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African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

Eighteenth session

Online, 13, 14 and 16 September 2021
and Dakar, 12–16 September 2022*

Outcomes of the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, preparations for the sixth session, and the UNEP@50 commemoration

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, convened under the theme “Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”, was held in Nairobi from 28 February to 2 March 2022. A special session of the Environment Assembly was held in Nairobi and online on 3 and 4 March 2022, following the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The special session, entitled “UNEP@50”, was held under the theme “Strengthening UNEP for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.
2. At the resumed fifth session, the Environment Assembly adopted 14 resolutions, 1 decision and a ministerial declaration, and at its special session, it adopted a political declaration commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of UNEP. The Environment Assembly also decided that its sixth session would be held from 26 February to 1 March 2024 and that the sixth session of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives would be held from 19 to 23 February 2024. The Environment Assembly urged delegates at its sixth session, when considering the date and venue of its seventh session, to keep in mind its resolution 2/22, on the review of the cycle of the Environment Assembly, and rule 1 of its rules of procedure concerning the recommended time between sessions of the Environment Assembly, and the need to approve the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2026–2027 in 2025.
3. In the ministerial declaration of the resumed fifth session, ministers recognized the need for transformative and systemic changes, and for policies that address multiple environmental, economic and social challenges simultaneously. They called for the decisive, adequate and coherent implementation of the actions and commitments contained in the resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its fifth session.

* In accordance with the decision taken at the meeting of the Bureau of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment held on 26 May 2022, the eighteenth session of the Conference, which was adjourned on 16 September 2021, will resume as an in-person meeting in Dakar from 12 to 16 September 2022.

4. Heads of State and Government, ministers and high-level representatives acknowledged the contribution made by UNEP in supporting global efforts to overcome the greatest environmental challenges to the planet. They recognized the urgent need and common objectives to reinforce and advance the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of the environment for present and future generations.

5. Ms. Leila Benali, Minister for Energy, Transition and Sustainable Development of Morocco, was elected President of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly and Mr. Abdou Karim Sall, Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development of Senegal, was elected a Vice-President of the Bureau, representing Africa.

II. Post-Environment Assembly Africa Diplomatic Corps retreat and Africa's future engagement in deliberations of the Environment Assembly

6. At the resumed fifth session, the Africa group called for an assessment of the performance of the Africa region during that session. Consequently, the Africa Diplomatic Corps based in Nairobi, with the support of the UNEP Regional Office for Africa, organized a post-session retreat in May 2022. The objective of the retreat was to reflect upon and assess the Africa group's engagement with and participation in both the resumed fifth session and the UNEP@50 deliberations, and to develop an action plan for engagement with and participation in future sessions of the Environment Assembly.

7. Participants at the retreat noted that the Africa group's participation in the resumed fifth session was successful, despite a number of shortcomings. The key accomplishments included:

- (a) A strong common position on key areas, such as the resolutions sponsored by the Africa Group, and the ministerial and political declarations;
- (b) Effective participation by and coordination between the member States of the Africa group;
- (c) Effective preparation through the AMCEN processes;
- (d) Well-coordinated meetings of the Africa Group;
- (e) Active engagement of the Africa group in all resolutions, including those relating to plastic pollution, animal welfare and nature-based solutions.

8. The retreat also noted that there were a number of challenges within the Africa group. Those challenges included:

- (a) Underrepresented delegations, resulting in few lead negotiators, both in contact groups and plenary sessions;
- (b) A general lack of in-depth knowledge of the resolutions and weak technical expertise in certain areas;
- (c) Numerous contact group meetings that African delegations were not able to attend owing to their small delegations.

9. The following recommendations were agreed upon for future engagement in Environment Assembly processes:

- (a) A sustainable programme should be developed and implemented to train diplomats and capital-based officials in environmental diplomacy and negotiation skills;
- (b) Regular meetings should be held with the UNEP Regional Office for Africa to identify key matters and information to support and guide the Africa group;
- (c) Key data and information should be made available to member States;
- (d) Clear and regular communication, and the holding of dialogues, whether online or in person, should be organized between the Africa Diplomatic Corps in Nairobi and capital-based officials to establish a sound foundation and strengthen cooperation between the two groups;
- (e) Early preparations should be made to establish common positions on and Africa's engagement in the forthcoming sixth session of the Environment Assembly in 2024;
- (f) The rules of procedure of AMCEN should be reviewed with a view to updating them to meet the growing influence of AMCEN in both regional and global processes.

10. The Africa Diplomatic Corps in Nairobi agreed to develop an action plan to strengthen Africa's negotiating capacity in both bilateral and multilateral settings. The action plan will enhance cooperation between African countries in the lead-up to the sixth session of the Environment Assembly in 2024.
 11. The action plan will improve collaboration between Africa Group chapters, capital-based officers, relevant ministries and other inter-governmental bodies within the environmental sphere. It will also include mechanisms for enhancing negotiating skills and knowledge among the negotiators through specific training programmes.
 12. The finalized action plan will be distributed to member States, through the President of AMCEN, for implementation.
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