



AMCEN



AU



Distr.: Limited
5 September 2024

Original: English
English and French only

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
Tenth special session
Abidjan, 3–6 September 2024

Decision AMCEN/SS.X/1: Opportunities to raise ambition to combat desertification and land degradation and enhance drought resilience in Africa*

We, African Ministers of environment,

Having met in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire on 5 and 6 of September 2024 at the tenth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment,

Welcoming and appreciating the participation of the invited Ministers responsible for agriculture or their representatives in this tenth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment,

Aware of the forthcoming sixteenth session of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification that will take place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from 2 to 13 December 2024,

Welcoming the outcomes of the Africa Regional Consultations in preparation to the sixteenth session of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification that was held in Abidjan Côte d'Ivoire from 30 August to 2 September 2024,

Noting the outcomes of the twelfth conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa held in Abidjan Côte d'Ivoire from 30 August to 2 September 2024,

Recalling Goal 15 of the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development on protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably managing forests, combating desertification, halting and reversing land degradation and halting biodiversity loss, and its target 15.3 on, combating desertification, restoring degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and striving to achieve a land-degradation-neutral world by 2030,

Recalling General Assembly resolution, A/RES/70/206 on implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, adopted by the Assembly of the African Union at its twenty-second session,

Further recalling resolutions 2/24, on combating desertification, land degradation and drought and promoting sustainable pastoralism and rangelands and 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, of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme,

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

Recognizing the role of the African Union Commission through the African Union Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development's in facilitating the organisation of the African regional preparatory meeting for the sixteenth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa,

Recalling the declarations and decisions of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, and other applicable international instruments in particular those addressing drought, land degradation and desertification, as a contribution to the sustainable management of the environment,

Underscoring the interlinkages between drought, land degradation and desertification, biodiversity conservation, and climate change, and the need to increase synergies and complementarities among the three Rio Conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements to achieve mutual social, economic and environmental co-benefits for member States,

Further recalling African Ministerial Conference on the Environment decision SS.VI/4 on action to combat desertification, drought and floods and restore degraded land in order to achieve a land-degradation-neutral world; African Ministerial Conference on the Environment decision 16/2 on desertification, land degradation and drought; and African Ministerial Conference on the Environment decision 18/3 on biodiversity, wildlife and desertification,

Acknowledging that the vast majority of African countries are vulnerable to desertification, and that Africa's arable land is already affected by degradation, exacerbating water scarcity, reducing agricultural productivity, further threatening food security and exacerbating economic hardships,

Recognizing the importance of the Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration and other initiatives under the African Union's Agenda 2063 in, among others, promoting sustainable management of terrestrial ecosystems,

Aware that combating desertification, land degradation and drought, and achieving land degradation neutrality, especially in the context of climate change, requires innovative and collective local, national and regional approaches,

Stressing on the interconnectedness of climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss with desertification, land degradation, and drought, underscoring the need for integrated and sustainable approaches to address these issues and promote sustainable land management practices,

Recognizing that addressing the interrelated challenges of drought, land degradation, and desertification exacerbated by climate change in Africa requires significant and scaling up of financing and effective partnerships, including availability and access to adequate and predictable financial resources,

Recognizing the importance of flagship programmes in Africa, including the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative as a successful financing model in Africa that blends international funding, national government support, and active community involvement in addressing desertification, land degradation and drought,

Noting the Bonn Challenge to bring 150 million hectares of degraded and deforested landscapes into restoration by 2020 and 350 million hectares by 2030,

Recalling the Pan African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration and for Increased Resilience adopted by Africa Union Assembly,

Taking note of the report of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Mid-Term Evaluation and the recommendations thereof,

Noting that the recommendations are relevant and important for the effective implementation of the convention, particularly the focus on implementation of large-scale projects and synergies between the three Rio conventions,

Deeply concerned of the lack of new, additional, adequate, quality and predictable financing and emphasize that effective implementation of the strategy for the next five years can only be achieved by unlocking the zero nominal growth in the core budget of the secretariat in order to accelerate global mechanism and the work of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification towards large scale projects,

Welcoming the recommendation that non-affected country Parties, should comply in formulating and implementing voluntary land degradation neutrality targets, and reporting on the adverse effects of drought, land degradation and desertification in their countries and addressing the special needs of affected country Parties,

Supporting the recommendation for a comprehensive discussion among State Parties on how best to reaffirm the global role and importance of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in deepening political commitment and cooperation to address in drought, land degradation and desertification, recognizing that everyone is affected,

Emphasizing the importance of building resilient landscapes and communities through ecosystem services, integrated landscape management approaches that prioritize ecosystem restoration, biodiversity conservation, achieving land degradation neutrality and enhancing resilience in climate change, desertification, land degradation and drought,

Decide:

1. To reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the Windhoek Declaration for Enhancing Resilience to Drought in Africa for enhancing resilience to drought in Africa and the Strategic Framework for Drought Risk Management Enhancing Resilience in Africa;
2. To request the African Group of Negotiators on Combating Desertification to submit for consideration and adoption by the sixteenth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, a draft decision calling for the establishment of an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on a legally binding protocol on drought, building on the report by Intergovernmental Working Group on drought;
3. To request the Chair of the African Group of Negotiators on Combating Desertification and heads of delegation of African Parties to speak with one voice in spearheading negotiations to establish, at the sixteenth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification an open-ended Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee with a mandate and terms of reference, to complete a legally binding protocol on drought within two years for submission to the seventeenth session of the Conference of Parties;
4. To urge developed State Parties and other member States in a position to do, the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and its Global Mechanism, along with partners, such as, the Global Environment Facility and other funding mechanisms, to provide financial and technical support to eligible countries for meaningful participation in the sessions of the open-ended Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee;
5. To request the President of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission to promote and advocate for the African common position on a legally binding protocol on drought under the framework of the of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;
6. To establish a coordination platform between the African Groups of Negotiators of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Combating Desertification to enhance policy coherence and synergistic approaches on African positions in their respective conventions, as well as in the framework of the implementation at the national level;
7. To request the Africa Union Commission and African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, to urgently operationalize the coordination platform of the African Groups of Negotiators of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Combating Desertification, and report at the next session of the Conference;
8. To appreciate the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and its Global Mechanism, the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Commissions and all stakeholders, including international financing institutions for their continued support in the implementation of the of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and request them to further mobilize new, additional, adequate, quality and predictable financial resources, including through innovative financing mechanisms, for capacity building and technology transfer to strengthen efforts by African States in implementing programmes on drought at all levels;
9. To request member States, technical and financial partners to take into consideration the fight against sand and dust storms in budgetary planning, given the impact of this phenomena on human health, social life, economic and environmental security;

10. To urge member States to build technical and scientific capacity in drought, land degradation and desertification and request for support as appropriate from member States and partners in position to do so;
11. To request regional entities to support capacity building of the national focal points of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and scientific correspondent under their respective regional and sub-regional action plans;
12. To appreciate governments, and relevant organizations for their continued support in providing technical assistance to African member States and invite other governments and relevant organizations in a position to do so, to register as providers of technical assistance and consider supporting member State in addressing their capacity building, development and technical and scientific cooperation needs;
13. To elevate the drought issues and the need for a protocol on drought under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification at the highest political level for prioritization by the heads of states and Government for engagement at the seventeenth session of the United Nations General Assembly, the sixteenth session of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of Parties of Climate Change, the sixteenth session of Conference of Parties of the Convention to Combat Desertification and any other relevant fora;
14. To initiate bilateral engagements with counterparts in other regions to support the African position; and invite the Chair of Group of 77 and China to facilitate a common position among members of the group in support of the protocol on drought under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;
15. To urge developed country Parties and other country Parties, stakeholders and partners including the United Nations agencies, international and regional and philanthropic, organizations to provide financial and technical support for the implementation of the strategic framework and the convention;
16. To urge member States to prioritize, harmonize and implement national and regional action plans and policies to combat desertification, land degradation and drought and ensure that these plans align with national development objectives and integrate climate resilience considerations related to agriculture, forestry, health, air quality, water management, and to align these considerations with broader sustainable development goals;
17. To urge member States on the enhancement of disaster preparedness through improved early warning systems and response mechanisms to mitigate the impacts of climate change, including induced extreme weather events and other natural hazards on vulnerable communities and ecosystems to enhance resilience to drought;
18. To request member States to strengthen legal, policy and institutional frameworks and coordination mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels to effectively address desertification, land degradation and drought and achieve land degradation neutrality;
19. To encourage member States in collaboration with academia, research institutions, local and indigenous communities and relevant stakeholders to advance data collection, analysis, data banking and dissemination to inform policy making and project planning in sustainable land management and to support integration of indigenous and local knowledge and traditional land management practices into modern approaches to land and ecosystem restoration;
20. To urge member States to establish or strengthen, dedicated national funds, and increase domestic financial resources and request development partners, private sector, and multilateral financial institutions, and other partners to explore innovative financing mechanisms for additional resources, such as, green bonds, blended finance and public-private partnerships, including from development partners, private sector, and multilateral financial institutions. strengthen these financial resources with new and additional financing for land restoration and achievement of land degradation neutrality;
21. To encourage member States to create enabling environment for private sector to invest in sustainable interventions that address the broader development goals, including in addressing desertification, land degradation and drought;

22. To call for accelerated reforms for the global financial architecture and funding mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility, and other financial mechanisms that are responsive to Africa's current reality to simplify the process of developing bankable proposals to align financial resources with on-the-ground needs;
23. To request the African Union Commission, African Development Bank, United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Development Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and other partners to enhance and build capacity for African national institutions to access international funds;
24. To call upon the Global Environment Facility, Green Climate Fund, and other relevant funding mechanisms to diversify its funding allocation, and to support the implementation of synergistic activities, to address issues of land degradation neutrality, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation, adaptation and plastic pollution;
25. To request United Nations Environment Programme and Green Climate Fund and other relevant funding mechanisms to facilitate capacity building and development for member States including legislative bodies to bridge the gap between science and finance when developing projects to address issues of land degradation neutrality, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation, adaptation and plastic pollution;
26. To mandate the African Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification and Plastics to reiterate in the global negotiations Africa's position on financial mechanism, and further redefine the relevant term, "grants and loans", to view them as catalytic enablers and investments that empower Africa to effectively address biodiversity, climate change, desertification, and plastic pollution challenges;
27. To encourage member States to collaborate with the Convention on Biological Diversity Regional Support Centers for scientific cooperation and technology transfer to enhance transboundary collaboration by involving different stakeholders in a holistic approach to environmental challenges that transcend national borders;
28. To encourage member States in collaboration with the African Union Commission, African Development Bank, United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Economic Commission on Africa, the United Nations Development Programme, and other partners to replicate impactful and scalable projects, such as the Great Green Wall Initiative, at regional and sub regional levels to maximize benefits of such initiatives at scale;
29. To urge member States to develop financial plans and strategies for effectively accessing financing opportunities provided by international conventions and funds, such as the Loss and Damage Fund, the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund, and others, to address interconnected issues such as climate change, biodiversity, plastics, and land degradation in alignment with the implementation of Pan African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration and for Increased Resilience in a concerted and comprehensive manner;
30. To request the African Union Commission to provide a brief to the African Ministerial Conference on Environment on the progress of implementation of Pan African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration and for Increased Resilience in its next session;
31. To invite member States to take note of the mapping of the Africa Natural Capital Atlas and prioritize the valuation of the Africa Natural Capital as an innovative financing mechanism, contributing to long-term self-sustainability and shifting the continent from being price-takers to price-setters;
32. To request the African Union Commission, African Development Bank in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme and other relevant United Nations agencies, to support member States in establishing a carbon markets facility to provide technical assistance, policy guidance, and capacity-building as a means of enhancing carbon reduction strategies;
33. To encourage members States to promote and prioritize investment in land management initiatives aimed at land, ecosystem restoration and land degradation neutrality, including from private sector and public private partnerships;

34. To urge member States to call upon the private sector to invest in such land management initiatives, including in research and innovation, development of new technologies, sustainable waste management, eco-tourism, renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture, to contribute to land and ecosystem restoration and achievement of land degradation neutrality, while creating opportunities for livelihoods and skills development to boost economies and call upon the civil society to support these initiatives;

35. To encourage member States to adopt gender-sensitive approaches in design and implementation of policies and programmes related to desertification, land degradation and drought, including the active participation and empowerment of women, youth, local communities and indigenous people in decision-making processes related to sustainable land management, ecosystem restoration and achievement land degradation neutrality;

36. To urge member States to promote climate-smart agriculture practices including development and technology transfer of drought-resistant and salt-tolerant crop varieties to support agricultural productivity that enhance soil health, improve water efficiency, and increase crop resilience to climate variability, thereby enhancing food security, agri-foods systems and livelihoods, as well as reducing the risk of desertification, land degradation and drought including through the water, energy, agriculture nexus approach;

37. To urge member States to put in place measures on securing land tenure rights for indigenous peoples and local communities, including small scale land users, farmers, women, youth, to support achievement of land degradation neutrality targets;

38. To encourage member States to continue addressing land degradation in conflict-affected areas and promote peacebuilding and resilience through sustainable land management practices;

39. To encourage member States to continue strengthening and enforcing policies and regulatory measures for adoption and implementation of sustainable mining practices and the rehabilitation of mining and mined out sites to prevent and reduce land degradation and protect local ecosystems;

40. To encourage member States in collaboration with academia, research institutions, and relevant stakeholders to promote the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned among Parties to the Rio Conventions, with a particular focus on sustainable land management practices that contribute to the conservation of biodiversity, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the reduction of plastic pollution;

41. To congratulate the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, the African Union Commission, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification for excellent coordination and organization of the Africa Regional Preparatory Meeting to the upcoming the sixteenth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to be held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from 2 to 13 December 2024.
