

Regional Consultative Meeting of the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa Ahead of the Nineteenth Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN)

Concept Note
12th-13th August 2023

Theme: Seizing opportunities and enhancing collaboration to address environmental challenges in Africa

Introduction

The Nineteenth Session of the AMCEN will be held at the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 14th to 18th August 2023 under the theme, **“Seizing opportunities and enhancing collaboration to address environmental challenges in Africa”**. Since its inception in 1985, the AMCEN has been bringing together African ministers of the environment together and providing a platform for dialogue on pertinent environmental issues that concern the sustainable development of the African continent. With various decisions having been taken over the three decades of the AMCEN, the Nineteenth session of the AMCEN will focus on strengthening institutional collaboration and enhancing the implementation of global and regional collaboration frameworks with a view to addressing Africa’s environmental challenges. In keeping with tradition and to create adequate, organized space for African non-state actors on the environment to represent the voices of their communities and contribute to the African environmental agenda, the Major Groups and Stakeholders of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), Africa, will hold their Regional Consultative Meeting (RCM) on the 12th and 13th August 2023 at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and engage actively in the Nineteenth Session of the AMCEN.

The 2023 Regional Consultative Meeting, Africa

Purpose

The 2023 Regional Consultative Meeting (RCM), Africa seeks to provide an in-person and virtual dialogic and expert platform of UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa and other actors on the environment into a two-day meeting to prepare inputs for the Nineteenth session of the AMCEN.

Themes

The RCM will engage UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa on the following themes:

1. Implementation of the AMCEN Decisions

Previous sessions of the AMCEN have arrived at important decisions about conserving the environment on the continent and safeguarding the livelihoods of the peoples of Africa. UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa find it progressive that the African ministers of the environment will look back and review the progress in the implementation of previous AMCEN decisions while looking into emerging environmental issues. The focus on issues related to the Africa Green Stimulus

Programme, African Forum of Environment Protection Agencies, critical minerals and their role in energy transitions in Africa, phasing out open burning of waste in Africa, Africa Environment Partnership Platform, collaboration with African ministers of finance and economic planning, and circular economy is highly welcome. In consistency with the agenda of the Nineteenth Session of the AMCEN, key among the decisions that the 2023 RCM will focus on include:

- **Africa Green Stimulus Programme**
- **Critical minerals and their role in energy transitions in Africa**
- **Phasing out open burning of waste in Africa**
- **Africa Environment Partnership Platform**
- **Collaboration with African ministers of finance and economic planning;**
- **Circular economy**

2. Climate Change

The Nineteenth Session of the AMCEN happens at a time when Africa is facing some of the worst climate-related catastrophes despite being “one of the lowest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions causing climate change...”¹ Due to climate change, Africa is recording increased heat waves and drought, which is affecting both the livelihoods of her people and causing significant derailment on the development of the Continent at large. From dying glaciers in the Eastern African mountains of Kenya, Ruwenzori, and Kilimanjaro to the catastrophic drought and growing desertification in the Western Sahel and Northern Africa, to tropical cyclones in southern Africa, and flooding in Western Africa, climate change and climate-related risks remain an ongoing threat to the sustainable development and survival of Africa and her people. The Nineteenth Session of the AMCEN provides an opportunity for Africa to prepare for the Africa Climate Week and the historic Africa Climate Week to be held in Nairobi, Kenya in September and to form a common position for the benefit of the continent and her people ahead of the UNFCCC COP28 in December.

3. Implications of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework on Africa

With Africa’s biodiversity facing significant threats aggravated by climate change and human activity, reviewing the implications of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework is vital for a continent that is home to about 25% of the global biodiversity and supporter of “the earth’s largest intact assemblages of large mammals.”² Looking forward, African Ministers of the Environment will need to establish clear mechanisms, processes, and guidelines to strengthen their commitment to protecting and halting the loss of biodiversity in Africa by domesticating the 23 targets and 4 goals of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to the African context.

¹ Trisos, C.H. et al. (2022). Africa. In H.-O. Pörtner et al., “Climate Change 2022: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, p. 1289, doi:10.1017/9781009325844.011.

² UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The state of biodiversity in Africa: A mid-term review of progress towards the Aichi biodiversity targets. Nairobi, Kenya. <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/gbo4/outlook-africa-en.pdf>.

4. Plastic Pollution and the International Legally Binding Instrument to End Plastic Pollution

Plastic pollution is an eyesore, a threat to human health, and a sustainability impediment around the world. In Africa, the producer and consumer of only 5% and 4% of the over 400 million tons of plastic produced around the world annually, single-use plastic usage is on the rise and poses both health and environmental pollution threats³. Subsequent to Resolution 5/14 of the Resumed Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2) entitled, “End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument,” Africa played an instrumental role to host the Ad hoc open-ended working group (OEWG) to prepare for the intergovernmental negotiating committee on plastic pollution in Senegal in June 2022. Since then, discussions have advanced through the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) whose third session (INC-3) will be held in Nairobi in November. UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa welcome the decision to include the discussions about the instrument in the agenda of the Nineteenth Session of the AMCEN and will utilize the RCM to reaffirm the significance of state-non-state stakeholder cooperation in delivering for the world an ambitious and deliverable instrument to end plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

5. UNEA-6

Next year, Africa will pride herself in presiding over the Sixth session of the UNEA (UNEA-6) in Nairobi. This is an opportune moment for African ministers and the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa to reassure the world of their commitment to pro-people and pro-planet leadership by presenting a united front and collective engagement that will deliver a successful UNEA-6. Even then, it should be noted that there are several UNEA-5 resolutions whose implementation is still lagging behind and this requires intentional attention to fast-track. The preparation of African ministers of the environment for the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5) in Bonn, Germany also comes at a time when discussions on the implementation of UNEA 5 Resolution 5/7 on Sound management of chemicals and waste are ongoing. Linking the ICCM5 to Africa’s priorities as promulgated in Resolution 5/7 could help advance progressive, collective engagement to address chemicals and waste based on the priorities identified during Africa’s regional Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) consultations in Ghana in 2022.

Target Audience

The regional consultation meeting will bring together UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS), Africa, non-accredited regional MGS partners, UN Environment staff, and resource people relevant to the theme of the Nineteenth Session of the AMCEN with a target of 60 in-person participants and another 200 participants engaging virtually.

Principal Outcome

A joint (long and summary) statement of Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa to be

³ World Health Organization (WHO). (2023). *Tackling health impacts of plastic pollution in Africa*. <https://www.afro.who.int/news/tackling-health-impacts-plastic-pollution-africa#:~:text=In%20many%20African%20cities%20and,toxic%20gases%20and%20particulate%20matter>.

delivered to the African ministers of the environment at the Nineteenth Session of the AMCEN and subsequently published on the UNEP website for global visibility.

Other Outcomes

- Key messages for the Nineteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in line with this year's theme.
- Consultative dialogue and strengthening of UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa working relations.
- Strengthening partnerships and collaboration between governments and Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa.
- Consolidation of UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa roadmap and working groups towards the upcoming regional and global engagements including;
 - The Africa Climate Week and Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi, Kenya in September;
 - Third meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Indicators for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in Montreal, Canada in October.
 - The INC-3 in Nairobi, Kenya in November.
 - The UNFCCC COP28 in Dubai in December.
 - The Global Major Groups & Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF) in February in Nairobi, Kenya.
 - The Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, in February in Nairobi, Kenya.
 - The Sixth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6).