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African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
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Report of the Bureau of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment on the work of its twenty-second meeting

Introduction

1. The twenty-second meeting of the Bureau of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was held on 5 and 6 November 2007 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

I. Opening of the meeting

2. The meeting was opened by Mr. André Okombi Salissa, Minister of Tourism and Environment of the Congo and President of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), on 5 November 2007 at 10.30 a.m. He welcomed members of the Bureau to Johannesburg and to the twenty-second meeting of the Bureau. He also thanked the Government of South Africa for hosting the meeting and UNEP as the secretariat to AMCEN for organizing the meeting. He briefly highlighted the objectives of the meeting and invited the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to make a few remarks. The secretary of AMCEN, Mr. Peter Acquah, speaking on behalf of the Executive Director of UNEP, Mr. Achim Steiner, said that the twenty-second meeting of the Bureau was a crucial meeting in view of the matters that were to be considered at the meeting. He also said that, as host to the AMCEN secretariat, UNEP was committed to the success of AMCEN. He wished the meeting well. Following those remarks and after confirmation by the secretariat that the members present constituted a quorum, the President of AMCEN declared the meeting open.

II. Organizational matters

A. Adoption of the agenda

3. The Bureau adopted the following agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda prepared by the secretariat without amendment:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Organizational matters:
 - (a) Adoption of the agenda;
 - (b) Adoption of programme of work.

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3. Consideration of the report of the Bureau of AMCEN on the work of its twenty-first meeting.
4. Establishment of the African Environment Facility and proposed uses of the general trust fund of AMCEN.
5. Consideration of progress reports.
 - (a) Status of implementation of the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD from July 2006 to August 2007.
 - (b) Status of implementation of the decisions taken by AMCEN at its eleventh regular session and other related activities during the period from July 2006 to August 2007.
6. Briefing on the joint meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Abidjan and Nairobi conventions scheduled to be held in Johannesburg on 8 November 2007.
7. Consideration of the twelfth session of AMCEN, scheduled to be held in South Africa in June 2008 (theme; draft agenda; dates; venue).
8. Follow up on capacity-building in climate change in the region.
9. Any other business.
10. Closure of the meeting.

B. Attendance

4. The list of members of the Bureau that attended the meeting may be found in annex I to the present report.

III. Consideration of the report of the Bureau of AMCEN on the work of its twenty-first meeting

5. The representative of the secretariat presented the report of the Bureau of AMCEN on the work of its twenty-first meeting, held on 13 November 2006 in Nairobi, highlighting key aspects of the report. Following that presentation and on the invitation of the President of AMCEN, he drew attention to the matters arising from the report as outlined below.

6. The African Union and Mali had agreed to convene the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa in December 2006. The proposed date had coincided, however, with the international celebrations on the Year of Desertification. It had therefore been agreed to postpone the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Bamako Convention first to March 2007 and subsequently to mid-2007. Unfortunately, the general elections scheduled to be held in Mali in mid-2007 had meant that the meeting had to be postponed indefinitely.

7. With reference to the incident of toxic waste dumping in Abidjan on or about 19 August 2006, the Bureau learnt of the steps that AMCEN had taken during the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention, held in Nairobi from 27 November to 1 December 2006, to ensure that the incident received the attention that it merited. In that regard, the Conference of the Parties had adopted a decision requesting the Executive Director of UNEP to assist in the rapid mobilization of financial resources on the basis of a strategic plan prepared by Côte d'Ivoire. The Executive Director had subsequently set up a trust fund for the purpose of mobilizing contributions from partners.

8. Ms. Mabudafhasi, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism of South Africa, said that the commitment to helping Côte d'Ivoire deal with the toxic waste dumping incident in Abidjan should be reaffirmed.

9. Egypt and South Africa had committed themselves to supporting other countries in the region in building their climate-change capacity, since they had already developed clean development mechanism projects that had been approved. It was also recalled that, during the extraordinary meeting of the Bureau of AMCEN held in Cape Town on 29 September 2006, Egypt had offered to support other African countries in implementing their national action plans for the NEPAD environment initiative. The representative of the secretariat said that the Bureau might wish to consider the modalities for

executing these offers. South Africa confirmed that it was in the process of developing training programmes that could commence in 2008. Mr. Mohamed Heider, from the Consulate of the Egyptian Embassy in South Africa and representing the Minister of Environment of Egypt, said that he would contact his capital with the view to having the necessary follow-up measures taken.

10. The representative of the secretariat briefed the Bureau on the advocacy work carried out by AMCEN with the Executive Council of the Global Environment Facility that had helped secure, first, its agreement that the Facility should become a financial mechanism for land degradation and, second, its approval of the strategic investment programme for sustainable land management under the TerrAfrica initiative. Following a discussion of the opportunities that the resulting new arrangement provided, the Bureau expressed satisfaction at those outcomes.

11. Ms. Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Benin, commended the President and the secretariat on their efforts. A question that she raised on resource mobilization and management led to a discussion on the merits and de-merits of centralizing resource mobilization in connection with Global Environment Facility funds at the country level.

12. The Bureau observed that African Governments had been very cautious about the Facility's resource allocation framework. It was further observed that the Facility's current Chief Executive Officer had shown signs of commitment to the cause of Africa, as demonstrated by the recent approvals by the Executive Council. The secretariat indicated that the negotiations under the fifth resource allocation framework would commence in 2008 and there was a need to consider how Africa could play a more active role by making substantive inputs and actively engaging in the negotiations as a region.

13. Ms. Mabudafhasi said that the commitment of the Global Environment Facility was indeed serious, as it had already allocated \$150 million for land degradation through the TerrAfrica initiative. Ms. Koudenoukpo also drew attention to the keen interest in reviving the land degradation programme for Benin. In response to a request from the Bureau, on the TerrAfrica programme, the secretariat agreed to provide a comprehensive report on the TerrAfrica programme at the next Bureau meeting.

14. In conclusion, the Bureau expressed its cautious optimism on future relations between AMCEN and the Global Environment Facility. Noting their satisfaction with its content, the members of the Bureau adopted the report of the Bureau of AMCEN on the work of its twenty-first meeting.

IV. Establishment of the African Environment Facility and proposed uses of the general trust fund of AMCEN

15. Introducing the item, the representative of the secretariat recalled that, at its eleventh session, in May 2006, AMCEN had adopted the report of the feasibility study on an African Environment Facility. He further recalled that, by its decision 11 adopted at that session, AMCEN had agreed that the proposed facility should be established at the African Development Bank. That decision had been endorsed by the African Union at its summit in January 2007, which had also called for the establishment of the facility at the African Development Bank.

16. Given those decisions, he informed members of the need for a second visit to the Bank in early 2008 to follow up on the issue. It was proposed that the team for this visit should comprise the President of AMCEN, the Minister of Environment of South Africa (as the incoming President of AMCEN), the Minister of Environment of Rwanda and a nominee of President Wade of Senegal.

17. He further recalled that UNEP, in collaboration with a number of development partners, had supported AMCEN in holding its meetings in the past. Since then, however, the development partners had shifted their preference from sponsoring AMCEN meetings to activities. Accordingly, it would be necessary to use part of the interest generated by the AMCEN trust fund to support some of the meetings of AMCEN. The secretariat sought the Bureau's approval to use part of the interest generated on the general trust fund of AMCEN for the proposed visit to African Development Bank and the holding of the Bureau meetings for the period January 2008–June 2010. The visit to the Bank would cost approximately \$12,210, while the Bureau meetings would cost about \$82,380.

18. Ms. Mabudafhasi proposed that the President of the African Development Bank should be invited to the special session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in February 2008 in Monaco. The secretariat agreed to follow up on this proposal, since the Secretary of AMCEN would be in Tunis in mid-November 2007 to attend the climate change conference for the Africa and Mediterranean regions being organized by the Government of Tunisia. Ms. Mabudafhasi indicated that the budget proposal tabled by the secretariat was reasonable and should be adopted.

19. The budget provided by the secretariat for the visit to the African Development Bank and the Bureau meetings was unanimously approved and the request that the budget be funded from the interest generated on the general trust fund of AMCEN was also approved by the Bureau.

V. Consideration of progress reports

A. Status of implementation of the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD from July 2006 to August 2007

20. The representative of the secretariat provided a summary of the report and recalled that the work programme of AMCEN was an integral part of the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD and hence implementation of that work programme contributed to implementation of the action plan. The report described the activities carried out in all programme areas of the action plan, demonstrating the progress that had been made towards implementation of the action plan.

21. The report noted that the NEPAD subregional environmental action plans had been finalized and adopted by the respective regional economic communities. The final printed copies of the subregional environmental action plans would be available at the twelfth regular session of AMCEN for adoption and discussion on the way forward. In addition to the preparation of the subregional environmental action plans, five pilot countries, with financial support from Norway, were currently involved in the preparation of their NEPAD national action plans on the environment. Based on the outcomes of those pilot countries' studies, the initiative could be replicated in other African countries.

22. The report also highlighted some programme areas that needed attention. For example, it pointed out that the future of the Partnership for the Development of Environmental Law and Institutions (PADELIA) programme was unclear. Programme area 3 on invasive alien species needed to be revitalized.

23. Ms. Koudenoukpo stated her country's view that the PADELIA programme was useful and that much had been achieved through the programme. She said that efforts should be made to extend the programme to other African countries that had not already benefited. AMCEN should endeavour to ensure that the programme was not discontinued. In response to the request from South Africa, the secretariat agreed to provide documentation on phase 3 of the PADELIA programme at the next Bureau meeting.

24. Members were also briefed by the secretariat on other forthcoming initiatives and activities in the context of the implementation of the NEPAD environmental action plan. A joint meeting of the ministers of environment and ministers of health was scheduled for early 2008 in Libreville, Gabon. It was resolved that AMCEN would be actively involved in the meeting. The secretariat would send detailed information on the subject to the Bureau members.

25. The Bureau took note of the secretariat's presentation and commended it on its excellent work and the significant progress made. The secretariat was requested to circulate the report to all the member States of AMCEN as soon as possible, thus ensuring that they were fully informed of progress in the implementation of the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD well ahead of the twelfth session of AMCEN.

B. Status of implementation of the decisions taken by AMCEN at its eleventh regular session and other related activities during the period from July 2006 to August 2007

26. The representative of the secretariat briefed the Bureau on the implementation of the decisions of AMCEN, pointing out that the reports on the implementation of the AMCEN decisions and the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD were complementary. It was noted that some of the issues under the item had already been dealt with when the report on the implementation of the Action Plan had been presented earlier in the meeting.

27. It was recalled that decision 3 of the eleventh session of AMCEN had requested that any further discussion on the AMCEN constitution would have to be deferred till the African Union had taken a decision on the future of ministerial forums. Accordingly, the Bureau agreed to defer discussion on the AMCEN constitution.

28. The representative of the secretariat said that a report on the activities relating to decision 9, relating to the Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative, would be submitted at the twelfth regular session of AMCEN by the African Union Commission.

29. The Bureau was further informed that a new initiative was in the pipeline to support capacity-building in the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements for African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. In that context, a project proposal on capacity-building for the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements in Africa, to be supported by the European Union, had been developed by UNEP with the aim of strengthening the implementation of such agreements and related international legal instruments, including chemicals-related instruments, at the national and regional levels in the African region. Activities under the project would include enhancement of negotiation skills, training, information dissemination and exchange.

30. Expressing satisfaction with its content, the Bureau duly adopted the report.

VI. Briefing on the joint meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Abidjan and Nairobi conventions scheduled to be held in Johannesburg on 8 November 2007

31. The representative of the secretariat briefed members on the joint meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Abidjan and Nairobi conventions scheduled to take place in Johannesburg on 8 November 2007. He said that the objective of the meeting was to provide a platform for contracting parties and other stakeholders to discuss and propose appropriate measures to prevent and deal with coastal and marine pollution from land-based and other sources of pollution. The meeting was also to consider certain topical issues, including oil and gas and the continental shelf, among others.

32. He said further that AMCEN had continued to pay particular attention to the implementation of environmental agreements, including the Abidjan and Nairobi conventions. The AMCEN work programme for the biennium 2007–2008 contained a component on coastal and marine ecosystems aimed at supporting the implementation of Abidjan and Nairobi conventions under four main themes, namely: assessment; management; coordination and legal aspects; and cross-cutting issues such as information dissemination and exchange; and emerging issues.

33. He also said that the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative, which was prepared under the auspices of AMCEN, acknowledged the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources as a priority for the region. In this regard, the goal of the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources programme area was to incorporate environmental concerns into the development agenda of countries through targeted actions that addressed not only the environmental aspects, but also institutional, regulatory, policy and capacity elements.

34. The President of AMCEN (Mr. Salissa) and the Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism of South Africa (Ms. Mabudafhasi) would co-chair the joint meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Abidjan and Nairobi conventions.

VII. Consideration of the twelfth session of AMCEN, scheduled to be held in South Africa in June 2008 (theme, draft agenda, dates and venue)

35. Introducing the item, the representative of the secretariat said that progress had evidently been made in the implementation of the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative and the elements were virtually in place to increase the momentum of its implementation. The secretariat therefore suggested that the theme for the twelfth session should take those facts into account. Following a discussion, the Bureau agreed on “Enhancing the implementation of the action plan for the environment initiative of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development” as the theme for the twelfth session of AMCEN.

36. South Africa, as the host of the twelfth session of AMCEN, had suggested the dates and venue for the meeting. After discussing the suggestions by South Africa, the Bureau agreed that the twelfth regular session of AMCEN would be held from 7 to 12 June 2008 in Johannesburg at the Sandton Convention Centre. It was subsequently agreed that the ministerial segment would be held at the Sandton Convention Centre, while suitable alternative arrangements would be made for the experts segment.

37. The South African Minister of Environment, Mr. Schalkywk, proposed a meeting between AMCEN and colleague ministers from the European Union on 13 June 2008 back-to-back with the twelfth session. The objective would be to discuss, with counterparts from the European Union, the role that the European Union could play in the implementation of some of the priority activities identified by AMCEN. Following a discussion, the Bureau agreed to the suggestion. South Africa offered to seek financial support from the European Union for the joint meeting on behalf of AMCEN.

38. The representative of the secretariat introduced the proposed agenda for the twelfth regular session of AMCEN for the Bureau's consideration. The secretariat proposed that the opening session of the ministerial segment be held in the evening of 10 June 2008 (i.e., the evening earlier) since previous experience had repeatedly shown that opening ceremonies took an inordinate amount of time, leaving very little time for substantive discussions by the ministers and heads of delegations. The Bureau agreed to the proposal after consideration of the issue.

39. The secretariat also proposed that the agenda should make provision for policy dialogue on the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD, and also for the presentation of relevant case studies by some member States. Other agenda items were similarly discussed and approved, including a proposal by the South African Minister of Environment that the issue of the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development should be included on the agenda of the twelfth session.

40. The outcomes of the twelfth regular session of AMCEN would be presented to the African Union at its summit meeting for adoption.

41. Regarding the financing of that session, the secretariat tabled a proposal indicating that direct meeting costs amounted to \$163,787 and suggested that they should be covered from the funds generated by the interest on the general trust fund of AMCEN. A request was made to South Africa, as the host country, to meet the costs of interpretation for the meeting, amounting to some \$40,730. The request was accepted by South Africa. If South Africa was to bear the costs of interpretation, the direct costs to be funded from the interest generated by the general trust fund of AMCEN would amount to some \$123,060.

42. At the same time, a funding proposal had been developed to try and mobilize additional resources for the twelfth session. In the event that such funding was secured, there would be no need to use funds from the interest accrued from the AMCEN trust fund. The Bureau approved the use of the interest from the general trust fund of AMCEN as elaborated above in the event that alternative funding was not secured. The Bureau requested the secretariat to commence work as soon as possible with South Africa on the organization of the twelfth session of AMCEN. The host country agreement to be signed between UNEP and South Africa would set out the responsibilities of each party.

VIII. Follow up on capacity-building in climate change in the region

43. The representative of the secretariat briefed Bureau members on the issue of capacity-building in climate change in the region. Noting, in that connection, the willingness expressed by Egypt and South Africa to support other African countries, he said that, as confirmed by South Africa, an agreement between South Africa and Egypt was ready for signature and might be signed during the forthcoming meeting in Morocco. That was a good development for the region and, once the agreement was signed, information on the support would be circulated to the member States of AMCEN through the AMCEN newsletter.

44. He also informed the Bureau that the formation of a high-level panel on climate change was being considered, as part of the build up to the 2012 Kyoto negotiations. The new body, which was under discussion at the level of the African Union and the NEPAD secretariat, would act as a platform for Africa to reach a common position on climate change issues. Further details were provided by Ms. Estherine Fotabong of the NEPAD secretariat. She said that members of the high-level panel had yet to be selected and that the NEPAD secretariat has had preliminary discussions with the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism of South Africa, UNDP and UNEP. She also said that the regional economic communities would be represented on the panel. The Bureau endorsed the idea of the panel and requested UNEP to provide technical support for its establishment through the NEPAD secretariat.

IX. Any other business

45. Members were informed that the secretariat had been liaising with the Capacity Development and Linkages for Environmental Assessment in Africa (CLEAA) network. During the last meeting of CLEAA in Addis Ababa, a proposal had been put forward that a set of recommendations should be forwarded to AMCEN at its twelfth regular session. CLEAA had requested that the Bureau should be apprised of that proposal and confirmed that it would prepare detailed documentation for circulation to participants at the twelfth session.

46. The representative of the secretariat also drew attention to the need to make modern information and communications technology tools more widely available, in order to provide key training resources to a wider user community in an innovative, experiential and participatory format. UNEP might wish to make a presentation on the matter at the twelfth session of AMCEN.

47. Recalling that the issue of sustainable consumption and production was one of the programme elements for the work programme of AMCEN, he also informed Bureau members that a side event on sustainable consumption and production had been proposed for the twelfth regular session, with support and funding from the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics.

48. Bureau members also learnt that Birdlife International had indicated its willingness to provide support for the work programme of AMCEN and requesting recognition as a partner. In addition, in a letter to the President of AMCEN, through the secretariat, Birdlife International had raised its concerns about the proposed extraction of sodium from lake Natron in the United Republic of Tanzania. That project could have an adverse impact on the Flamingo population in the lake. The Bureau requested the secretariat to prepare an appropriate letter from the AMCEN President to the Tanzanian Government on the issue.

49. The representative of the secretariat briefed the members on the Africa Stockpiles Programme. It was noted that insufficient attention had been given to the issue of chemicals management in the region. Bureau members also learnt that the NEPAD secretariat was currently a member of the Programme's implementing committee, but the question of the hosting of the Programme's secretariat remained unresolved since both the NEPAD secretariat and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) had offered to serve as host organizations. The Bureau agreed that the NEPAD secretariat should serve on the Africa Stockpiles Programme implementing committee in its capacity as a regional African institution and that the NEPAD secretariat should also host the proposed secretariat of the implementing committee. Finally, it expressed the view that the proposed new secretariat should work in close concert with all partners.

X. Closure of the meeting

50. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the President declared the meeting closed at noon on 6 November 2007.

Annex I

List of participants

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