



AMCEN



AU



UNEP

Distr.: General  
12 August 2022

Original: English  
English and French only

### *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\*

## **Report of the secretariat for the period from December 2019 to July 2022\*\***

### **Note by the secretariat**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was established to promote regional cooperation between African Governments and stakeholders in addressing emerging environmental challenges. Through the work of AMCEN, there has been heightened policy responses and actions by Governments, civil society and private sector to transform Africa's sustainable development pathways.
2. The present report aims to provide information to participants at the resumed eighteenth session of the Conference on the status of implementation of decisions adopted by the Conference at its seventeenth session, held in Durban from 11 to 15 November 2019, its eighth special session, held online on 4 December 2020, its ninth special session, held online on 17 February 2022, and of other activities during the reporting period.
3. The report provides a summary of some key activities related to the Conference and their associated outcomes and should in no way be considered exhaustive in terms of the activities that may have been undertaken since the seventeenth session. The report also provides information on key documents produced by the secretariat during the intersessional period. Finally, the report provides some highlights for consideration by the Conference at the resumed eighteenth session.

#### **II. Status of implementation of the decisions adopted by the Conference at its seventeenth session**

4. The following two decisions were adopted by the Conference at its seventeenth session. Decision 17/1: Taking action for the sustainability of environmental and natural resources in Africa had twelve sections, namely on (i) Taking action on decisions (ii) Blue economy (iii) Circular economy (iv) Bamako Convention (v) Biodiversity (vi) Land degradation, desertification and drought (vii) Maputo Convention (viii) United Nations Environment Assembly (ix) Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (x) Poverty, environment, gender and youth (xi) Africa Environment Partnership Platform (xii) Montreal Protocol and the Kigali Amendment thereto.

---

\* 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.

\*\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

## **A. Taking action on decisions**

5. The decision called for necessary action to accelerate the implementation of past and future decisions of the Conference. With regard to the implementation of AMCEN decision 13/4, the Conference called on countries that had not yet paid their contributions to urgently meet their obligations and to provide additional resources to the AMCEN trust fund. To this end, the secretariat continued to engage countries and send reminder letters to the countries to make their contributions to the trust fund. A few member states that had previously not contributed to the general trust fund were able to clear their arrears during the reporting period. A detailed update is provided in document AMCEN/18(II)/13 being the report of the general trust fund.

## **B. Blue economy**

6. The decision welcomed the formulation of the African Union blueprint for Africa's blue economy and agreed to contribute towards its implementation in line with the mandate of the Conference, and invited the secretariat of the Conference, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, to prepare a report on the matter, in consultation with member States, taking environmental considerations into account, for consideration by the Conference at its eighteenth session.

7. The African Union has developed an African Blue Economy Strategy, focusing on the following five thematic areas that are considered critical for Sustainable Blue Economic Growth in Africa:

- (a) Fisheries, aquaculture, conservation and sustainable aquatic ecosystems
- (b) Shipping/transportation, trade, ports, maritime security, safety and enforcement
- (c) Coastal and maritime tourism, climate change, resilience, environment, infrastructure
- (d) Sustainable energy and mineral resources and innovative industries
- (e) Policies, institutional and governance, employment, job creation and poverty eradication, innovative financing

## **C. Circular economy**

8. The decision called for the development of a regional programme to promote and scale up circular economy and requested the African Union Commission, the United Nations Environment Programme, the regional economic communities and other partners to support that programme. Under the guidance of the African Union Commission, and with the participation of other regional partners, an expert working group and terms of reference for the development of a "Regional Framework on Circular Economy" was established and agreed upon respectively. Two meetings of the working group were held which agreed on a roadmap for the development of a regional action plan on circular economy.

9. An invitation was extended to African countries that are yet to be members of the African Circular Economy Alliance, a country-led coalition of African nations, to join the Alliance in order to strengthen the continental coalition to drive the circular economy agenda in Africa. Several countries have expressed interest to join the Alliance.

10. Rwanda, Nigeria, and South Africa currently serve as Co-chairs of the Alliance. Other member countries of the Alliance include Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Burkina Faso, Sudan, and Morocco. The Alliance is supported by strategic partners, including the World Economic Forum, the African Development Bank, UNEP, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Finland, the European Commission, African Circular Economy Network and the Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy.

11. In 2020, the Secretariat of the African Circular Economy Alliance was set up after the African Development Bank agreed to serve as its host. With funding from the World Economic Forum and the Danish Development Agency, Dalberg, an international development consulting firm, was contracted to lead the activities of the African Circular Economy Alliance secretariat and support defining the strategy and work programme of the Alliance within the first year.

12. In line with the defined strategy, the Alliance has engaged in activities and made significant progress in delivering its mandate, including: conducting market research to identify gaps and opportunities for circular economy in Africa (the 5 Big Bets); operationalizing working groups to support the scale-up of industries along the 5 Big Bets; conducting research for circular economy

opportunities, specifically in mining and plastic; designing a platform for a business support programme for circular solutions on the African continent; raising awareness through events such as the World Circular Economy Forum in 2020, African Circular Economy Alliance's annual event on the side-lines of World Circular Economy Forum plus Climate in 2021, and this year, as hosts of the World Circular Economy Forum 2022 in Africa; launching a website (<https://www.aceafrica.org>) to serve as a knowledge resource for stakeholders as well as a platform for engaging with new members, partners and collaborators; elaborating a policy brief for the scale-up of regional circular value chains; supporting external initiatives and projects for greater collaboration and compounded impact; and internally, the Alliance has leveraged its network of strategic partners to implement interventions in line with its mandate.

13. UNEP in collaboration with the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association and the Sustainable Seas Trust is currently supporting Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Seychelles and Uganda to enhance national policy frameworks to include circular economy approaches to plastic pollution management. Activities include: (a) identification of national regulatory frameworks to underpin integrated plastic pollution management with circular economy approaches (b) development of simple technical guidance to support governments in setting up/updating baselines, setting targets, and quantifying progress on circular plastics pollution management (c) supporting national authorities in drafting updates to NAPs or appropriate policy frameworks to include lifecycle circular plastic management, and (d) enhancing the capacity of national authorities to assist in meeting commitments under initiatives like the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment, Clean Seas Campaign and the Africa Circular Economy Alliance.

#### **D. Bamako Convention**

14. The decision requested the United Nations Environment Programme to work closely with the Government of the Republic of Congo, the African Union Commission and other relevant partners in the organization of the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Bamako Convention. The third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Bamako Convention was organized under the theme "*From decisions to action: working for Africa with a safe chemicals and waste future*", in Brazzaville from 12 to 14 February 2020.

15. The third Conference of the Parties adopted a set of decisions reaffirming the Parties' commitment to strengthen the Convention in order to prevent African countries from receiving unwanted hazardous waste in their territories as well as promoting sound management of chemicals and waste produced within the continent. The Conference acknowledged the updated list of hazardous substances and encouraged Parties to use the list in their national implementation plans of the Bamako Convention.

16. Parties reaffirmed their commitment to take concrete actions to implement decisions adopted at the first and second Conference of the Parties. They also agreed on a common scale to enhance their financial contributions to the Convention. Parties further called upon African States who have not yet ratified the Convention to do so. Parties agreed to reinforce collaboration and create more synergies between the Bamako Convention and the related Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions.

17. The Bureau of Conference of Parties to the Bamako Convention met online on 10 September 2020 and 16 March 2021. The meetings followed reports of the illicit trafficking of 282 containers of hazardous household waste to Tunisia from Italy and the illegal disposal of 119,000 tonnes of contaminated plastic waste to Liberia from Greece in violation of the provisions of the Bamako Convention, which bans the importation of hazardous waste into Africa.

18. The objectives of the meetings were to receive full updates from the two parties about these situations, discuss the available courses of action and make concrete recommendations on the possible mechanisms to be adopted to ensure that the waste leaves the territory of the African continent.

19. During these meetings, the Bureau called upon African countries to increase vigilance to protect the continent from illegal dumping of medical and hazardous waste, especially during the ongoing health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Bureau cautioned that the current Covid-19 health crisis is generating huge amounts of hazardous medical waste as well as increased use of plastics which may cause serious health and environmental consequences in Africa.

20. In view of the illicit exportation of hazardous waste materials to Tunisia and Liberia, the Bureau urged the two countries to use every diplomatic and legal means, including through the African Union, AMCEN, the European Union, and the implementation and compliance committee of the Basel convention, to stop the hazardous waste dumping in Africa.

21. The Bureau called upon UNEP, the African Union, AMCEN and other international, regional and sub-regional bodies to lobby for the continent-wide ratification/accession to the Bamako convention as well as its subsequent domestication to prevent Africa from being an easy target for illegal dumping of hazardous waste from outside the continent and to accelerate the implementation of national and regional plans for the management of hazardous waste.
22. The President of the Bureau sent a letter to the Bureau of AMCEN to bring these two cases of illicit trafficking of hazardous waste to its attention and to request cooperation and collaboration between the Bamako convention and AMCEN to support Liberia and Tunisia in their efforts to repatriate the hazardous wastes back to the countries of origin.
23. The Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the Bamako Convention met face-to-face and online on 2 March 2022 in the margins of the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme. The focus of the meeting was for the Bureau to deliberate on the issue of the transfer of the secretariat to Bamako, and how best to “jumpstart” and give prominence to the work of the Bamako Convention. The meeting also deliberated on the cases of illicit trafficking of hazardous waste to Tunisia, Liberia, and Kenya, in contravention of the provisions of the Bamako Convention.
24. By decision CB.3/4: Provisions relating to the transfer to Bamako, Mali, establishment and staffing of the secretariat of the Bamako Convention, the Conference of the Parties decided, to request the Bureau and the current secretariat of the Bamako Convention (UNEP), including the Government of Mali, to implement scenario 2 (The secretariat and the Convention are hosted by Mali and UNEP provides coordination). The members present expressed reservations on the transfer of the Bamako Convention Secretariat from the UNEP Africa Office to Bamako, Mali.
25. Regarding the Liberia and Tunisia dumping cases, there did not seem to be any concrete action undertaken by the Convention to address the two cases. There was also a reported case in Kenya of a ship carrying hazardous nuclear waste. Although Kenya is not a party to the Convention, it shared information about the ship carrying the toxic waste with states along the Coastal line. The Convention should strengthen its efficacy in supporting member states in cases of illegal hazardous waste dumping.
26. It was unanimously agreed that there was an urgent need to create a road map on revitalizing the way the Convention works. Quick gains that the Convention can benefit from could include: (a) Development of an improved website specifically for the Bamako Convention with all relevant information available; (b) Creation of an information sharing mechanism that could be used by the focal points to communicate and inform each other on incidences of illegal traffic (c) Creation of electronic interactive tools – to raise awareness-raising on the Convention’s work, to highlight benefits for joining the Convention, information on how to become a member state to the Convention, etc. (d) Enhanced visibility of the Bamako Convention.

## **E. Biodiversity**

27. The decision endorsed the establishment of a core group to facilitate the coordination of the African group of negotiators on biodiversity in developing a common regional position to strengthen Africa’s voice on biodiversity. A coordination group comprising UNEP, the African Wildlife Foundation, IUCN, WWF, AUDA-NEPAD and the African Union Commission was established. UNEP facilitates monthly coordination meetings among these organisations.
28. The African group of negotiators on biodiversity has since been engaging and articulating African perspectives, priorities and common positions during all the meetings of the open-ended working group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and in preparations for the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. A programme on young African fellowship on biodiversity negotiations which intends to integrate the youth in international biodiversity negotiations has been established.
29. The decision endorsed the development of a regional cooperation framework on ‘advancing the biodiversity economy that enhances the value of biological goods and services, integrates natural capital accounting and scales up investment in the sustainable utilization of biological resources as part of Africa’s transformation.’ The AMCEN Secretariat has since engaged UNEP, the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in discussions on this subject.

30. As a precursor to the development of a regional cooperation framework, a background document entitled “*Towards a Regional Cooperation Framework on Advancing the Biodiversity Economy in Africa*” has been prepared by UNEP in consultation with the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, the South African National Biodiversity Institute and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. A consultation workshop on the document was hosted by the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment on 26 January 2022.

## **F. Land degradation, desertification and drought**

31. The decision requested member States and development partners to support the implementation of land degradation neutrality transformative projects and national drought plans, and to promote appropriate action to combat desertification and drought under the drought initiative of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

32. To this end, an online meeting of Heads of United Nations Entities and multilateral agencies on the Great Green Wall was held on 25 June 2020. All participating entities reiterated their strong commitment to the Great Green Wall Initiative and enhanced coordination and collaboration in support of the initiative. They expressed support for transformational projects and a joint programmatic approach and financial mechanism to scale up efforts.

33. The fifteenth session of the conference of the parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification took place in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, 9-20 May 2022 where African countries called for renewed efforts to ensure the regions priority actions are taken up by the Secretariat of the Convention and further called for the development of an instrument on land degradation. It has been proposed that a group of countries should represent Africa in these negotiations.

34. The UNEP ecosystem-based adaptation project implemented in the Eastern Cape and Northern Cape provinces of South Africa was completed in May 2022. In the Eastern Cape Province, the pilot project enhanced water/food security as part of the water-energy-food nexus, through: (i) the installation of 5 water reservoirs, provision of seedlings; (ii) developing capacity and skills through training on climate-smart agriculture and vegetable gardens backstopping to 5 villages; (iii) research on Natural Resources and Crop Suitability in Joe Gqabi District; (iv) Agricultural Information Technology Youth Capacity Building (Citizen Science) to 18 trainees. In the Northern Cape Province, the pilot project enhanced ecosystem restoration (including rangeland/wetland restoration, soil erosion control), and empowered small-scale farmers in climate-smart livestock production.

## **G. Maputo Convention**

35. The decision requested the African Union Commission, in collaboration with the African Union Development Agency, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the African Development Bank and the World Wide Fund for Nature, among others, to support the convening of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Maputo Convention.

36. Efforts towards implementing this decision were initiated in early 2020 with the development of a concept note and roadmap for the organization of the Conference of the Parties. However, the preparations were disrupted because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and this inaugural meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Maputo Convention has yet to take place.

## **H. United Nations Environment Assembly**

37. The decision encouraged the African group of States to engage and develop a common African approach to the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, prior to that session in 2021. It will be noted that due to Covid-19, a two-stage approach of holding a short online session as the first part of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly in February 2021 to consider only the medium-term strategy and the programme of work and budget, to be followed by a resumed in-person session in 2022 to consider substantive matters was agreed. Member states and the Africa Group successfully raised Africa’s voice and contributed to the outcomes of first part of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly.

38. 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. 14 resolutions, one decision, and a ministerial declaration were adopted, as well as a political declaration commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of UNEP. The adopted

resolutions included Africa's common sponsored resolutions on biodiversity and health; the environmental dimension of a sustainable, resilient and inclusive post-COVID-19 recovery; and enhancing circular economy as a contribution to achieving sustainable consumption and production.

39. 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.

## **I. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora**

40. The decision requested the African Union Commission and partners to establish a platform for African negotiators on matters pertaining to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora in order to foster a coherent African position and enable African countries to speak with a common voice in global negotiations.

## **J. Poverty, environment, gender and youth**

41. The decision encouraged the establishment of platforms and networks for women and youth that enhance their involvement in the management of natural resources. To this end, youth in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Togo, and Uganda were given technical assistance in adapting their skills to drive climate action solutions. Part of these interventions entailed the transformation of environmental value chains, including through the conversion of waste to bio-fertiliser to catalyse adaptation in food systems, and waste to fuel briquettes.

42. Youth in Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda were guided to participate in the development and decentralisation of affordable solar dryers to provide affordable clean energy for agro-value chain actors. In the process, they are not only implementing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in waste, agriculture and clean energy and creating enterprise opportunities for themselves, but also providing data to refine policy by addressing specific bottlenecks to drive practical NDCs.

43. Women groups from the Gaza Province, Chongoene District in Mozambique were empowered and equipped with technical and business skills in renewable energy technology in the Socio-economic lens. These women groups are now entrepreneurs in the energy sector where they are selling and distributing solar kits and improved clean cooking stoves to rural communities and households in Chongoene district.

44. Based on the results of the above project in Mozambique, similar projects are going to be implemented starting in 2022 in other southern Africa countries (Malawi and South Africa). The project focusses on waste circularity driving climate smart agriculture and use of biogas and solar clean energy technology for the purpose of lighting, clean cooking and as well as cold storage and drying of agriproducts. This contributes significantly to empowerment of women and youth economically through job creation and income generation, in addition to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction.

45. Related to poverty and environment, the joint UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Action for the SDGs Africa programme continued implementation during the reporting period. This programme supports governments to integrate sustainability objectives that will contribute to poverty reduction and other priority development objectives such as food security in national development plans and their implementation at sector and sub-national levels. The programme supports Mauritania, Rwanda, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique and builds on the achievements of the earlier Poverty-Environment Initiative programme. It is due to end in December 2022, but options are being discussed to sustain its impact.

## **K. Africa Environment Partnership Platform**

46. The decision requested member States and regional institutions to work closely with the African Union Development Agency and the African Union Commission and provide the needed technical and financial support for, and participate in, the multi-stakeholder Africa Environment Partnership Platform and provide the requisite data to enrich the geospatial portal. The African Union Development Agency continued to engage member States to train staff on the use of the geospatial portal.

47. The African Union Development Agency in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo convened the second edition of the Africa Environment Partnership Platform on 8 and 9 September 2021. The second edition deliberated upon ways to strengthen the coordination mechanisms of the platform through enhanced engagement with its stakeholders, identified options to mitigate against the challenges posed by the Covid-19 Pandemic for Africa and examined opportunities for using the environment as a vehicle for post-Covid-19 recovery and sustainability as well as enhancing synergies between the Africa Environment Partnership Platform and the African Green Stimulus Programme.

## L. Montreal Protocol and the Kigali Amendment thereto

48. The decision urged African States that have not yet done so to ratify and implement the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol as soon as possible. Since the AMCEN meeting, several countries (Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Eswatini, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tunisia and Zambia) have ratified the Kigali Amendment.

### Decision 17/2 on Climate Change

49. The seventeenth session adopted decision 17/2 on climate change. This decision and key messages endorsed, were used as a basis for Africa's common negotiating position during the twenty-fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Madrid, Spain. A consultative meeting of African ministers was organized in Madrid prior to the start of the high-level segment that provided an opportunity for the African group of negotiators to brief the Ministers on the status of the negotiations.

50. The African group of negotiators made some key submissions on behalf of the continent at the Conference of Parties. For example, the African position on the review of Warsaw Implementation Mechanism where the African group of negotiators submission made it clear on the need for Parties to report to both the Conference of Parties and the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (whereas other Parties wanted to report only to the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement) and advocated for the item to remain on the agenda (whereas other Parties wanted it closed).

51. The second meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA2) agenda was limited to mitigation and reporting and did not include finance or work on adaptation. The African group of negotiators successfully advocated for the inclusion of the elaboration of Global Goal on Adaptation which ensured a balance of mitigation and adaptation-which is of key interest to Africa.

52. The African group of negotiators was successful in the advancement of the issue of Africa's Special Needs and Circumstances, and stranded assets and its reflection in the Conference of Parties agenda.

53. Decision 17/2 on climate change also emphasized the benefits of improving air quality, including through managing and, as nationally appropriate, reducing short-lived climate pollutants in the environment, agriculture, health and forest conservation sectors, while responding to the aspirations of Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the Sustainable Development Goals, noting the need for an assessment of the linkage between policies to address air pollution and policies to address climate change.

54. To this end, communities of practice were established, and support was provided for building institutional capacity on improved air quality and air quality assessments. This was realized through the implementation of the pilot project "*Urban Air Quality Monitoring in African cities*", targeting Addis Ababa, Cape Town and Nairobi. The three pilot cities were supported to formulate legal instruments and frameworks to manage air quality.

55. Demonstrating waste recovery to biogas using a biodigester plant that turned waste from a meat processing facility enabled the processor to lower the cost of waste management of regular evacuation of its manholes and septic tanks. It helped generate methane gas that reduced dependency on butane by up to 57% and generated income from trading in organic compost from the biodigester. This was realized through the implementation of the pilot project "*Supporting Implementation of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in the Waste Sector in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal*".

56. Countries have been supported in developing the implementation of their Nationally Determined Contributions investment tools that integrate communal cooperatives as a critical financing instrument for climate actions. This ensures informal sector financing instruments can be leveraged to drive the green pandemic recovery through the informal sector actor's constituency. This was realized by implementing the "Nationally Determined Contributions Action project in Ghana, Uganda and Morocco" pilot project.

57. Youth have been guided across Africa to adapt their skills to drive climate action solutions in non-capital-intensive areas of waste recovery to fuel briquettes and biofertilizers. They are converting waste to biofertilizer to drive adaptation in food systems and waste to fuel briquettes to save energy. This is building the resilience of communities as they adapt to climate change and create opportunities for themselves. Data from these ground actions will inform Nationally Determined Contributions' implementation in the countries.

58. The African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan formulated to guide, coordinate and support the Continent's response to Climate Change for the period 2022–2032, which was developed in consultation with AMCEN, was adopted at the thirty-fifth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, which took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 5 and 6 February 2022.

### **III. Implementation of Conference-related activities for the period December 2019 to July 2022**

59. Several Conference-related activities were undertaken during the reporting period, which are highlighted below.

#### **A. Implementation of previous AMCEN decisions**

60. The Arusha Declaration on Africa's post Rio+20 strategy for sustainable development of 2012 agreed to implement the priority transport areas outlined in the Africa Sustainable Transport Forum Action Framework to address road safety, reduce vehicle emissions and improve energy efficiency and enhance sustainable urban transport as a means of effectively implementing the sustainable development agenda. UNEP, in collaboration with other partners organised an African regional forum for action on inclusive and active mobility from 7 to 9 June 2022. The East Africa Community Council of Ministers adopted the regional harmonization of Euro 4/IV vehicle emissions standards on 27 May 2022. The standards were then gazetted on 4 July 2022 and East Africa Community countries have up to 6 months to implement the standards. Kenya already announced implementation with effect from 1 July 2022. The Economic Community of West African States Commission conducted a training on 12–14 April 2022 on implementation of the vehicle's directive adopted in September 2020 that regulates vehicle standards (new and imported used) into the sub-region. In 2020, the subregion also adopted a regional fuel efficiency roadmap to promote import of energy efficient vehicles. UNEP collaborated with the Southern African Development Community Secretariat and Zambia to carry out a regional sensitization workshop on harmonization of cleaner fuel standards for the Southern African Development Community sub-region on 24 June 2022. UNEP has also provided capacity building to various stakeholders in Africa under the Africa Support and Investment Platform on electric mobility. UNEP continues to support adoption of soot-free buses in African cities. In addition, several cities have been assisted to commit to soot-free buses including electric buses (Dakar, Lagos, Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam). Through the Economic Community of West African States' Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency, the region was supported to carry out a baseline for 2 and 3 electric wheelers and link to renewable energy.

61. UNEP is working closely with regional partners and stakeholders to deliver on various programmes on natural capital, including those contained in AMCEN's *Decision SS.VI/1; Decision 15/1: Sustainably harnessing Africa's natural capital in the context of Agenda 2063; Decision 17/1: Taking action for the sustainability of environmental and natural resources in Africa*. Key among the undertakings which began in early 2020, but was slowed down by the COVID-19 pandemic, is the production of a regional natural capital assessment report, dubbed the "*Atlas of Africa's Natural Capital*". This commitment is being delivered jointly with the African Development Bank, with the support of regional collaborating centres of excellence and specialized entities. With a production process that is currently past mid-way, the atlas seeks to strengthen the science-business-policy interface in the exploration, utilization, management, and sustainability of Africa's natural resources.

62. It will provide up-to-date and credible data on the continent's natural capital endowment and related key issues to support national and regional planning and decision-making processes, including valorisation and strategic investments. It is also set to provide detailed country profiles on natural capital that will feed into national-level programming processes involving governments and development partners, such as those that get to inform multiple pacts under the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.



63. The Atlas production process encompasses an inclusive multi-stakeholder and multi-step approach. Accordingly, at its current stage, the draft Atlas report is set to be reviewed by regional experts, including representatives of Member States, at a consultative workshop in Cairo, Egypt on 26 to 28 September 2022. It is set to be finalized by mid-2023 and launched in a subsequent ordinary session of AMCEN.

## **B. Africa Green Stimulus Programme**

64. The African Green Stimulus Programme was developed and adopted by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) as an innovative African-led initiative to support the continent's recovery in a sustainable manner, to the devastating socio-economic and environmental impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

65. The programme provides an overarching framework to support the implementation of environment and sustainable development initiatives in Africa, while identifying new areas requiring strategic interventions. It is intended to bring about a common and unifying continental response by enhancing and forging cooperation and partnerships between and among African governments, non-state actors, inter-governmental organisations, and the private sector in support of a comprehensive green recovery for Africa.

66. The programme was presented to the special session on environment and natural resources of the African Union's specialised technical committee on agriculture, rural development, water and environment on 13 November 2020. Subsequently, the programme was presented to the African ministers of environment at the eighth special session of the Conference that took place on 4 December 2020 where the ministers welcomed its development, provided inputs, and expressed their general support for the programme. The programme was eventually adopted as of 31 December 2020.

67. The programme was adopted by the African Heads of State and Government as an initiative to contribute towards Africa's green recovery to the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic at the thirty-fifth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, which took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 5 and 6 February 2022.

68. A coordinating committee has been established to provide oversight to the development and implementation of the programme. A working group has been established comprising representatives from several inter-governmental agencies and regional organizations to oversee the operational aspects of the programme. An online platform has been developed for sharing of information on the Programme and for the application of programmes seeking under the umbrella of the African Green Stimulus Programme. The online platform, hosted by the African Union Development Agency was launched during the Ministerial segment of part one of the eighteenth ordinary session of the Conference on 16 September 2021.

69. In the meantime, a mapping exercise is being undertaken to highlight on-going initiatives and identify new areas requiring strategic interventions. Case studies are being undertaken to understand the nature of resources (and estimated amounts) needed for all the key priority areas proposed and deliver a prioritized resource mobilization strategy as part of the programme.

70. A detailed progress report on the development and implementation of the African green stimulus programme has been prepared as document AMCEN/18(II)/3.

## **C. Development of an African strategy for ocean governance**

71. In the Cairo Declaration on Managing Africa's Natural Capital for Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication, adopted by the Conference at its fifteenth session in 2015, African ministers for the environment agreed to "develop a governance strategy, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and regional seas conventions, on oceans and seas in Africa for the effective management of the region's shared maritime resources".

72. In the Nairobi Declaration on Turning Environmental Policies into Action through Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges in Africa, of September 2018, adopted by the Conference at its seventh special session, African ministers for the environment agreed to "urge African States to promote the growth and development of the regional ocean sector in a sustainable blue economy pathway and support the mainstreaming of aquatic biodiversity in all productive sectors with a view to sustainably harnessing the blue economy".

73. As part of the implementation of the above decisions, two consultative meetings were convened during the reporting period. The second consultative meeting on the development of an African strategy for ocean governance was held online on 21 and 22 October 2020 to discuss possible elements to be included in the strategy.

74. The discussions at this consultative meeting focused on the scope of the strategy, linkages to regional and global structures, cooperation and coordination and the implementation of existing and future strategies. The meeting addressed issues related to ecosystem approach, science for ocean governance as well as stakeholder engagement and blue economy. Meeting participants agreed that the development of the strategy should begin immediately upon the conclusion of the consultative meeting.

75. Following the initial consultative meetings, UNEP developed a first draft of the African ocean governance strategy, presenting the purpose, goal and objectives of the strategy, its strategic pillars and scenarios for developing and implementing African ocean governance frameworks.

76. Subsequently, the third consultative meeting, also virtual, was held on 16 June 2021<sup>1</sup> to review the structure and content of the draft African ocean governance strategy.

77. The three consultative meetings confirmed that there is a need for an overarching governance framework to be established under the strategy. The form and function of such a coordinating mechanism need to be further defined, elaborated and agreed upon. Further, given the multiplicity of governance frameworks and issues touching on different areas in the African ocean space, there is a need for forums in which sectors can meet to address specific needs and issues and to support the work of the overarching mechanism.

78. A detailed progress report on the development of an African Oceans Governance Strategy has been prepared as document AMCEN/18(II)/8.

## IV. Outcomes and outputs of Conference-related meetings

### A. Eighth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

79. The eighth special session of the Conference took place online on 30 November and 1 December 2020 for the experts and 4 December 2020 for the ministerial segment under the theme “*Enhancing environmental action for effective post-Covid-19 recovery in Africa*”. The theme was to encourage countries to take increased environmental action to protect and restore the environment, contribute to building back differently and better, increase resilience in the face of future crises, and make the environment an integral part of their economic recovery to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The meeting was attended by 42 member states with 30 at ministerial level. A pre-AMCEN major groups and civil society meeting was held on 26 November 2020.

80. The meeting supported the proposal for the holding a short virtual fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly session in February 2021 to consider only the Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work and Budget and a physical session in 2022 to consider substantive matters. It was also highlighted that the Africa region would assume the presidency of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and hence the need to agree on the African country to be nominated for the Presidency.

81. The meeting welcomed the process to develop an ambitious and transformative post-2020 global biodiversity framework for adoption at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity and agreed to continue working with the global community through the African group of negotiators on biodiversity to secure a robust, ambitious and transformative post-2020 global biodiversity framework in order to reverse biodiversity loss by the year 2030.

82. The special session emphasized the special needs and circumstances of Africa should be recognised and agreed to continue, under the leadership of the African group of negotiators on climate change, to effectively participate in the climate change negotiation process leading to the twenty-sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The meeting called for the finalization of the revised African climate change strategy led by

<sup>1</sup> The Chair’s summary for the third consultative meeting is available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/37920/AOGS%20chairmans%20summary%202021.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

the African Union Commission before twenty-sixth meeting through consultations with member states and relevant stakeholders. The meeting agreed to fully support the African member State that will host the twenty-seventh meeting in 2022.

83. The session recognized that the Covid-19 pandemic had placed additional pressure on Africa's socio-economic development and efforts to achieve sustainable development and called for continued efforts to conserve, protect and enhance the resilience of Africa's environment in order to avoid similar crises in future. The session agreed to adopt the continental-wide Africa green stimulus programme to support the continent's recovery to the devastating socio-economic and environmental impacts of the Covid-19 in a sustainable manner.

84. The session emphasized the need to align and integrate biodiversity conservation, climate action, waste and sustainable resource management, amongst others, as priorities in the post-Covid recovery phase in Africa.

## **B. Ninth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment**

85. The ninth special session of the Conference was held on 15 and 17 February 2022. The main objective of the ninth special session of AMCEN was to consider matters relating to the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

86. The special session provided an opportunity for the member States to be briefed on and finalize Africa's sponsored draft resolutions, including on green recovery, circular economy, biodiversity and health. The session helped strategize on how to support the Africa sponsored resolutions and any other resolutions sponsored by individual African countries, as well as global resolutions that were of interest to Africa.

87. The special session also deliberated on the nominations for the presidency and the Bureau of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly considering that the African region was assuming the Presidency of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly.

## **C. Meetings of the Bureau of the Conference**

88. Four formal meetings of the Bureau of the Conference were held during the reporting period. The thirtieth meeting of the Bureau of the Conference took place on 28 May 2020, the thirty-first meeting of the Bureau of the Conference took place from 26 to 27 May 2021, the thirty-second meeting of the Bureau of the Conference took place from 17 to 18 November 2021, while the thirty-third meeting of the Bureau of the Conference took place on 25 and 26 May 2022. Outcome statements of the key issues discussed at these Bureau meetings were circulated to all member States.

### **1. Thirtieth meeting of the Bureau of the Conference**

89. An online meeting of the Bureau of the Conference was convened by Ms. Barbara Creecy, Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries of South Africa and President of AMCEN on 28 May 2020, to discuss Africa's response to Covid-19 from an environment perspective.

90. The meeting was attended by all the Bureau countries namely Algeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, South Africa and Sudan. It was also attended by the African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency, UNEP and the AMCEN secretariat.

91. The Bureau expressed its concern that Covid-19 posed a serious challenge to achieving the aspirations of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The containment measures in Africa had consequences on the environment, due to waste from used face masks and gloves, and pollution because of chemicals being used to spray and sanitize places and buildings.

92. Due to Covid-19, key environmental meetings such as the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on biodiversity, the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and the twenty-sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change had been postponed. The postponement of these meetings was a concern as the international community was losing critical time to address the challenges associated with biodiversity loss, climate change and chemicals management, among other issues. To this end, the Bureau re-iterated the need to enhance the implementation of decisions of the Conference, including decisions emanating from the seventeenth session of the Conference that took place from 11 to 15 November 2019 in Durban, South Africa, which could contribute to Africa's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

93. The Bureau took note of the theme for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly which focused on nature-based solutions in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and agreed to ensure Africa's effective engagement during the first part of the session, as this theme addresses the priority of utilizing Africa's rich biodiversity and diverse ecosystems.

94. The Bureau observed that Covid-19 presented an opportunity to reset the global economy on a pathway towards a more environmentally sustainable and low-carbon developmental trajectory. Consequently, the Bureau agreed on the development of a green stimulus programme as a priority initiative to contribute to the overall Covid-19 recovery plan for Africa.

## **2. Thirty-first meeting of the Bureau of the Conference**

95. During its thirty-first meeting that was held online on 26 and 27 May 2021, the Bureau of the Conference reviewed implementation of the decisions of the eighth special session of the Conference held on 4 December 2020 and discussed developments and emerging issues.

96. The Bureau acknowledged the progress made towards the operationalization of the African green stimulus programme and reiterated the importance of the programme to support the continent's recovery from the devastating socio-economic and environmental impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic in a sustainable manner.

97. The Bureau took note of the need to align the stimulus programme to Africa's agenda 2063 and recommended the inclusion of a key result area on disaster risk management, as well as limiting plastic use through enhanced management. In their deliberations, the Bureau called upon member States to actively engage in the global actions to combat plastic pollution, including through support for a global agreement to address plastic waste and to prepare for common African positions for global discussions on this issue.

98. The Bureau recognized that the twenty-sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change offered an opportunity for countries to scale up ambition to address climate change and encouraged the African group of negotiators on climate change to continue advocating for the interests of Africa. The Bureau acknowledged that African countries remained committed to updating their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

99. The Bureau appreciated the work of the African group of negotiators on biodiversity who have continued their engagements to formulate common African positions on key biodiversity issues. The Bureau emphasized the importance of finalizing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the need to ensure Africa's concerns are taken into consideration, including means of implementation, together with set targets which should be an integral part of the framework.

100. The Bureau reiterated the decisions on biodiversity made at the seventeenth session of the Conference and for the Africa group of negotiators to continue developing common positions on key issues including resource mobilization, raising the levels of ambition, biodiversity and human health linkages, local community participation, as well as the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. The Bureau supported the proposal to hold an extraordinary session of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (to be organized in a virtual format in December 2021, to adopt an interim budget while understanding that the Conference of the Parties will be rescheduled to a later date in 2022).

101. The Bureau took note of the outcomes of the first part of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, which took place online on 22 to 23 February 2021, especially on the procedural decisions, namely, the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy for 2022 to 2025, programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022 to 2023; management of trust funds and earmarked contributions; and adjournment and resumption of the fifth session of the Assembly to February 2022. In this regard, the Bureau urged African member states, at the earliest moment, to express their willingness to represent the region and serve on the Bureau of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, including its Presidency.

102. The Bureau, considering the then on-going spread and impacts of Covid 19 pandemic, recommended the convening of the eighteenth session of AMCEN in two parts, that is, part one during the week of 13 to 17 September 2021 (in an online format) to deliberate on urgent and procedural matters, and part two to be held between June and October 2022 (in a physical format) to deliberate on substantive matters.

### 3. **Thirty-second meeting of the Bureau of the Conference**

103. The thirty-second meeting of the Bureau of the Conference was convened by Mr. Abdou Karim Sall, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Senegal and President of AMCEN on 17 and 18 November 2021.

104. The meeting considered the outcomes of the first part of the eighteenth session of AMCEN and matters requiring urgent attention, including the modalities for the nomination of Africa's representative and President of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and the overall preparations for Africa's participation in the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, to be held in 2022.

105. Regarding matters requiring urgent attention, the Bureau established a coordination committee to oversee the operational aspects of the African Green Stimulus Programme, to be comprised of core members and partners as observers. The Bureau endorsed the membership, terms of reference, roles and responsibilities of the coordination committee.

106. The Bureau agreed on the need for a regional approach for engagement on the proposed global legally binding agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution, to ensure that Africa speaks in one voice during the negotiations. It proposed that a core group of countries be tasked to lead in the negotiations on behalf of the African region on the proposed Environment Assembly resolution, and the subsequent arrangements in the intergovernmental negotiating committee.

107. The core group of African countries would be composed of representatives of the current Bureau of AMCEN, namely, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritania, Senegal and Sudan, and the African Group in Nairobi. The Bureau proposed that the core group be chaired by Rwanda, as the co-sponsor of the draft resolution to be tabled at the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly and be co-chaired by Ghana.

108. The Bureau mandated the Secretariat, working with the President, to organize and facilitate the ninth special session of AMCEN to be held from 15 to 17 February 2022, in a hybrid format. The main objective of the special session would be for the African region to prepare for and consider matters relating to the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly.

### 4. **Thirty-third meeting of the Bureau of the Conference**

109. The thirty-third meeting of the Bureau of the Conference was convened by Mr. Abdou Karim Sall, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Senegal and President of AMCEN on 25 and 26 May 2022.

110. The meeting considered and acknowledged the overall participation of Africa in the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the special session to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of UNEP, including the assumption by Ms. Leila Benali, Minister of Energy, Transition, and Sustainable Development of Morocco, as President of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly and Mr. Abdou Karim Sall, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Senegal, as Vice-President of the Bureau, as well as the adoption of Africa's common sponsored resolutions.

111. The Bureau expressed its appreciation to the African Diplomatic Corps in Nairobi for ensuring the effective participation of the Africa region in the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly and the special session to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of UNEP. The Bureau endorsed the need for early preparation for the Africa region for the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, which will take place from 26 February to 1 March 2024, and called upon the African Diplomatic Corps in Nairobi to prepare a roadmap and action plan including on Africa interests in the implementation of Environment Assembly resolutions.

112. The Bureau urged member states to actively participate in the fourth meeting of the open-ended working group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework that took place from 21 to 26 June 2022 in Nairobi and the resumed fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, scheduled to take place later in 2022 in Montreal, Canada, so as to support the priority interests of Africa.

113. On the preparations for the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Bureau re-iterated the commitment of AMCEN to work with and support the Arab Republic of Egypt in hosting the Conference to ensure that the Conference of the Parties as an "African COP" is successful. The Bureau encouraged the Africa Group of Negotiators on climate change to continue with preparations to ensure that Africa's interests are well represented during the Conference. The Bureau acknowledged the importance of the preparatory

meeting for the Conference that is scheduled to take place from 3 to 9 October 2022 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and urged member States to actively participate in the meeting.

114. The Bureau agreed that Africa must effectively participate in the development of the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution. In this regard, the Bureau called for a process of negotiations, that was to be discussed during the open-ended working group meeting in Dakar from 30 May to 1 June 2022, to take Africa's interests into account, especially regarding rules of procedure, full participation, physical attendance, venues and number of future meetings.

115. Regarding the preparation for the resumed eighteenth session of AMCEN, the Bureau agreed on the key agenda items, date and format of the session. The Bureau agreed that the resumed session be held in a physical format, from 12 to 16 September 2022, in Dakar.

## **V. Considerations for the Conference at the resumed eighteenth session**

116. The urgency to accelerate progress, in turning decisions to action cannot be overstated. Effective implementation of the decisions of the Conference and the African green stimulus programme is key in supporting the continent's recovery in a sustainable manner, to the devastating socio-economic and environmental impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

117. Member states should take immediate steps to clear the arrears and sustain their contributions to the trust fund of the Conference which is one of the mechanisms available for financing the implementation of the decisions of the Conference, including the Africa green stimulus programme.

118. The present report is submitted for noting and consideration by the Conference at its resumed eighteenth session.

---