



AMCEN



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African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

Nineteenth session

Expert group meeting

Addis Ababa, 14–16 August 2023

Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

Consideration of the report of the secretariat of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

Report of the secretariat for the period from September 2022 to July 2023**

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment was established to promote regional cooperation between African Governments and stakeholders in addressing emerging environmental challenges. Through the work of the Conference, there has been heightened policy responses and actions by Governments, civil society, and private sector to transform Africa's sustainable development pathways.
2. The Conference holds its ordinary sessions once every two or three years and provides a platform for African ministers to develop decisions and resolutions aimed at moving forward the environmental agenda in the region. The Regional Office for Africa of the United Nations Environment Programme serves as the secretariat for the Conference.
3. The aim of the present report is to provide information to participants at the nineteenth ordinary session of the Conference on the status of implementation of decisions adopted by the Conference at its resumed eighteenth ordinary session, held in Dakar, Senegal from 12 to 16 September 2022, and of other related initiatives during the reporting period.
4. The report provides a summary of several 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 during the reporting period. The report also provides information on key Conference related meetings during the intersessional period. Finally, the report provides some recommendations for consideration by the Conference at the nineteenth ordinary session.

II. Status of implementation of the decisions adopted by the Conference at its resumed eighteenth ordinary session

5. The resumed eighteenth ordinary session emphasized the need for environmental actions that create jobs, improve livelihoods, and ensure people's well-being. Accordingly, the session reviewed

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environmental challenges and opportunities in Africa in the post-Covid-19 era and considered other issues related to sustainable development in Africa.

6. The Conference adopted the Dakar declaration on securing people's well-being and ensuring environmental sustainability in Africa. The Dakar declaration expressed full commitment to strengthen the Conference as the principal forum for advancing collective national and regional environmental policies and actions. In addition, four decisions on key environmental issues requiring a strong commitment by African Ministers of environment were adopted at the meeting.

A. Decision 18/1, an omnibus decision on enhancing the role of the Conference

7. The decision has several parts, including: (a) Fostering sustainable soil governance in Africa; (b) Towards phasing out open burning of waste in Africa; (c) Environmental solutions to antimicrobial resistance in Africa; (d) Strengthening collaboration with African Ministers of Finance and Economic Planning; (e) Enhancing the role of environment protection agencies in Africa; (f) Review of the rules of procedure of AMCEN; and (g) Provisional agenda, date and venue of the nineteenth ordinary session of AMCEN.

1. Fostering sustainable soil governance in Africa

8. The decision stressed the urgent need to enhance sustainable soil governance for protecting biodiversity, providing ecosystem services, food systems, combating climate change, desertification, deforestation and pollution as well as promoting land degradation neutrality and for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. Limited progress has been made in the implementation of this decision. However, the secretariat, working with partners intends to develop a mapping strategy on soils governance to inform further actions that are needed.

2. Towards phasing out open burning of waste in Africa

10. In the decision, African countries committed to reducing open dumping and burning of waste in Africa and to promote the use of waste as a resource for value and job creation so as to build more inclusive and sustainable economies and called upon development partners to support African countries to reduce methane and black carbon emissions associated with waste. A detailed presentation and discussion will be made under item 4 (d) of the expert agenda. However, it is important to highlight the following:

11. A multi-stakeholder partnership for the elimination of open burning of waste in Africa was launched at the twenty-seventh Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in November 2022 in Sharm el Sheikh by the President of AMCEN in the presence of representatives of other strategic partners and local governments.

12. A steering committee for the partnership has been established under the co-chairmanship of the AMCEN Secretariat and Urban Cities and Local Governments of Africa and continues to provide strategic guidance for the activities of the partnership.

13. Active engagement has been carried out targeting selected strategic partners and additional members representing industries and relevant civil societies have joined the partnership as founding members. The founding members include: AMCEN secretariat, Engineering X, United Nations High Level Champions, Urban Cities and Local Governments of Africa, Climate and Clean Air Coalition, International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)-Africa, and Practical Action. Additional members who have joined the partnership include Global Cement and Concrete Association, International Solid Waste Management Association, Airtel, **Green Africa Youth Organization** and Stockholm Environment Institute-Africa Centre (SEI Africa).

14. A financial grant amounting to five hundred thousand British pounds (£500,000) was allocated by Engineering X for activities on phasing out open burning of waste. A total of sixteen grants were awarded, with a global reach across 13 different countries. Six of these projects are focused on the African continent in Malawi, Senegal, Benin, Uganda, and Nigeria, and one with a regional focus to be implemented by ICLEI-Africa.

15. The Waste Hub Grant of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition has allocated about US Dollars 1.3 million for supporting 'Transformative action in the waste sector' in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

3. Environmental solutions to antimicrobial resistance in Africa

16. The decision recognized that antimicrobial resistance poses an increasing threat to global health and sustainable development and stressed the need to take urgent and collective action to prevent and minimize its adverse impacts. Progress made include:

17. Several educational materials on antimicrobial resistance, including a comic book, a video, and a training manual have been developed by the African Union Commission. These materials have been translated into several African languages and are being used to raise awareness of antimicrobial resistance among healthcare workers, policy-makers, and the general public.

18. Several countries in Africa are working to strengthen their antimicrobial resistance surveillance systems. For example, South Africa has established a national antimicrobial resistance reference laboratory.

19. Other countries including Kenya, South Africa and Uganda have developed national antimicrobial resistance action plans consistent with the Global Action Plan. The United Nations Environment Programme has contributed to the review of several country antimicrobial resistance action plans including in Nigeria, South Sudan and the Gambia. The United Nations Environment Programme, alongside other quadripartite partners have been involved in the development of antimicrobial resistance multi-partner trust fund proposals for Tunisia, Madagascar and Ghana.

20. The United Nations Environment Programme is working closely with member States to raise awareness of antimicrobial resistance in Africa. The United Nations Environment Programme as a member of the African region quadripartite group has been involved in organizing the world antimicrobial resistance awareness week which is a global campaign that is celebrated annually to improve awareness and understanding of antimicrobial resistance and encourage best practices among the public, one-health stakeholders and policymakers, who all play a critical role in reducing the further emergence and spread of antimicrobial resistance.

21. Quadripartite agencies Food and Agriculture Organization, World Organization for Animal Health, World Health Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, other United Nations agencies, and the World Bank, in the context of the United Nations reform, are expected to further strengthen the joint one-health action, based on target-setting, country priorities and needs, by enhancing their organizational capacity and providing adequate and sustainable core funding for antimicrobial resistance related activities.

22. Stronger political leadership, advocacy, coordination, and accountability are needed at all levels to enable a sustained one-health response to antimicrobial resistance. The development and implementation of one-health national antimicrobial resistance action plans need to be accelerated within the context of the sustainable development goals. There is need for systematic and meaningful engagement of civil society groups and organizations as key stakeholders in the one-health response to antimicrobial resistance at global, regional, national and local levels.

4. Strengthening collaboration with African Ministers of Finance and Economic Planning

23. The decision provided for the need for the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment to engage with the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development with a view to accelerating sustainable, long-term formal collaboration that would ensure impactful and innovative socio-economic and environmental transformation in Africa.

24. Subsequently, the Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development at its fifty-fifth session held in Addis Ababa in March 2023, through resolution 2023/6, committed to collaborate with the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment in forging collective efforts and actions to accelerate socio-economic and environmental development and green investments in Africa and the mobilization of climate finance.

25. The secretariat of the Conference will continue to engage with the secretariat of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank and the African Union Commission towards enhancing this collaboration.

5. Enhancing the role of environment protection agencies in Africa

26. The decision welcomed the establishment of a forum that brings together heads of environment protection agencies in Africa to share experiences, knowledge exchange, and best practices, advance science to policy interface and find solutions on technical and operational challenges. Substantial progress has been made in implementing this decision and the issue will be

discussed in detail under agenda item 4 (b) of the expert group meeting. However, it is important to highlight that:

27. The Africa Office of the United Nations Environment Programme, in collaboration with the Rwanda Environment Management Authority, hosted the first formal roundtable meeting for the Africa Forum of Environment Protection Agencies in Kigali, Rwanda, 7 to 8 March 2023.

28. A blueprint for the Africa Forum of Environment Protection Agencies, the establishment of the forum's framework and data management system, the identification of priority areas for immediate action, the election of office bearers, and the designation of the AMCEN secretariat as the host of the Africa Forum of Environment Protection Agencies were agreed upon.

6. Review of the rules of procedure of AMCEN

29. Decision 18/1(f) agreed that the rules of procedure of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment should be reviewed. The secretariat has initiated the process of engaging a consultant to review and identify areas that require revision in line with the Constitution of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment.

B. Decision 18/2 on Africa's participation in the development of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment

30. The decision welcomed the establishment of the African Group of Negotiators on plastics pollution to coordinate Africa's interests and urged Member States to prepare and actively participate in the intergovernmental negotiation committee processes to develop an international legally binding instrument towards ending plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. It also urged Member States to upscale measures to address plastic pollution, including microplastics, that addresses the full life cycle of plastic to achieve sustainable production and consumption of plastics.

31. Good progress has been made towards the implementation of this decision and a detailed progress report is available in document AMCEN/19/2 and discussions will be taken up under agenda items 6 and 5 of the expert group meeting and the ministerial meeting respectively.

32. In addition, as part of preparations for INC-3, a physical in-person regional consultation of the African Group of Negotiators will be held later in October 2023 in Kampala, Uganda. This meeting will provide an opportunity for the African Group of Negotiators to further strategize and coordinate their efforts, enhancing their effectiveness and unity in influencing the outcomes of INC-3.

33. However, there is need to strengthen the work of the Africa Group of Negotiators that are involved in the chemicals and waste family, including for the plastics pollution, Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, as well as Minamata and others.

C. Decision 18/3 on biodiversity, wildlife and desertification

34. This decision urged Member States to provide the needed political leadership and direction for the adoption and implementation of an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework and to raise the visibility of biodiversity and its contribution to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063. It called for the effective participation of Africa in the second part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties on biodiversity that took place in December 2022 in Montreal, and to champion the position of Africa in the global biodiversity framework negotiations.

35. The African Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity, coordinated by the AMCEN Secretariat, negotiated based on the agreed African group common position endorsed by Ministers at the resumed eighteenth session of AMCEN. Detailed discussions will be taken up under agenda item 9 of the expert group meeting.

36. However, there is need to strengthen the work of the Africa Group of Negotiators in the biodiversity family, including on wildlife and for the Convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora.

D. Decision 19/4 on climate change

37. The decision appreciated the work of the African Group of Negotiators on climate change, who have continued to advocate for the interests of Africa and agreed to the Africa common position and key policy messages of the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. This decision and key messages endorsed

at the resumed eighteenth session were used as a basis for Africa's common negotiating position during the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of Parties in Sharm el Sheikh.

38. The African group of negotiators made some key submissions on behalf of the continent at the Conference of Parties, including on adaptation, loss and damage, climate finance, and Africa's special needs and circumstances.

39. A consultative meeting of African ministers was organized by the secretariat of the Conference in Sharm el Sheikh 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.

III. Implementation of Conference-related activities for the period from September 2022 to July 2023

40. A number of Conference-related activities were undertaken during the reporting period, including the implementation of previous decisions of the Conference.

A. Biodiversity

41. At its seventeenth ordinary session held in Durban in 2019, the Conference adopted the Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience as Africa's commitment to implement the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030, and invited all member States to swiftly embark on its implementation, building on existing initiatives and programmes, and invited United Nations entities, the African Development Bank, development partners and relevant organizations to provide all necessary support to implement the Pan-African Action Agenda.

42. The Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration is a commitment by African countries to restore 100 million hectares of degraded land by 2030. It has successfully raised awareness, improved coordination, increased funding, and boosted restoration activities in Africa. It is a significant achievement aligned with the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, showcasing Africa's leadership in global restoration efforts through initiatives such as:

(a) The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative which is a pan-African initiative to plant a 100-million-hectare (247-million-acre) strip of trees and vegetation across the Sahel region, from Senegal to Djibouti. The initiative is still in its early stages, but it has already planted over 10 million trees and created over 1 million jobs.

(b) The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration is a global initiative to restore degraded ecosystems. In Africa, the initiative is focusing on restoring forests, grasslands, and wetlands. The initiative has already restored over 1 million hectares (2.5 million acres) of land in Africa.

(c) The Forest Ecosystem Restoration Initiative is a regional initiative to restore degraded forests in West Africa. The initiative is working with communities to plant trees, improve land management practices, and promote sustainable livelihoods. The initiative has already restored over 500,000 hectares (1.2 million acres) of land in West Africa.

(d) The Central African Forest Initiative is a regional initiative to protect and manage the forests of the Congo Basin. The initiative is working with governments, communities, and businesses to combat illegal logging, reduce deforestation, and promote sustainable forest management. The Central African Forest Initiative has already helped to reduce deforestation rates in the Congo Basin by 20%.

(e) The African Union's flagship programme on climate change, biodiversity and land degradation is a continental initiative to address the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation. The initiative is working with governments, communities, and businesses to develop and implement policies and programs to address these challenges.

(f) The Integrated Lake Basin Management Initiative is a regional initiative to manage the shared water resources of Africa's Lake basins. The initiative is working with governments, communities, and businesses to improve water quality, reduce pollution, and promote sustainable water use. The Lake Basin Management Initiative has already helped to improve the water quality of Lake Victoria by 50%.

(g) The Mangrove Capital Africa programme is a regional initiative to restore and conserve mangrove forests in Africa. The initiative is working with governments, communities, and

businesses to plant mangrove trees, improve mangrove management practices, and promote sustainable livelihoods. The Mangrove Capital Africa programme has already planted over 1 million mangrove trees in Africa.

B. Circular economy

43. At the seventeenth ordinary session of the Conference, the African Union Commission, the United Nations Environment Programme, the regional economic communities and other partners were requested to support the contextualization of the circular economy to the needs and resource profiles of Africa and prepare a regional programme and the necessary toolkits for capacity building.

44. To operationalize this decision, the African Union Commission established an expert working group on circular economy in 2020. The Commission is in the process of developing a circular economy action plan, which includes an implementation and resource mobilization strategy. This plan will ultimately provide a vision for the entire continent, as well as guidance and alignment for regions and countries on their circular economy activities.

45. The African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and the United Nations Environment Programme have collaborated to develop regional circular economy guidelines in Africa. These guidelines aim to provide a framework for promoting and implementing circular economy practices across the continent.

46. Several countries in Africa have developed national circular economy guidelines and policies to promote the adoption of circular economy principles. Mauritius and Ethiopia have developed a national circular economy policy and implementation plan; South Africa has focused on the circular economy within its national waste management strategy; Rwanda has developed a specific circular economy strategy; Egypt has established a national framework for the circular economy; Ghana has developed a national circular economy policy and implementation plan; Kenya is currently implementing a circular economy strategy; Morocco has adopted a national circular economy plan; and Nigeria has established a national steering committee on the circular economy.

47. These efforts reflect the commitment of these countries to transition towards a more sustainable and circular approach to economic development. Other African countries are also developing circular economy plans to address environmental challenges and promote sustainable development, as the need for sustainable practices become increasingly important in the region.

C. Development of an Atlas of Africa's natural capital

48. In the Cairo Declaration and decision 15/1 on sustainably harnessing Africa's natural capital in the context of Agenda 2063, African ministers for the environment recommended that the status of natural capital in national planning and financing be elevated to that of strategic national resources and be managed and used in that context in order to secure its sustainability and contribution to economic development and environmental stability.

49. The United Nations Environment Programme, in collaboration with the African Development Bank and other partners, organized a technical review meeting in May 2023 in Cairo, Egypt, to prepare the "Atlas of Africa's Natural Capital". The aim of the atlas is to comprehensively assess the continent's natural resources and provide maps, charts, and time series images aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

50. The development process involves data collection, analysis, validation surveys, and the use of Geographic Information Systems technology. The purpose of the meeting was to conduct a technical peer review of the draft Atlas, ensuring accuracy, adequate coverage, and enhancing the quality of the final version. The target audience included policymakers, investors, academics, and the general public.

IV. Outcomes and outputs of Conference-related meetings

A. Meetings of the Bureau of the Conference

51. One formal meeting of the Bureau of the Conference was held during the reporting period.

Thirty-fourth meeting of the Bureau of the Conference

52. The thirty-fourth meeting of the Bureau of the Conference was convened by H.E. Alioune Ndoye, Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Ecological Transition of Senegal and

President of AMCEN on 20 April 2023. The meeting was attended by four of the Bureau members, namely, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritania and Senegal.

53. The meeting was also attended by H.E. Ambassador Josefa Sacko, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment of the African Union Commission, and Mr. Frank Turyatunga, Director and Regional Representative, Africa Office, United Nations Environment Programme and staff of the Secretariat of AMCEN.
54. The Bureau appreciated the work of the African Group of Negotiators on climate change and took note of the outcomes of the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, especially, with regard to loss and damage as advocated for by the Africa group.
55. The Bureau acknowledged the outcomes of the Yangambi International Scientific Conference that was organized by the Democratic Republic of Congo in partnership with the Arab Republic of Egypt as part of the preparatory work for the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties and noted the importance of convening such scientific conferences, where possible, to ensure that the African region has access to the latest science before the different Conference of Parties.
56. The Bureau took note of the several scheduled meetings to further develop the African common position prior to the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties. It encouraged the African Group of Negotiators on climate change to continue with the necessary preparations to ensure that Africa's interests are well represented during the Conference of the Parties.
57. The Bureau acknowledged the importance of the Africa Climate Summit that is scheduled to take place from 4 to 6 September 2023 in Kenya, the Africa Climate Week, and other associated events, and urged member states to actively participate in these events.
58. The Bureau took note of the progress made in operationalizing the African Group of Negotiators on plastic pollution and in advancing Africa's interests in the intergovernmental negotiation committee processes to develop an international legally binding instrument towards ending plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. It urged member States to finalize the coordination mechanism and operational modalities of the African Group of Negotiators on plastic pollution.
59. The Bureau took note of the various meetings that have been held by the African Group of Negotiators on plastic pollution including the Africa regional plastic diplomacy training that was held in Naivasha, Kenya in 2022. It expressed its appreciation to UNEP and other partners for the support provided to the work of the African Group of Negotiators on plastic pollution.
60. The Bureau urged Member States to prepare and actively participate in the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiation committee meetings to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, so as to advance Africa's interests in the negotiations. It requested the African Group of Negotiators on plastic pollution to engage the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment of the African Union Commission so as to align their work with the African Union policies and structures.
61. The Bureau acknowledged the outcomes of the second part of the fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and in particular, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the active role played by the African Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity and urged Member States to provide the needed political leadership and direction for the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework.
62. The Bureau welcomed the outcomes of the First Roundtable Meeting for the African Forum of Environment Protection Agencies held on 7 and 8 March 2023 in Kigali, Rwanda, and encouraged them to advance the science to policy interface and find solutions on technical and operational challenges.
63. Regarding the preparation for the nineteenth ordinary session of AMCEN, the Bureau agreed on the key agenda items, date, and format of the session. The Bureau agreed that the nineteenth ordinary session of AMCEN be held in a physical and online format, from 14 to 18 August 2023, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
64. H.E. Ambassador Josefa Sacko, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment of the African Union Commission, encouraged Ministers responsible for the environment to attend the meeting of the Specialised Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment to be held in November 2023 in

Addis Ababa so as to ensure that the outcomes and priorities of AMCEN are endorsed and considered by the Africa Union structures.

VI. Considerations for the Conference at the nineteenth ordinary session

65. Member states have previously committed to making the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment the principal forum for establishing regional environmental policies with effective mechanisms for implementation. The uptake and implementation of the decisions of the Conference by member States and stakeholders continues to be limited. There is urgent need for member States and stakeholders to take concrete actions to implement past and future decisions of the Conference.

66. The non-contribution by most member States to the general trust fund has continued to affect the ability of the Conference to effectively carry out its activities. 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 for the implementation of the decisions of the Conference.

67. Through decisions of the Conference, several African Group of Negotiators have been established, including on climate change, biodiversity and plastic pollution. These groups require substantial technical and financial support to operate optimally. The Conference should therefore explore mechanisms for providing this support to these groups of negotiators.

68. The present report is submitted for noting and consideration by the Conference at its nineteenth ordinary session.
