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Ministerial segment

Libreville, 15 and 16 June 2017

Draft Decision 1: Investing in Innovative Environmental Solutions for Accelerating Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 in Africa*

We, the African Ministers of Environment,

Having met in Libreville from 15 to 16 June 2017 at the sixteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment,

Recalling the outcomes of the sixth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment held in Cairo from 18 to 19 April 2016,

Recalling Agenda 2063 “The Africa We Want” adopted at the 24th African Union Assembly 23-24 January of 2015, Addis Ababa,

Recalling also resolution 66/288 of the seventieth session of the United Nations General Assembly that adopted Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals,

Recognising that achieving long-term sustainable development in Africa will depend on sustainable and optimal management of our natural capital and this requires investment in innovative environmental solutions,

Determined to use all means available at our disposal to catalyse the achievement of the sustainable development goals, Agendas 2030 and 2063,

Decide

1. To agree to take all necessary measures to invest in innovative policy and non-policy interventions to maximize and optimise the sustainable productivity of our natural capital to accelerate implementation of the sustainable development goals as well as Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063.
2. To agree to enhance environmental innovative mechanisms through innovative financing schemes, education, research and development, private and public partnerships, among others, to foster the actualization of socio-economic development in Africa by optimal use of Africa’s natural resources.
3. To agree to allocate at least two per cent of national or sub national revenue accruing from natural capital assets in re-investing in environmental innovative solutions.
4. To agree to create or strengthen partnerships between governments, private sector, non-governmental organisations, international community and other relevant parties to promote and enhance investments in innovative environmental solutions.
5. To call upon all member states of the United Nations Environment Assembly to consider adopting, during its third session, a universally applicable resolution on environmental innovative solutions to galvanise international attention on strengthening sustainable management of natural capital.

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

6. To agree to domesticate this decision and the attached key policy messages into regional, national and sub national policies and legislation and actions.

Key Policy Messages

I. Introduction

1. We, the African ministers of environment, recognize that Africa's environment needs to play a strategic role, providing practical, affordable innovative solutions to socioeconomic development challenges in order for Africa to actualize the Sustainable Development Goals and realize aspirations in the Africa Union Agenda 2063.

2. We affirm that achieving long-term sustainable development in Africa will depend on innovative environmental solutions that will ensure the lasting sustainable socio-economic progress. We believe that innovative environmental solutions will allow for action through financial, economic, social and environmental contribution towards the achievement of agenda 2063/ 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals as well as unlocking domestic and international resources.

3. We recognize the importance of education, research and development as well as technological innovations to promote sustainable development and to that effect emphasize regional national and sub national capabilities to develop environmentally innovative technologies.

4. We are committed to mobilizing domestic resources by instituting innovative strategies, mechanisms and interventions to sustainably harness Africa's natural capital. We therefore call upon our governments to optimize environmentally innovative policy and non-policy measures to invest in (i) reversing environmental losses so as to free resources for development, and (ii) sustainable harnessing of natural capital and sustainable green industrialization, green agriculture, integrated sustainable urban development, green transport systems, eco- tourism, standardisation and sustainable trade through value addition.

5. In order to have effectiveness, we will establish or strengthen inter-agency or inter-ministerial task forces to advocate for and formulate enabling policies on clean energy to add value to ecosystem based adaptation driven agriculture.

A. Innovative Environmental Solutions and Investments

The attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, Agendas 2030 and 2063 requires a substantial reorientation of development policies to focus on key sources of economic growth, especially those associated with the use of innovative scientific and technological knowledge, and related institutional adjustments. There is, therefore, an urgent need to find alternative approaches that can help to address sustainability related drivers whilst at the same time offering opportunities for better environmental management.

1. We recognize that investing in innovative mechanisms such as eco-labels, clean energy initiatives, ecosystem based agriculture among others, will result in Africa recouping substantial earnings annually for re-investment in these sectors towards achieving the sustainable development goals.

2. We are committed to facilitate development of innovative financing tools especially fintech, risk sharing facilities and complementary multi-stakeholder partnerships to finance enterprises in catalytic areas towards bridging financing gaps.

3. We will facilitate the standardization of ecosystem based adaptation-driven agriculture, agro-value addition as a means to catalyse a sustainable clean energy-powered agro-industrialization in Africa.

4. We the Environment Ministers are committed to working with our colleagues in the ministries responsible for transport, energy, education, industrialization, trade, planning and finance, among others, to ensure targeted policy reforms to ensure complementarity to the catalytic areas of clean energy development to add value to agriculture and industry.

B. Innovative Financing to Maximize Africa's Catalytic Sectors

Africa needs up to USD 1.2 trillion to implement the sustainable development goals, it is therefore imperative to engage in innovative environmental approaches that will unlock direct and indirect financing towards maximizing productivity of the catalytic areas and unlocking actualization of multiple sustainable development goals.

1. We, the Environment Ministers, will enhance clean energy financing to finance off-grid energy for industrial applications targeted for powering agro-value addition that will maximize on innovative models for financing sustainable development goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8.
2. We will create opportunities for complementary partnerships to finance profitable enterprises; mutual business partnerships between financiers and entrepreneurs in the catalytic areas as well as clean energy powered value addition to enhance businesses.
3. We will strengthen the capacity of tax administration of Africa's natural capital that will recoup resources for investment in the catalytic areas and curtail illicit financial flows.
4. We will encourage private sector investment by developing policy incentives for financial institutions to develop funds for enterprises based on the catalytic sectors.

C. Policy Harmonization

Policy is the biggest driver of change. Maximizing productivity of the catalytic areas will need harmonization of policies across multiple ministries to ensure sustainable socio-economic development.

1. We, the Environment Minister, will take policy, institutional and legal measures and reforms to promote and strengthen environmentally innovative technologies that will ensure sustainable use of Africa's natural capital, value addition, reverse current environmental losses, re-invest current earnings at regional, national and sub national levels.
2. We will continue to mobilize policy makers, create awareness of the role of natural capital in the development process and build consensus at sub national, national, regional levels in Africa on the contribution of natural capital in sustainable development.
3. We recognize that to catalyze investment in clean energy powered value addition, policies will need to be reconciled especially those in agriculture, industry, energy and lands management as well as incentivize the private investor to ensure relevant-cross cutting policies by both state and non-state actors. We agree to create inter-ministerial policy-task forces to bridge silos and harmonize policies to ensure they are complementary towards achievement of sustainable socio-economic development.

D. Education and Capacity building to Empower the Youth

Adequately empowered human capacity to seize opportunities in the catalytic areas remains an urgent imperative. The lack of alignment of the education sector to the catalytic areas is limiting implementation of the sustainable development goals. By extension, African states are losing an opportunity to actualize a demographic dividend of the 60% of Africa youths.

1. We, the Environment Ministers, will advocate for the creation and reform of African higher learning institutions to empower youth with skills aligned to opportunities in environmental innovative solutions and the catalytic sectors, while not compromising on the competitiveness.
2. We will advocate for the capacity building of different sectors; judiciary, compliance and enforcement agencies among other sectors with targeted curriculum development that will empower the youth in engaging in green businesses.
3. We encourage United Nations Environment Programme and other relevant bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, to support African countries in the integration and training of different sectors that will improve the skill and knowledge of its youth in environmental innovative solutions and the catalytic sectors.

E. Mobilizing Global support

1. We call upon the international community to support Africa's environmental innovative measures by supporting the sustainable use of Africa's environmental assets through strengthening of capacity, development of innovative and adaptable tools and innovative technologies.
2. We also call for international support in the technology transfer and capacity building to eliminate illegal financial flows, especially through stoppage of tax evasion and improved tax administration.