. It is a non-binding instrument, therefore should avoid, too much technical language.
- 3- In terms of implementation, the Group notices a lack of recognition of national capacities and different levels of development between countries. This aspect should be taken into consideration in the document to cushion many developing countries which do not have the necessary capacity and know-how for implementing decisions.
- 4- The document also lacks clear provisions on capacity building and technology transfer. These should be set out clearly and overarchingly for the entire document.

Request for clarification: *Throughout the document specific deadlines for the achievement of specific commitments are indicated, namely the years 2021 and 2025. What is the significance of these two years in particular?*

(B) Specific Observations and Suggestions:

The Preamble: The Group suggests additions along these lines:

- **3 bis:** *We recognize that environmental challenges, including unsustainable consumption and production, call for a paradigm shift in the way we do business, therefore requiring creative and innovative approaches and solutions that will support sustainable wealth creation, green jobs, ensure access to renewable energy, enhance food security, while protecting ecosystems and biodiversity.*
- **5 bis:** *We recognize that capacity development and building, provisions of technical support and technology transfer, are key in enabling countries to develop and implement national resource management strategies which will essentially help them to detoxify, decouple and enhance ecosystem resilience and ensure sustainable consumption and production is achieved.*

Priority 1:

- **Request for clarification:** *The use of “innovative digital solutions” in the title of priority 1 needs clarification. The Group believes that limiting innovative solutions to only “digital” ones under this priority would limit its scope.*
- Capacity building and reducing the gap between developed and developing countries in their abilities to collect and manage environmental data should be noted under this priority. Also, a reference to the cardinal role of national statistics offices in collection of such data should be made.
- The Group requests **deleting** sub paragraph (e) under this priority area. The Group believes that UNEA 4 Ministerial Declaration is not the most appropriate medium through which to communicate such specific technical commitments that could constitute barriers to trade. These topics are also not the prerogative of Environment Ministers.

Priority 2:

- **Request for clarification:** *In sub paragraphs (h) and (l) under this priority, specific goals are denoted by [X]%. The Group wishes to know the process for the final determination and agreement on the*

specific percentages. The Group also believes that such specific commitments shouldn't be included in the declaration.

- Sub paragraph (g) addresses waste prevention and management policies with emphasis on specific sectors. The focus should be left open in accordance with the national priorities of each and every member state.
- Along the same lines, Sub paragraph (j)'s language should remain general, non-binding in nature, without time frames and without singling out specific priority sectors.
- Sub Paragraph (l) should be **deleted** as public procurement issues are no the mandate of environment ministers.
- Sub Paragraph (m) should be deleted as subsidies do not fall under the mandate of environment ministers.

Priority 3:

- In sub paragraph (f), consider using “involvement of civil society” instead of “meaningful participation of civil society”.

The Group suggests the addition of a new Priority 2 along these lines:

NB: Original Priority 2 becomes Priority 3.

New Main priority - 2: Commitment to incorporate creative approaches and innovative solutions to environmental challenges and poverty eradication

- a) We commit to undertake all necessary measures to invest in creative and innovative approaches applied to ecosystem services, products, processes, market approaches and organizational structures which will support efforts that aim to effectively solve environmental challenges and ensure resource efficiencies while simultaneously accelerating the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals;

- b) We advocate for innovative approaches and solutions that promote sustainable use and management of natural resources for sustainable job and wealth creation, sustainable industrialization, which will result in the prevention of unsustainable migration;
- c) We create and strengthen partnerships between governments, private sector, intergovernmental organizations, the scientific community, non-governmental organizations and other relevant entities to promote and enhance investments in innovative environmental solutions;
- d) We commit to ensure environmentally sound innovative policies for sustainable agriculture, sustainable urban development, sustainable infrastructure, sustainable tourism and trade, as well as sustainable consumption and production;
- e) We foster the investments in innovative solutions to enable access to clean energy, to ensure sustainable production and consumption, to ensure food security, to effectively deal with the challenges of all forms of waste, to address environmental displacement/migration and in this process, eradicate poverty;
- f) We agree to ensure availability and accessibility of adequate, predictable and sustainable resource mobilization from all sources, technology development, dissemination, diffusion and transfer and capacity-building to unlock practical, affordable and innovative environmental solutions;
- g) We target to strengthen innovative and affordable financing instruments to create market incentives in support of innovative solutions to environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production.
- h) We agree that the effective implementation requires enabling policy frameworks at the global, regional, national, subnational and local levels, as applicable, and effective means of implementation including finance, capacity-building, mutually beneficial partnerships and the development,

dissemination and diffusion and transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favorable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed in accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda