

African Major Groups' Dialogue at the Sidelines of the Resumed Eighteenth Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

Concept Note

10th-11th September, 2022

Theme: Securing people's well-being and ensuring environmental sustainability in Africa

The Resumed Eighteenth Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) will be held in Dakar, Senegal from 12th to 16th September 2022 under the theme, ***“Securing people's well-being and ensuring environmental sustainability in Africa”***. The emphasis of this year's session will be the need for people-centered recovery with an emphasis on **people's well-being** through environmentally friendly actions that both **create jobs and improve livelihoods**. The 2020 session was held virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic and this significantly affected participation of stakeholders and especially the major groups. This is the rationale for holding the 2022 session in person.

The Resumed Eighteenth Session of the AMCEN is happening against the backdrop of the triple planetary crisis - climate, biodiversity and pollution - that the world is facing. Globally, there are calls for urgent and transformative action to address these crises. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Report made it clear that there is a narrowing window of opportunity for action and “opportunities for climate resilient development are not equitably distributed around the world”. Despite its relatively low contribution to greenhouse gasses, Africa remains the most vulnerable continent to climate change impacts, with poverty, water, food & energy insecurity, vulnerable urban environments, degraded ecosystems and rural environments, facing non-climate challenges that inhibit climate resilient development and are further exacerbated by climate change. Biodiversity in Africa is on a decline trend, with ongoing losses of species and habitats, driven by a combination of human-induced factors. Air pollution is a major threat that needs to be addressed too with a UNEP report indicating that air pollution was responsible for about 383,419 deaths across Africa in 2019¹. In addition, Africa loses an estimated 1.2 million people prematurely due to open burning of waste and other air pollutants even as many of Africa's fast-growing cities face inadequate waste management and landfill facilities. Land degradation and desertification continue to threaten Africa's resilience and survival, affect social security, communities, and cause migration and insecurity problems with women, children, and the vulnerable suffering the most. Africa's implementation of the UNCCD CoP15 outcomes on accelerating restoration of degraded lands, boosting drought resilience, enhancing women involvement in land management, and promoting decent land-based jobs for youth are key to reversing the trend and achieving Agenda 2063 on the Africa We Want and the

¹<https://www.unep.org/resources/report/air-pollution-and-development-africa-impacts-health-economy-and-human-capital#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20ambient%20air%20pollution,charcoal%20and%20kerosene%20are%20prevalent.>

SDGs.

We warmly welcome the commitment by African Environment Ministers to step-up the continent's response to accelerate the green and sustainable recovery programme to tackle the triple planetary crisis at the 18th session of the AMCEN in Nairobi, in September 2021. However, we note the growing concern among member states and other stakeholders about the slow pace in implementation of AMCEN decisions. This is characterized by the lack of adequate translation of policies, strategies and plans into implemented actions, and in some cases by the lack of the development of policies at the national level. One example of the latter is the preparation and submission of National Adaptation Plans (NAP). Unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, degraded ecosystems, and environment-related matters largely remain just cross-cutting issues at national level. Adequate political will, commitment and leadership on environment-related issues still lacks though AMCEN has been promoting them since its establishment. There is a need to take stock on why this is so by having a monitoring framework to track this trend.

We further note and welcome the urgency of addressing the need to strengthen and enhance implementation of AMCEN decisions in the post-COVID-19 era, including the Africa Green Stimulus Programme, by both the Expert and Ministerial segments of the forthcoming resumed Eighteenth session of the AMCEN in Dakar, Senegal.

This year, the ministers will focus on reviewing environmental challenges and opportunities that presents itself in Africa in the post-Covid-19 era and consider other issues related to sustainable development in the continent. The ministers will also develop policy guidance for the effective participation of the Africa region in the upcoming key global environmental events, including the UNFCCC COP 27 in Egypt in November and the Fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD-COP15) in Montreal, Canada in December. Discussion on the outcomes of UNEA 5.2, UNCBD and the past UNCCD COP15 will also be a top agenda. As the ministers focus on these agenda items, the Major groups continues to assert the need to establish a robust, clear and transparent Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) mechanism that will regularly track progress, assess results of implementation of the agreed decisions at regional and national level, and document best practices; Strengthen resource mobilization strategies at AMCEN and national level; At country level, Member States should enhance their resource mobilization, innovative domestic resource mobilization and diversification of sources; engagement of all stakeholders by packaging environment-related initiatives into investment portfolio; and strengthen capacity to access multilateral funds for environment-related initiatives; Member States to enhance implementation and enhance alignment of AMCEN decisions to global environment-related process such as UNEA, and the UNFCCC and UNCBD COPs; Enhance strategic partnership with African MGS to leverage on their technical expertise, financial resources, expanding stakeholders reach and link with communities who are the main implementers; States should provide conducive environment for African MGS to engage from planning, implementation to monitoring and evaluation at both national and regional levels.

Themes

In line with this year's theme, therefore, the major groups will host a two-day regional consultative meeting, which will be held from 10th to 11th September, 2022. The consultations aim to engage civil society organizations and other stakeholders to contribute effectively in the AMCEN Conference under the following themes:

1. Open waste burning and waste management

Organic waste accounts for up to 56 percent of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) whereas plastic waste accounts for the biggest fraction of the remaining 44 percent². Agenda 2063 set out a 10-year implementation plan for African cities to recycle 50 percent or more of the waste they generated by 2023. Today, Africa is still facing the problem of growing waste generation coupled with poor disposal practices in open dumpsites and landfills. The situation is aggravated by inadequate structures, resources and policies to promote a circular economy at the local, subnational, national, sub-regional and regional levels. This inadequacy has led to increased open waste burning and counts to missed opportunities for job creation, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and air pollution - all of which inhibit the right to a healthy environment as a human right. The regional consultative meeting of the African MGS shall come up with policy and practical recommendations on action to address open waste burning and institute proper waste management practices in Africa.

2. Climate change

Addressing the climate crisis must now be considered within the context of the global health crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both are tragic and costly, triggering cross-sectoral impacts that compound existing health and climate vulnerabilities, particularly in Africa where communities' coping capacities are among the lowest in the world. Whereas COVID-19 has already led to hundreds of thousands of deaths, climate change is projected to account for up to 250,000 additional deaths between 2030 and 2050 from factors such as malnutrition, heat stress and malaria. Besides, the World Bank estimates that climate change could push 100 million people into extreme poverty – again mostly in Africa – by 2030.

COP26 was not the turning point many African advocates had envisaged after decades of dashed hopes. Our assessment of the Glasgow Climate Pact concluded that it was “a failed opportunity to spur ambitious action and secure protection for hundreds of millions of people affected by climate change in Africa and other developing nations. Efforts to secure a healthy planet and resilient communities were derailed by the narrow interests of states, notably those required to do more to address the climate crisis because of their past and current share of greenhouse gas emissions. As in previous engagements, COP26 focused on accommodating and comforting big polluters.”

Therefore, we believe that COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, presents a unique opportunity to place Africa at the center of global climate attention and negotiations. We have dubbed it the “African People's COP” to reflect our desire that COP27 not stay the course with previous climate change conferences and truly deliver for the African people.

²https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25515/Africa_WMO_Summary.pdf?sequence=1&isAlloved=y

3. Biodiversity

The CBD COP 15 marks a significant milestone in the global biodiversity agenda as State Parties will negotiate and adopt a new global biodiversity framework and targets. The framework will provide a strategic vision and a global roadmap for the conservation, protection, restoration and sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystems for the next decade. The new framework recognizes that urgent policy action globally, regionally and nationally is required to transform economic, social and financial models so the trends that have exacerbated biodiversity loss will stabilize by 2030 and allow for the recovery of natural ecosystems, with net improvements by 2050. A ‘whole of government’ and ‘whole of society’ approach underpins the theory of change of the framework, which recognizes the crucial role played by civil society, the business sector and all levels of subnational government in the successful implementation of the framework and towards the achievement of global and national biodiversity targets. Human rights, nature and the environment are inextricably linked and a rights-based approach is anchored within the framework’s theory of change and reinforced in the enabling conditions. The new framework commits to applying a rights-based approach to conservation, sustainable use and benefit-sharing of biodiversity to realize the 2050 vision of “living in harmony with nature”. Furthermore, the COP will consider the adoption of a recommendation that entrenches multi-level governance in a renewed decision on the engagement with subnational governments, cities and other local authorities to enhance implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and its accompanying Plan of Action (CBD/SBI/3/L.16). A possible outcome of the regional consultative meeting will be to consolidate civil society and subnational government stakeholders in supporting the call to Parties for the adoption of the renewed decision and Plan of Action, as well as supporting a rights-based approach to the conservation, sustainable use and benefit-sharing of biodiversity in the new framework.

4. Plastic pollution

Plastics account for about 13 percent of waste in Africa with the majority of plastics being disposed into the environment thereby polluting the land and the African waterways and oceans. Globally, about 11 million metric tons of plastic waste end up in the oceans, “choking them” in the process³. Plastic pollution was a key agenda item in UNEA 5.2 held in Nairobi this year. Governments at UNEA 5.2 agreed to negotiate an internationally legal binding instrument by 2024 to end plastic pollution and to establish a science-policy panel on chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution. The plastics treaty is expected to address the full lifecycle of plastics, including production, design, and disposal. In June 2022, the UNEP Executive Director convened an ad hoc open-ended working group to prepare for the intergovernmental negotiating committee’s work in Dakar, Senegal. The major groups will discuss the preparedness of the African governments in implementation of this UNEA decision within the context of circular economy.

5. Implementation of AMCEN decisions

AMCEN has been passing decisions since 1985, but most of those decisions have largely

³ <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/2022-year-stop-decline-ocean%E2%80%99s-health>

remained on paper and are not implemented on the ground. The major groups will have an opportunity to reflect on AMCEN decisions and give recommendations.

A successful development agenda requires inclusive **partnerships** at the global, regional, national and local levels and across all sectors of society. 'Leave no one behind' is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A prosperous Africa that is a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, as envisioned in Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, is possible. The reality is that global economic crises, political conflicts and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have made this promise increasingly elusive. Most African nations do not have the resources and capacity to successfully address developmental goals, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Aid levels are declining as developed nations prioritize their own agendas in the changing economic and geopolitical landscape. Going forward, it is imperative that we work together in forging and strengthening partnerships between governments and stakeholders, to give effect to the core principles and values of SDG 17, which focuses on partnerships and leveraging resource mobilization for technical support, cooperation and support for sustainable development. The SDG 17 targets provide concrete and practical entry points for guiding our approach towards partnerships and securing international investment and support.

Multi-level governance is another key ingredient to ensuring successful implementation. While policies and targets are negotiated and adopted by nations on global platforms and domestically, implementation takes place on the ground, in cities, districts and provinces. The CBD COP has since 2010 recognized the value of engaging subnational governments actively towards the successful implementation and achievement of global and national biodiversity targets. At COP 15, Parties look set to adopt a renewed decision and Plan of Action on multi-level governance making it, for the second time, the only Multilateral Environmental Agreement with a consistent, 10-year plan for the engagement of all levels of subnational governments. Going forward we need to better explore the benefits of multilevel governance for effective, efficient, and inclusive implementation of the global agendas within AMCEN. The meaningful participation of all levels of government, and their stakeholders, is imperative for implementation to happen and succeed.

Implementation thrives in an environment characterized by clear **accountability and transparency**. This requires a clear and **structured mechanism for monitoring, reviewing and reporting** to track and report on progress with implementation against decisions taken at AMCEN meetings.

Target Audience

The regional consultation meeting will bring together African Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) accredited to UNEP, non-accredited regional MGS partners, UN Environment staff, and resource people relevant to the conference's theme.

The consultation is targeting 60 participants who will participate physically with another 200 participants engaging virtually.

Purpose and Objectives of the Meeting

Objectives of the Meeting

The scope of the two-day consultative meeting is for the African Major Groups and Stakeholders is to prepare their inputs for the next session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and issue around the four themes indicated above. The outcome of the meeting will be a regional statement by civil society, which will constitute the information document to the UN Environment Assembly. The first day will be dedicated to discussions around the African aspiration for COP 27.

Expected Outcomes:

- Key messages for the next session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in line with this years' theme.
- Inclusion of the key messages from the African Major Groups and Stakeholders to the AMCEN, which will also serve as background information to the Conference with specific recommendations pertaining to:
 - strengthening partnerships and collaboration between governments and major groups and stakeholders for implementation b improved resource mobilization;
 - exploring the benefits of multilevel governance and meaningful participation of all levels of government and their stakeholders for effective, efficient, and inclusive implementation of the decisions of the AMCEN;
 - developing a clear and structured monitoring, review and reporting mechanism for the implementation of AMCEN decisions; and
 - dealing with the triple planetary crisis (see suggestion below re biodiversity & multi-level governance).
- A statement from the major groups on UNFCCC COP 27 and UNCBD COP15 detailing the aspiration of African major groups and their contribution to UNEA 6.
- A call to Parties to support the adoption of the renewed decision and Plan of Action, as well as supporting a rights-based approach to the conservation, sustainable use and benefit-sharing of biodiversity in the new framework.
- To develop collaborative strategies through which the African MGS can contribute to enhancing implementation of the AMCEN decisions and mechanisms for ensuring accountability, mobilization of meaningful partnerships, and good governance.