



African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

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African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
Twelfth session
Johannesburg, 7–12 June 2008

Information note on the twelfth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

Introduction

1. The present note will be distributed by the secretariat a few weeks before the opening of the twelfth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN). A complete list of the documents prepared for the session will be provided in document UNEP/AMCEN/12/1/Add.1.
2. According to paragraph 1 of article 9 of the AMCEN constitution, the Conference shall hold its ordinary sessions once every two or three years. Accordingly, the offer by the Government of South Africa to host the twelfth session of AMCEN was accepted by the Conference at its eleventh session, held on 25 and 26 May 2006 in Brazzaville, Congo, and by the AMCEN Bureau at its twenty-second meeting, held in Johannesburg on 5 and 6 November 2007.
3. Pursuant to this offer by the Government of South Africa, it has been agreed that the twelfth session of AMCEN will be held at the Sandton International Convention Centre in Johannesburg from 7 to 12 June 2008. The session will consist of an expert group segment from 7 to 9 June 2008 and a ministerial segment from 10 to 12 June 2008.
4. In this connection, at its twenty-second meeting, held in Johannesburg on 5 and 6 November 2007, the AMCEN Bureau considered and adopted a provisional agenda for the ministerial segment of the twelfth session, which is contained in document UNEP/AMCEN/12/1. The Bureau also chose “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.
5. The main objective of the twelfth session of AMCEN is to provide a platform for environment ministers to review the progress made in the implementation of the action plan for the environment initiative of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), with a view to enhancing its implementation. The twelfth session will also provide an opportunity for environment ministers to tackle emerging environmental challenges in Africa, particularly issues related to climate change.
6. The Bureau of AMCEN has devised the programme of work for the twelfth session in such a way that adequate time will be available for ministerial dialogue on, first, climate change – the Bali Action Plan; second, financing adaptation and environmental programmes and projects; and, third, international environmental governance and United Nations reforms.
7. Ministers will also deliberate on substantive issues of importance to Africa which must be addressed in the context of the implementation of the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative and the AMCEN work programme for 2009–2010. They will also review progress made towards the establishment of the African Environment Facility for the implementation of environmental projects and

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programmes. In addition, ministers will review progress made towards AMCEN becoming a specialized technical committee of the African Union.

8. In considering follow-up processes to the implementation of the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative – in particular, climate change, biological diversity loss, land degradation and desertification, and certain emerging issues – ministers will be invited to assess the progress made, in terms of implementation, since the eleventh session of AMCEN. Ministers will also deliberate on the development of the subregional environmental action plans for all the subregions of Africa which were prepared in accordance with the project on capacity-building approved by AMCEN at its tenth session. Ministers will also consider the status and use of the AMCEN trust fund. The Conference may consider for adoption the final draft of the revised AMCEN constitution.

9. As stated above, the expert group segment of the twelfth session of AMCEN will be held from 7 to 9 June 2008. This segment of the twelfth session will discuss, among other things, the following: first, climate change and related matters; second, the draft indicative work programme of AMCEN for the biennium 2009–2010 and related matters; and, third, policy and related matters. The status of implementation of the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative, and also topical issues of relevance to Africa, will also be discussed by the expert group.

10. Other topical issues of relevance to Africa on which the expert group will deliberate will include: capacity-building, land degradation and desertification, biological diversity, chemicals and the environment, regional and multilateral environmental agreements, health and environment issues, etc. The outcomes of the expert group meeting will be brought to the attention of the ministerial segment for consideration and approval.

11. Details on the twelfth session can be found on the AMCEN website at the following address: http://www.unep.org/roa/Amcen/Amcen_Events/12th_Session_AMCEN/index.asp

I. Organization of the meeting

A. General information

12. General information regarding hotel accommodation, visa application and yellow fever requirements is available at: <http://www.environment.gov.za/HotIssues/2008/AMCEN/amncen1.html>. It is stressed, however, that participants from countries that are not exempted from visas to South Africa must acquire valid visas before leaving their home countries, since South Africa does not issue visas upon arrival at the ports of entry. Details of the countries that are exempted from visas to South Africa can be found on the website indicated above. In addition, yellow fever certificates are required if the journey starts or entails passing through the designated yellow fever belt. Details of countries falling within the yellow fever belt are also available on the website indicated above.

B. Venue

13. The meeting will be held at the Sandton International Convention Centre in Johannesburg. The convention centre is 25 minutes by road from Johannesburg International Airport. Airport-approved operators provide taxi, bus and shuttle services between Sandton and the airport terminal. Hotel courtesy buses are also available. Situated at the heart of Sandton Central, the Sandton International Convention Centre is close to all the important financial and industrial concerns in the country. The centre is flanked by the InterContinental, Sandton Sun and Towers and Garden Court Sandton City hotels. A further 15 hotels lie within walking distance, and additional hotels lie within a 15 km radius, providing a full range of modern hotel facilities and accommodation. The list of recommended hotels can also be found on the above-mentioned website.

C. Registration

14. Registration will be at the Sandton International Convention Centre and will commence on Friday, 6 June 2008, at noon, continuing to 6 p.m. and will continue on Saturday, 7 June 2008, from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. Badges will be issued to participants upon registration. For security reasons, participants are reminded that they should wear their name badges at all times during the meeting. Arrangements are being made for online registration at: http://www.unep.org/roa/Amcen/Amcen_Events/12th_Session_AMCEN/index.asp

D. Documents

15. The main pre-session documents for the meeting will be dispatched to AMCEN national focal points in advance of the meeting. The documents will also be published on the above-mentioned AMCEN website. Delegates are kindly reminded to bring the pre-session documents with them to the meeting, as they will only be available in limited quantities in Johannesburg.

E. Services to delegates

16. The Sandton International Convention Centre offers a variety of services to delegates. The Centre has the latest state-of-the-art facilities with in-house technology partners offering simultaneous translation systems, digital subscriber lines and wireless internet broadband connectivity (wi-fi), together with satellite broadcasting and conferencing facilities. A full data spectrum, with extensive internet connectivity, e-mail browsing and temporary and permanent internet café capabilities, is provided in a high-speed, secure environment. Experienced Siemens and Microsoft technologists are permanently on site to provide full support.

F. Election of officers

17. Consistent with the provisions of the AMCEN constitution and rules of procedure, the expert group segment will be conducted under the auspices of the Bureau of the eleventh session. Accordingly, the representative of Congo will chair the technical segment and the representative of Egypt will act as rapporteur. The representatives of Benin, Rwanda and South Africa will serve as vice-chairs.

18. Regional consultations will be encouraged on the election of officers for the next biennium. The elections will be aimed at filling the posts of president and rapporteur. West African countries are to elect the President of AMCEN from their subregion. In this regard, the thirteenth session of AMCEN is to be hosted by a member State of AMCEN from West Africa. A vice-president will be elected from each of the remaining regions. A breakdown of officers since 1985 will be circulated to inform discussions on this matter.

G. Organization of work

19. The programme of work for the ministerial segment and the expert group segment will be contained in UNEP/AMCEN/12/1/Add.1.

H. Establishment of working groups

20. Whereas the ministerial segment will take place entirely in plenary session, the expert group segment will be conducted using a mixture of plenary and break-out sessions. There will be three working groups as stated above and experts will be invited to join any one of the groups. Each member of the expert group will have to make his or her choice known to the secretariat by the close of the first day of the meeting.

I. Associated meetings

21. The fifth African round-table meeting on sustainable consumption and production will take place from 4 to 6 June 2008 at the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) Conference Centre in Johannesburg. The purpose of the meeting is to review the lessons learnt from current activities related to the African 10-Year Framework Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production and to identify the key steps that need to be taken in order to strengthen sustainable consumption and production activities in the region.

II. Side events

22. Two side events are envisaged, one organized by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and one by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). Details of these events will be published as soon as they become available.