

# **The 2024 Regional Consultative Meeting of the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa Ahead of the Tenth Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN)**

## **Concept Note**

**1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2024**

**Venue: Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire**

**Theme: Raising Ambition for Accelerating Action on Drought Resilience, and Combating land degradation and desertification**

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### **Introduction**

The Tenth Special Session of the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) will be held on 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> September 2024 in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire with a focus on land degradation, desertification, and drought, under the theme, *“Raising Ambition for Accelerating Action on Drought Resilience, and Combating land degradation and desertification.”* 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 10th Special Session will discuss innovative actions to consolidate the momentum around land degradation, desertification, and drought, as a key challenge that further compounds the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals and Africa’s 2063 Agenda. The special session will articulate a strong position on land degradation, desertification, and drought and is expected to adopt decisions to accelerate and scale up the implementation of land degradation actions and solutions in Africa while building on key regional and global initiatives. The Tenth Special Session will explore multifaceted approaches needed to sustain the momentum around conserving existing ecosystems and turning degraded landscapes into thriving ecosystems, secure livelihoods, and build a more resilient future for generations to come.

To establish common ground, generate support within the Continent and to elevate the momentum around the most pressing, prevailing issues, the outcomes of the Session will also be presented at various global fora. Key among these is the upcoming Sixteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification ([UNCCD COP16](#)) to be held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from December 2 to 13, 2024, the [Summit for the Future](#) to be held in New York from September 22 to 23, 2024, the sixteenth session of the COP of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity ([UNCBD COP16](#)) in Colombia from October 21 to November 1, 2024 in Cali, Colombia, and at the Twenty-Ninth Session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC COP29](#)) to be held in Baku, Azerbaijan from November 11 to 22, 2024.

In keeping with established tradition and to institute adequate, organized space for African non-state actors on the environment to present and represent the voices of their communities while

contributing to the African environmental agenda, the Major Groups and Stakeholders of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), Africa (UNEP MGS, Africa), will hold their Regional Consultative Meeting (RCM) on the 1st and 2nd of September 2024 in **Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire** and engage meaningfully to contribute actively to the 10th Special Session of AMCEN.

### **The 2024 Regional Consultative Meeting, Africa**

#### **Purpose**

The 2024 Regional Consultative Meeting (RCM), Africa seeks to provide an in-person and virtual dialogic and expert platform of the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa and other actors on the environment through a two-day meeting to prepare inputs for the Tenth Session of the AMCEN.

#### **Themes**

The 2024 RCM Africa will engage UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders from Africa region on the following themes:

##### **1. Reducing Land Degradation, Desertification and Drought in Africa**

In Africa, degraded land translate to degraded livelihoods economically and socially. Aggravated by desertification and incessant bouts of drought, Africa faces an immense challenge in ensuring healthy, greener land in its quest to feed its growing population and ongoing developments. A [2020 policy brief](#) that was released by the Africa Group of Negotiators Experts Support (AGNES) singled out unsustainable and inefficient agricultural practices and deforestation as the dominant drivers of land degradation in Africa. The Policy Brief corroborated widely accepted estimates that indicate that about 46% of land area in Africa is degraded and that this has affected nearly half a billion people that translated to about USD 9.3 billion costs annually. Despite these worrying trends, African countries have been on the forefront of reducing land degradation with countries such as Botswana having recorded a reduction of degraded land by more than 50% from 36% to 17% with about 1.42 million hectares reclaimed, as [reported by the UNCCD](#). The ambitious Great Green Wall is another example of collaborative, regional efforts to restore land, reverse, and halt land degradation, desertification, and drought on the African continent. Reversing impacts of degraded lands, desertification, and drought would reverse the impact of climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and stabilize the food systems in Africa, which would, in turn, accelerate Africa's pathway towards achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and, particularly, SDGs 15, 2, 13, 1, and 3. Against this lived reality, 2024 RCM Africa will focus on the following pertinent matters concerning land degradation, desertification, and drought:

- **The effects of land degradation, desertification, and drought**
- **Recommendations for best grassroots practices for reversing/halting land degradation, desertification, and drought**
- **Policy recommendations on land degradation, desertification, and drought**

##### **2. Climate Change**

The Tenth Special Session of the AMCEN will, as previous sessions have, take place at a time while Africa continues to be the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change yet having contributed the least to the aggravation of the climate crisis. This Special Session will also happen at a time when the world seems to be making progress in the setting up of the Loss and Damage Fund from which Africa should rightfully benefit. The Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) identified “species extinction and ecosystem disruption, loss of food production, reduced economic output and increased poverty, increased disease and loss of human life, increased water and energy insecurity, loss of natural

and cultural heritage and compound extreme events harming human settlements and critical infrastructure,” as some of the key risks (potentially severe risks) that Africa faces due to climate change. The Tenth Special Session of the AMCEN will be an important opportunity for the African Ministers of the Environment to tap into the wealth of expertise and experiences of the African Group of Negotiators on climate and the Major Groups and Stakeholders to develop consolidated reflections of the outcomes of the [June 2024 Bonn Climate Change Conference](#) and the preparations for the UNFCCC COP29 in December, 2024. **RCM Africa 2024 will be an opportunity for UNEP Africa’s major groups and stakeholders to continue building on this momentum.**

### **3. Biodiversity and Nature Loss**

In terms of significance as a threat to humanity, biodiversity and nature loss ranks third only to carbon emissions and nuclear war.<sup>1</sup> As Africa continues to grapple with declining biodiversity, destruction of ecosystems and habitats, and lost livelihoods attributed to ecosystems services, the world is working towards ensuring that the targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF) are achieved. Last year, during the Nineteenth Ordinary Session of the AMCEN in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the AMCEN reached consensus on the need to prioritize biodiversity conservation as an opportunity to address environmental challenges in Africa. Part of this commitment includes the development and submission of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). So far, [only Uganda is on record as having submitted her NBSAPs in May 2024](#). The 2024 RCM Africa will be an opportunity for the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa; to exhort the African Ministers at the Tenth Session of the AMCEN to work on their NBSAPs and to set ambitious national targets to reverse and halt biodiversity and nature loss on the African continent for the benefit of people and planet.

### **4. Plastic Pollution**

Africa continues to struggle with containing plastic pollution – and pollution in general. Following Resolution 5/14 of the Resumed Fifth Session of UNEA 5.2 entitled, “End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument,” the ensuing processes of Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) came to an inconclusive pause after the fourth INC session (INC-4) in Ottawa, Canada, from 23 to 29 April 2024. With a potential fifth INC session (INC-5) likely to take place in April 2025, there is a high chance that Africa will not have had another opportunity to reflect together on the INC processes and to consolidate common positions before the said INC-5. The 2024 RCM Africa will also be an opportunity for UNEP Major Groups & Stakeholders to take stock of the INC processes, to chart a common way forward in the processes, and to engage meaningfully with the Tenth Session of the AMCEN to encourage discussions towards Africa holding a strong position for an ambitious, international legally binding treaty to end plastic pollution including in the marine environment.

### **5. UNEA Outcomes and Preparations for UNEA-7**

As expressed by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP),<sup>2</sup> which hosts the Secretariat of the AMCEN, one of the purposes of the AMCEN is to ensure that decisions made, form the basis for common negotiating positions of Africa at the forthcoming UN Environment Assembly

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sowc.alueducation.com/biodiversity-investment-research-and-advisory/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unep.org/regions/africa/african-ministerial-conference-environment/amcen-frequently-asked-questions#:~:text=Biodiversity%20loss%20is%20destroying%20the,the%20most%20vulnerable%20the%20hardest.>

(UNEA).

The Sixth Session of the UNEA (UNEA-6) that took place in Nairobi in February/March under the first-ever African presidency of Morocco delivered 15 resolutions and 6 decisions. Resolution 6/14 on, “Strengthening international efforts to combat desertification and land degradation, restore degraded land, promote land conservation and sustainable land management, contribute to land degradation neutrality and enhance drought resilience,” aligns well with the theme of the Tenth Session of the AMCEN. The 2024 RCM Africa will provide an opportunity for the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders to reflect on the outcomes of the UNEA-6 and their post-UNEA-6 meeting that was held virtually in order to discern how best to contribute to the Tenth Session of the AMCEN towards the implementation of past UNEA resolutions and, especially, Resolution 6/14.

On the other hand, Decision 6/7 of UNEA-6 concerning the Provisional agenda, dates and venue of the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly scheduled UNEA-7 for 8 to 12 December, 2025 in Nairobi. In accordance with the [UNEA Rules of Procedure](#), some matters such as the decisions on the theme of the UNEA 7 will have to be concluded by December 7, 2024. The drafting of the draft ministerial statement will also commence later this year. The 2024 RCM Africa shall deliberate on the following matters in this regard:

- **Reflections on the outcomes of UNEA-6**
- **Meaningful engagement and preparations for UNEA-7**
- **UNEA Accreditation**

### **Target Audience**

Building on the successes of the previous RCMs and, particularly, the 2023 RCM Africa, the 2024 RCM Africa targets to bring together, in total, 100 in-person and about 150 virtual participants comprising UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS), Africa; representatives of organizations accredited to the UNCCD; non-accredited non-state organizations; UN Environment staff; and key resource persons relevant to the proceedings of the Tenth Special Session of the AMCEN.

### **Principal Outcome**

A joint (long and summary) statement of Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa to be delivered to the African ministers of the environment at the Tenth Special Session of the AMCEN and subsequently published on the UNEP website for global visibility.

### **Other Outcomes**

- Key messages for the Tenth Special Session of the AMCEN consistent with its theme.
- Bilateral conversations with key persons including, but not limited to, AMCEN Presidency, African Group of Negotiators, and UNCCD Secretariat, among others.
- Consultative dialogue and strengthening of UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa working relations.
- Strengthening partnerships and collaboration between African governments and Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa.
- Announcement of the commencement of the UNEP Major groups and Stakeholders Regional Facilitators elections as the current office holders’ term will be coming to end.
- Consolidation of UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa roadmap and working groups towards the upcoming regional and global engagements including:
  - The UNCCD COP 16

- The Summit of the Future
- The UNCBD COP16
- The UNFCCC COP29
- UNEA-related processes