

History of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

1985 – 2005



African Ministerial
Conference on the
Environment
(AMCEN)

HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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Conference on the
Environment (AMCEN)



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AMCEN Secretariat

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AEIN	Africa Environment Information Network
AEO	Africa Environment Outlook
AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
AMCOW	African Ministers' Council on Water
CAMRE	Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment
CILSS	Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEO	Global Environment Outlook
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IPF	Indicative Planning Figures
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

GLOSSARY

Abidjan Convention: see “Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region”

Abuja Treaty: see “Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community”

African Common Position on Environment and Development: adopted in 1991 by representatives of African Governments and presented at the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (the Earth Summit), held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This position paper emphasized that developmental and environmental concerns were inextricably linked in Africa and that development strategies in the future should emphasize economic growth through poverty alleviation and environmental protection.

African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Algiers Convention): adopted at Algiers in September 1968 and entered into force in June 1969. In 1980, Nigeria and Cameroon urged the Organization of African Unity, as the depositary of the Convention, to launch a process to revise the Algiers Convention and bring it in line with other treaties in the field. Between 1980 and 1986 work was done to revise and update the Algiers Convention but this could not be completed at the time. At its ninth session AMCEN decided to request the African Union to conclude the process. The Algiers Convention has since been revised and adopted by the African Union.

African Union: on 9 September 1999, the heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity issued a declaration (the Sirte Declaration) calling for the establishment of an African Union, with a view, among other things, to accelerating the process of integration in the continent to enable it play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic and political problems, compounded as they are by certain negative aspects of globalization.

Agenda 21: comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organizations of the United Nations system, Governments, and major groups in every area in which humans have impacts on the environment. It was adopted at the Earth Summit in 1992.

Algiers Convention: see “African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources”

Bamako Convention: see “Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes Within Africa”

Basel Convention: see “Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal”

Cairo Programme for African Cooperation: adopted at the first session of AMCEN in December 1985

Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity: adopted in January 2000 and entered into force in September 2004. The basic objective of the Protocol is to contribute to ensuring an adequate level of protection in the field of the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, also taking into account risks to human health. The Protocol focuses in particular on transboundary movements.

CITES: see “Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora”

Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention): adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, on 23 November 1972.

Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region (Abidjan Convention): adopted in 1981 and entered into force in 1984. Its objectives are to protect the marine environment, coastal zones and related internal waters falling within the jurisdiction of the States of the West and Central African region.

Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region (Nairobi Convention): adopted in June 1985 and entered into force in May 1996. Its objectives are to protect and manage the marine environment and coastal areas of the Eastern African region.

Convention on Biological Diversity: signed at the Earth Summit in 1992 and entered into force in December 1993. The objectives of the Convention are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and to technologies, and by appropriate funding.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): adopted in 1973 and entered into force in 1975. The objectives of the Convention are to ensure, through international cooperation, that the international trade in species of

wild fauna and flora does not threaten survival in the wild of the species concerned; and to protect endangered species from overexploitation by means of a system of import-export permits issued by a management authority under the advice of a scientific authority.

Convention on Migratory Species: see “Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals”

Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes Within Africa (Bamako Convention): adopted in January 1991 and entered into force in April 1998. The Convention’s objectives are to protect human health and the environment from dangers posed by hazardous wastes by reducing their generation to a minimum; adopt precautionary measures and ensure proper disposal of hazardous wastes; and prevent the dumping of hazardous wastes in Africa. The Bamako Convention that bans the import of hazardous waste was aimed at addressing gaps in the Basel Convention.

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Convention on Migratory Species): adopted in Bonn on 23 June 1979.

Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention): adopted in March 1989 and entered into force in 1992. The goal of the Basel Convention is to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of hazardous and other wastes.

Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (Rotterdam Convention): convention adopted in September 1998 and entered into force in February 2004, with the objective of promoting shared responsibility and cooperative efforts among Parties in the international trade of certain hazardous chemicals in order to protect human health and the environment from potential harm and to contribute to their environmentally sound use, by facilitating information exchange about their characteristics, by providing for a national decision-making process on their import and export and by disseminating those decisions to Parties.

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Convention on Wetlands): adopted in Ramsar, Islamic Republic of Iran, on 2 February 1971, with the aim of providing a framework for actions to be taken at the international, regional, national, provincial and local levels which would result in the long-term conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in their Natural State (London Convention): adopted in London in 1933 and entered into force on 14 January 1936; designed to preserve the natural fauna and flora of certain parts of the world,

particularly of Africa, by means of national parks and reserves and by the regulation of hunting and collection of species.

Convention to Combat Desertification: see “United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa”

Earth Summit: see “United Nations Conference on Environment and Development”

Framework Convention on Climate Change: see United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Framework for the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD: endorsed by AMCEN at its ninth session in 2002.

International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: adopted in November 2001 and entered into force in June 2004. Its objective is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their use, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity, for sustainable agriculture and food security. The treaty replaces the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources of 1983.

Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: adopted in Kyoto on 11 December 1997.

London Convention: see Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in Their Nature State

Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer: adopted in September 1987 and entered into force two years later. The basic objective of the Protocol is to protect the ozone layer by taking measures leading to total elimination of global emissions of ozone-depleting substances on the basis of developments in scientific knowledge, taking into account technical and economic considerations and the needs of developing countries.

Nairobi Convention: see “Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region”

Nairobi Declaration for Sustainable Development of African Mountain Regions and its recommendations for actions, prepared during the African High Summit on Mountains, held in Nairobi from 6 to 10 May 2002.

New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): vision and strategic framework for Africa's renewal. The NEPAD strategic framework document arises from a mandate given to the five initiating heads of State (Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa) and by the Organization for African Unity to develop an integrated social and economic development framework for Africa. At their thirty-seventh summit meeting in July 2001, the member States of the Organization of African Unity formally adopted the strategic framework document. NEPAD is designed to tackle the current development challenges facing the African continent. Issues such as escalating poverty levels, underdevelopment and the continued marginalization of Africa needed a new radical intervention, spearheaded by African leaders, to develop a new vision that would guarantee Africa's renewal.

Organization of African Unity: established in May 1963. The main objectives of the Organization of African Unity were, among other things, to rid the continent of the remaining vestiges of colonization and apartheid; to promote unity and solidarity among African States; to coordinate and intensify cooperation for development; to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member States; and to promote international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations. Indeed, as a continental organization, the Organization of African Unity provided an effective forum that enabled all member States to adopt coordinated positions on matters of common concern to the continent in international forums and to defend the interests of Africa effectively. The Organization of African Unity became the African Union pursuant to a decision adopted by its heads of State and Government in 1999.

Rabat Declaration on the Environmentally Sound Management of Unwanted Stocks of Hazardous Wastes (Rabat Declaration): adopted by the Parties to the Basel Convention on the occasion of the first Continental Conference for Africa on the Environmentally Sound Management of Unwanted Stockpiles of Hazardous Wastes and their Prevention in January 2001.

Rio Conference: see "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development"

Rotterdam Convention: see "Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade"

Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Stockholm Convention): adopted in Stockholm on 22 May 2001 with the aim of protecting human health and the environment from the effects of persistent organic pollutants.

Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (Abuja Treaty): the commitments in the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos were translated into concrete form in Abuja, in June 1991, when the heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity signed the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community. The Abuja Treaty has been in operation since May 1994, when the required number of instru-

ments of ratification for its coming into force were deposited with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity-African Economic Community. The Abuja Treaty seeks to create the African Economic Community through six stages, culminating in an African common market using the regional economic communities as building blocks.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit): held in June 1992, in Rio de Janeiro. The Conference was the culmination of two years of negotiations by the preparatory committees. Five major agreements on global environmental issues were signed. Two of these, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, were formal treaties whose provisions are binding on the parties. The other three Rio agreements were non-binding statements on the relationship between sustainable environmental practices and the pursuit of social and economic development. The Rio Declaration summarizes consensus principles of sustainable development and the Statement on Forest Principles pledges parties to more sustainable use of forest resources. Agenda 21 is a wide-ranging assessment of social and economic sectors with goals for improving the environment and development impact of each.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (Convention to Combat Desertification): adopted in 1994 and entered into force in December 1996. The objectives of the Convention are to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in the countries concerned through effective actions at all levels, supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements, in the framework of an integrated approach which is consistent with Agenda 21, with a view to contributing to the attainment of sustainable development in affected areas.

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa: established in 1958 as one of five regional commissions under the administrative direction of United Nations Headquarters. As the regional arm of the United Nations in Africa, it is mandated to support the economic and social development of its 53 member States, foster regional integration and promote international cooperation for Africa's development. It reports to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The Commission is organized around six substantive programme divisions: Development Policy and Management; Economic and Social Policy; Gender and Development; Information for Development; Sustainable Development; and Trade and Regional Integration. Five subregional offices contribute a subregional perspective to the work programme and support outreach.

United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP): established in 1972 to be the watchdog of the environment. It has its headquarters in Nairobi and follows the guidance and requests of the ministers of the environment of member countries sitting in the UNEP Governing Council.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: opened for signature in New York, on 9 May 1992, and entered into force on 21 March 1994. The objectives of the Framework Convention are to stabilize greenhouse-gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous human-caused interference with the climate system, within a timeframe sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change; to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.

Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer: adopted in Vienna on 22 March 1985.

World Heritage Convention: see Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

FOREWORD

Sustainable growth and development of Africa depend on the sustainable use of the continent's natural resources. The increasing degradation of the continent's environment and natural resources made it imperative for African Governments to put in place steps to safeguard these assets, including the adoption of the landmark Lagos Plan of Action in 1980, which proposed concrete measures to address the interface between environment and development of the region.

The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was established in December 1985, following a conference of African ministers of environment held in Cairo, Egypt in order to promote regional cooperation in addressing environmental issues confronting the region. Being mindful of the link between poverty and the environment, the mandate AMCEN set for itself at its inception was to provide advocacy for environmental protection in Africa; ensure that basic human needs were met adequately and in a sustainable manner; ensure that social and economic development was realized at all levels; and ensure that agricultural activities and practices met the food security needs of the region.

AMCEN has continued to give guidance in respect of key political events related to the environment, including multilateral environmental agreements. AMCEN has also led the process for the development of the action plan for the Environment Initiative for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It is noteworthy that the implementation of the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD is being undertaken under the guidance of AMCEN. The Ministerial Conference prompted and encouraged the preparation of the comprehensive regional report on the state of Africa's environment, Africa Environment Outlook, by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

In terms of regional environmental agreements, AMCEN successfully facilitated the revision of the 1968 African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Algiers Convention). Measures have been taken to strengthen the linkages between AMCEN and Africa's two marine and coastal conventions, namely, the Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region (Nairobi Convention) and the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region (Abidjan Convention).

AMCEN has continued to pay particular attention to the implementation of environmental conventions established further to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) in 1992, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity

and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol.

In spite of these achievements, the performance of AMCEN over the twenty year period has been hampered by gross financial difficulties and the rather complex organizational structure adopted by the Ministerial Conference at its inception. However in recent years, between 2000 and 2005, AMCEN has undertaken a process of streamlining its structural organization to make it more effective. Over this period AMCEN has grown to become the major forum for African Ministers responsible for the environment. The outlook for the future of AMCEN has considerably improved, with streamlined institutional arrangements, better financial prospects and envisaged enhanced links with the African Union as a Specialized Technical Committee of the African Union.

The *history of AMCEN* has been reviewed through three different periods marked by significant shifts in paradigm. Despite these differences in approach, there is an evident continuity in the performance of AMCEN. The measures adopted by AMCEN in seeking solutions to environmental concerns in Africa have consistently been participatory and consultative during the entire history of the Ministerial Conference. I trust that this document will be useful to all those who share our common vision of ensuring that Africa is able to confront its short-term economic growth challenges without losing sight of the long-term environmental, poverty reduction and social development imperatives.

Henri Djombo

President, African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. ESTABLISHMENT

1. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was established in December 1985, following a conference of African ministers of environment held in Cairo. Its mandate at inception was to provide advocacy for environmental protection in Africa; to ensure that basic human needs were met adequately and in a sustainable manner; to ensure that social and economic development was realized at all levels; and to ensure that agricultural activities and practices met the food security needs of the region.

B. HISTORY: FIRST PERIOD (1985–1993)

2. The Conference's history can best be analysed within three critical periods: 1985–1993, 1993–2000 and 2000–2005.
3. The first period (1985–1993) was characterized by the establishment of the organs of AMCEN and the development and implementation of the Cairo Programme for African Cooperation adopted at the first session of AMCEN in December 1985. The Cairo Programme emerged as the main thrust of the work of AMCEN in Africa. It was designed to halt the degradation of the environment to satisfy the food and energy needs of the people of Africa. Self-sufficiency in energy and food was to be ensured through regional pilot projects and 29 priority subregional activities. It stressed that African Governments should bear the primary responsibility for solving the continent's problems. They should therefore shoulder a considerable portion of the financial and other responsibilities involved before seeking external assistance. The organizational structure and modalities for convening sessions of the Conference were adopted.
4. Of particular significance during this period was the proliferation of organs (such as committees, networks, the African Technical Regional Environment Group, task forces and the Inter-Agency Working Group). The Conference also embarked on the development of pilot projects at national, subregional and regional levels, which it endeavoured to implement.
5. In response to new and emerging issues, the mandate of the Conference was widened to include all environmental matters of concern to the African countries. These included issues relating to education, women, apartheid and the engagement

of civil society. AMCEN also prepared and participated actively in the Earth Summit in 1992 and its preparatory process.

6. During this first period, AMCEN exerted political leadership in the field of environment. The Conference provided a forum for discussion of all environmental issues and initiatives of relevance to Africa, not only those covered by the Cairo Programme, leading to the strengthening of cooperation between African Governments, particularly through the networks, committees and pilot projects.
7. Owing, however, to the relatively unfocused nature of this approach, coupled with the ambitious scope of the Cairo Programme, which had created unwieldy structures as its operational organs, achievements during this period were disappointing. Furthermore, funding for the conference activities, originally envisaged at the first AMCEN session as coming from member States, never materialized, leaving the Conference with a limited financial basis.

C. SECOND PERIOD (1993–2000)

8. The second period (1993-2000), the period of new policy orientation, saw several changes in the structure and operations of AMCEN.
9. In response to such events as the Earth Summit in 1992, and also the challenges of implementing the Cairo Programme, the operations and focus of AMCEN were revisited with its new policy orientation, adopted at its fifth session in 1993. The Conference shifted its focus from running operational programmes to emphasizing policy guidance. Its mandate was reviewed first to provide continent-wide political and technical leadership on sustainable development within the framework of the Abuja Treaty and to come up with agreed African positions on environment and development. During this period of the history of AMCEN (1993–2000), the Conference was reconfirmed as the main forum for discussing environmental issues at the continental level.
10. Cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, UNEP, the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, the regional economic communities and the competent regional institutions and forums was enhanced.
11. The organizational structures were changed and, with the adoption of its constitution in 1997, AMCEN was transformed into an institutional intergovernmental body on the environment and development. Its organs were restructured and streamlined to make them more relevant to the tasks and resources of AMCEN – in other words, committees were transformed into standing committees of the Conference, to be

functional only at its sessions, the regional coordination unit of the networks was absorbed into already existing African national, subregional or regional institutions, the Inter-Agency Working Group was retained as an advisory body, subregional ministerial conferences were convened, etc. In this way, the Conference was reconfirmed as the main forum for discussing environmental issues at the continental level.

12. In addition, ministers decided in principle to formalize the Conference's institutionalization as an intergovernmental organization by providing the necessary legislative framework, including a constitution and related rules and regulations. Accordingly, the secretariat facilitated the drafting of a constitution that was adopted at the seventh session.
13. An attempt to establish a conference of African ministers responsible for sustainable development and the environment was abandoned and AMCEN continued its operations. The institutional relationship between AMCEN and institutions such as the Organization of African Unity were kept under periodic review and particular attention was given to ensuring that Africa's interests were fully taken into account in the context of international conventions and forums.
14. At the programmatic level, specific priority programme areas for implementation in African countries were identified and AMCEN work programmes developed. Several major meetings were held to deal with post-Rio follow-up. In addition to earlier advocacy work, emphasis was placed on monitoring the implementation of regional and global conventions and agreements of relevance to the African region and also on facilitating the harmonization of Africa's position and encouraging active participation in all major negotiations. Attempts were also made to facilitate the ratification and effective implementation of the Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes Within Africa (Bamako Convention) by all African countries.
15. The implementation of the new policy orientation led to AMCEN assuming an enhanced role as a forum where African ministers could discuss common environmental concerns and coordinate African positions.
16. The AMCEN sessions provided continent-wide leadership on the environment by promoting awareness-raising and consensus-building on global and regional environmental issues. They also facilitated coordination among African Governments and enhanced their preparations for international meetings. UNEP is a case in point: AMCEN facilitated the effective participation of African countries in sessions of the Governing Council of UNEP and promoted African representation in the Bureau of the UNEP Governing Council. Cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Commission for Africa and other institutions improved.

17. Notwithstanding their limitations, the networks and committees still facilitated technical cooperation. Growing interest emerged in the issue of environmental assessment and early warning.
18. Yet, in spite of all these achievements, the Conference's results remained constrained, largely by financial, structural and political obstacles. To address its financial problems, AMCEN established a trust fund based on voluntary contributions during this period. Only a few countries contributed to the fund, however. As a result, over the years AMCEN continued to rely on UNEP support, which meant that, in the mid-1990s, when UNEP experienced financial difficulties due to a sharp drop in contributions to the United Nations, AMCEN was also negatively affected and its operation hindered.

D. THIRD PERIOD (2000–2005)

19. During the revitalization period of AMCEN (2000–2005), the Conference managed to streamline its structural organization to make it more effective. This revitalized AMCEN is characterized by the successful consolidation of its advocacy role and also its positioning as the major forum for African ministers responsible for the environment over the last 20 years.
20. With a much leaner organizational structure and clearer focus, AMCEN has emerged during this period as an effective and exceptional instrument which has enabled Governments and the international community to ensure that the environment is fully embedded in key international and regional processes initiated during this period. In particular, AMCEN rose to the challenges in the context of the development of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) process by taking an active leadership role in developing its environment component. It took the initiative of ensuring the adoption of the action plan by the Assembly of the African Union and the organization of partners' conferences, with a view to persuading development partners to support the initiative. AMCEN also spearheaded the Africa preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development and has continued to foster implementation of the outcome of the Summit in Africa.
21. The Conference started to engage itself in the new institutional dispensation of the African Union to ensure that its own functions and those of the Union were harmonized and also to ensure that environmental issues were given due consideration. To that end, a broad-based partnership has been established which facilitates the involvement of all partners in the implementation of its programme of work, thereby creating a trickle-down effect throughout the region. Accordingly, the work programme is being implemented by various partners within their respective mandates and with their own resources. The result of this strategy is that these organizations are effectively working for AMCEN.

22. Although still fragile, the Conference's financial basis has been enhanced.

E. ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

23. In general, throughout its history, AMCEN has continued to give guidance in respect of key political events related to the environment, including multilateral environmental agreements. It also led the process to develop the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative. AMCEN is currently guiding the process for implementation of this action plan, including its work programme for the biennium 2005–2006. The Conference prompted and encouraged the preparation by UNEP of the comprehensive regional report on the state of Africa's environment, the *Africa Environment Outlook (AEO)*. The AEO process has been adopted by AMCEN as its instrument for monitoring and reporting on the environment.
24. In addition, AMCEN successfully facilitated revision of the 1968 African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Algiers Convention). Measures are being taken to strengthen the linkages between AMCEN and the region's two marine and coastal conventions, namely, the Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region (Nairobi Convention) and the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region (Abidjan Convention).
25. AMCEN has continued to pay particular attention to the implementation of environmental conventions established pursuant to the Earth Summit in 1992, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Protocol on Biosafety, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol.
26. The main challenge facing AMCEN is its severe financial difficulties.

F. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

27. The Conference is the highest organ of AMCEN. African ministers responsible for the environment are members of the AMCEN Conference. At the first session of AMCEN, ministers decided that the Conference would meet every two years, and that a bureau would be established to act on its behalf between meetings. UNEP, through its Regional Office for Africa, has served as the secretariat of AMCEN since its inception and a senior programme officer within UNEP has been appointed to facilitate the work of AMCEN.

28. Since the first session of AMCEN, a number of programmes and initiatives have been developed to facilitate the effective implementation of its mandate to work for environmental protection in Africa. Of particular note is the establishment of the regional scientific and technical committees and the network of national focal points, which worked with mixed results on various thematic issues to advance the objectives of AMCEN in the region. In addition, the decisions taken at various meetings of AMCEN have been successfully implemented when resources were available.
29. AMCEN is currently holding discussions with the African Union Commission on issues related to the harmonization and linkages between the Ministerial Conference and the Commission. It is expected that AMCEN would ultimately become a specialized technical committee of the Commission in line with the Sirte Declaration, adopted by the African Union in February 2004.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. ORIGINS AND GROWTH

1. Ever since 1985 the African ministers responsible for the environment in their respective countries have met at two-year intervals to discuss their common concerns: severe environmental degradation in Africa and the means to address those challenges. These gatherings have been the AMCEN sessions. The Conference can be considered an offspring of the Stockholm Conference on Environment and Development, held in 1972, which for the first time focused the world's attention on environmental issues in the most comprehensive way possible. The main outcome of that conference was the establishment of UNEP, with its headquarters moving to Nairobi, after being located for a few years in Europe. With the establishment of that institution, a question kept being asked: why did environment ministers of Africa feel the need to meet at their own conference?
2. The answer to this question can be found in the perceived mandate of UNEP, an organization with a global mandate, not devoted solely to addressing Africa's specific environmental management needs. The establishment of UNEP did however contribute to increased awareness on the issue of management of the environment in Africa. Governments started creating ministries responsible for the environment when, prior to the creation of UNEP, there had been few, if any, such ministries and little cooperation among countries in the region on environmental issues. The location of the headquarters in Africa raised high expectations among African Governments with regard to support from UNEP in environmental management on the continent. The fact that UNEP was at that time the only United Nations body located in a developing country raised those expectations still further.
3. In addition, the UNEP decision-making process motivated the decision by African Governments to establish their own Conference. Decisions are usually thoroughly negotiated and adopted on the basis of consensus. In a context where regions faced different environmental challenges, African countries had to lobby for attention and resources when the Governing Council of UNEP met to adopt decisions. As a result, the desire for an African forum at which only Africa's concerns were addressed steadily gathered momentum.
4. Since the 1980s, Africa had been passing through persistent economic crises, which, to a large extent, had their roots in severe degradation of the environment. Accordingly, at the request of its African members, at its eleventh session in 1983, the UNEP Governing Council invited the Governments of Africa to convene a ministerial con-

ference. The aim of the conference was to discuss national environmental priorities and identify common problems shared by the African countries. The African ministers were also to prepare a regional programme of action to deal with serious environmental problems in Africa.

5. A careful preparatory process ensued in 1984. This involved consultations with African Governments, African experts and several United Nations agencies concerned with African development. Six subregional meetings identified major environmental problems in each subregion. Subsequently, a regional African meeting in Lusaka considered the reports of the subregional meetings and reached consensus on the common African environmental problems. The Governing Council of UNEP took note of and expressed its satisfaction with these preparations at its twelfth session in May 1985.
6. As a follow-up, UNEP, in collaboration with the Organization for African Unity and the Economic Commission for Africa, organized the first session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in Cairo from 14 to 16 December 1985, the first in a series of eleven such sessions to date. Regular sessions have successively been held in Nairobi (June 1987), Nairobi (May 1989), Dakar (May 1991), Addis Ababa (November 1993), Nairobi (December 1995), Dakar (November 1997), Abuja (April 2000), Kampala (July 2002), Sirte (June 2004) and Brazzaville (May 2006). In addition, several special sessions have been convened to consider specific issues of concern.
7. The purpose of the present report is to give an introduction to the history of AMCEN from its inception in 1985 until 2005. The history is divided into three periods. For each period, the objective of AMCEN, its institutional arrangements, main activities and also its achievements and challenges are described. The institutional arrangements of AMCEN have evolved over its history. Nevertheless, throughout its history the Conference and the Bureau have held their position as its most important organs. The Conference, which meets biennially, is the decision-making body of AMCEN. In these sessions, ministers deliberate on topical issues, identify common challenges and priorities to be addressed by the region. The Bureau is responsible for guiding the implementation of the decisions of the Conference. Currently, the Bureau consists of five ministers elected by the Conference. Equitable geographical representation is one of the core criteria which the Conference has traditionally considered in electing the members of the Bureau. The implementation of AMCEN decisions is undertaken by its secretariat, which has been hosted by UNEP through its Regional Office for Africa.
8. The inception period of the history of AMCEN (1985–1993) begins with its first session, in Cairo in December 1985. The main outcome of the Cairo session was a programme of action aimed at mobilizing national, subregional and regional cooperation on four major priorities, namely: halting environmental degradation; enhancing Africa's food producing capacity; achieving self-sufficiency in energy; and correcting

the imbalance between population and resources. It was envisaged that those priorities would be pursued through pilot projects run at the grassroots level in African villages.

9. The second period of the history of AMCEN (1993–2000) dates from the adoption of the New Policy Orientation at the fifth session of the Conference in 1993. While the first phase focused on grass-roots development, with the participation of local communities in a joint endeavour to attain eco-development, the second phase concentrated on international discussions on environment and development to ensuring sustainable development. This policy orientation focused on negotiation and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements. Although some progress was achieved, the later part of this period was characterized by a relative diminution in the visibility of AMCEN.
10. The third and current period of the history of the Conference (2000–2005) is considered as starting with the adoption of decisions at the eighth session of the Conference, in Abuja in April 2000, to revitalise AMCEN for the twenty-first century. The ministers adopted a new direction for the work of AMCEN. The development and subsequent implementation of the action plan for the environmental initiative of NEPAD are very important milestones in the current work of AMCEN.

Cairo Programme	New Policy Orientation	Revitalization of AMCEN for the twenty-first century
1985–1993	1993–2000	2000–2005
The Cairo Programme strived to achieve grass-roots development through pilot projects at the village level and to enhance technical cooperation through networks and committees	The New Policy Orientation focused on follow-up activities to the 1992 Earth Summit and its Agenda 21. Importance was attached to the promotion of participation and ratification of multilateral environmental agreements and the development of common African positions	The project to revitalize AMCEN for the twenty-first century involved simplifying its structure and determining its relation to the establishment of the African Union and the launch of NEPAD. First the development and now the implementation of the action plan for the environmental initiative of NEPAD are very important in the present work of AMCEN

B. BENEFITS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

11. The existence of AMCEN has had a substantive impact on the manner in which environmental issues are being handled in Africa and also on the influence exercised by the region on international environmental governance architectures and mecha-

nisms. The achievements and benefits of AMCEN in this area can be summarized as follows:

- (a) Raising awareness of environmental issues, particularly through steady, coherent, and consistent efforts over a number of years;
 - (b) Enhancing the capacities of ministers of the environment to assess and appreciate environmental issues and propose solutions at the national, sub-regional and regional levels;
 - (c) Providing a forum for ministers to develop programmes to tackle environmental concerns, as exemplified by the development of the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD;
 - (d) Providing an institutional mechanism which has enabled ministers of the environment and senior government officials to provide leadership to the continent and to civil society organizations and other stakeholders;
 - (e) Establishing the general trust fund of AMCEN – albeit marked by a low level of contributions from member States;
 - (f) Catalysing the establishment of other ministerial forums, such as the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW);
 - (g) Spearheading the development of regional environmental agreements, such as the Lusaka Agreement, the Algiers Convention, the Bamako Convention and others;
 - (h) Engaging with the African Union Commission through involvement in its evolving structures, such as the specialized technical committees;
 - (i) Consistently advocating measures to strengthen environmental management – the third pillar of sustainable development;
 - (j) Serving as a mechanism to enhance and streamline Africa's concerns in the environmental domain in international forums, in particular the UNEP Governing Council and conferences of the parties to the multilateral environmental agreements.
12. AMCEN is faced by a number of institutional, financial and operational challenges. In particular, the evolving institutional dispensation of the African Union, which calls for the development of a coordinated institutional framework and the harmonization of activities of ministerial forums such as AMCEN with those of NEPAD and the African Union, raises a number of questions, such as:
- (a) How can AMCEN become a specialized technical committee of the African Union and still maintain the momentum that it has attained in implementing, among other things, the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD?

- (b) How should AMCEN improve its own delivery mechanisms to adapt to the new context?
 - (c) What are the best modalities for interaction with the subregional economic communities, civil society organizations and other partners?
13. Equally challenging, notwithstanding any strengthening of its financial base, will be the future direction to be taken by AMCEN and the role it may play as the world moves towards closer integration of the notion of sustainable development into intergovernmental and other processes.

II. CAIRO PROGRAMME (1985–1993)

14. During the 1980s, Africa suffered from a continual drain on its natural resources and their degradation. In order to meet this challenge, African approaches and African solutions to the problems and challenges of the region were set out in the Cairo Programme, adopted at the first session of AMCEN in December 1985, aimed at strengthening cooperation among African Governments in economic, technical and scientific activities. The Programme's primary objective was to halt and reverse the process whereby the African environment was being degraded in order to satisfy the food and energy needs of the people of the continent. The Cairo Programme was the fruit of an African initiative. The intention was that the Programme should be conceived and managed by Africans, with the support of a secretariat provided by UNEP.

A. BACKGROUND

15. Since the 1980s, Africa had been passing through persistent economic crises, which, to a large extent, had their roots in severe degradation of the environment. Accordingly, at the request of its African members, at its eleventh session in 1983, the UNEP Governing Council invited the Governments of Africa to convene a ministerial conference. The aim of the conference was to discuss national environmental priorities and identify common problems shared by the African countries. The African ministers were also to prepare a regional programme of action to deal with serious environmental problems in Africa.
16. A careful preparatory process ensued in 1984. This involved consultations with African Governments, African experts and several United Nations agencies concerned with African development. Six subregional meetings identified major environmental problems in each subregion. Subsequently, a regional African meeting in Lusaka considered the reports of the subregional meetings and reached consensus on the common African environmental problems. The Governing Council of UNEP took note of and expressed its satisfaction with these preparations at its twelfth session in May 1985.
17. As a follow-up, UNEP, in collaboration with the Organization for African Unity and the Economic Commission for Africa, organized the first session of AMCEN in Cairo from 14 to 16 December 1985. The Executive Director of UNEP at that time, Mr. Mostafa Kamal Tolba, working in close cooperation with African experts and in consultation with the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Commission for Africa, had prepared a report on the environmental condition of Africa. After an extensive

general debate on this report, the Conference adopted a comprehensive resolution on the Cairo Programme for African Cooperation. The objective of the programme was to halt the process whereby the environment was being degraded to satisfy the food and energy needs of people. This was to be attained by institutionalizing the Conference and enhancing regional cooperation by setting up four committees on priority areas, and also by establishing eight regional technical cooperative networks. Self-sufficiency in energy and food was to be ensured through regional pilot projects and 29 priority subregional activities.

18. In the mid-1980s, several environmental commitments were entered into by African Governments. These included the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, or the Algiers Convention, adopted by African heads of State and Government in Algiers in 1968. The fundamental principle of the Algiers Convention is that the contracting States should undertake to adopt the measures necessary to ensure conservation, use and development of soil, water, flora and faunal resources in accordance with scientific principles and with due regard for the best interests of the people (article 2).
19. Another commitment was the Lagos Plan of Action, adopted by the Organization of African Unity in 1980. The environmental provisions of the Plan stated, among other things, that States must cooperate in the environmental arena. In addition, the regional cooperation machinery was defined and placed under the auspices of Economic Commission for Africa. Furthermore, States were called upon to cooperate with international organizations dealing with environmental matters and with industrialized countries for technical and financial assistance.
20. AMCEN was set up to enhance these existing cooperation initiatives among African Governments. It was intended to serve as a forum for reviewing the environmental situation, endorsing a programme of action and deciding how to implement this programme. The philosophy of the Cairo Programme could be expressed by the phrase "sustainable development from the ground up". The Programme focused on using successful grass-roots development experience in Africa. The activities were to be promoted within a framework of scientific and technical cooperation between African countries at the regional and subregional levels and was to rely to the greatest extent possible on local resources and expertise.
21. In response to a request by AMCEN at its second session in 1987, the Governing Council of UNEP, at its fourteenth session, welcomed the Cairo Programme for African Cooperation adopted by AMCEN at its first session (decision 14/1 C I). The Governing Council also requested the Executive Director of UNEP to provide technical and financial support within available resources to those activities of the Cairo Programme for African Cooperation selected for priority implementation by AMCEN.

B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

22. The Cairo Programme for African Cooperation aimed at strengthening cooperation between African Governments in economic, technical and scientific activities with the following prime objectives:
 - (a) Halting environmental degradation;
 - (b) Enhancing the food-producing capacity of the continent;
 - (c) Achieving self-sufficiency in energy; and
 - (d) Rectifying the imbalance between population and resources.
23. The Programme therefore stressed that African Governments should bear primary responsibility for solving the continent's problems and should shoulder a considerable portion of the financial and other responsibilities involved before seeking external assistance.

C. ORGANIZATIONAL AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURES

24. Where institutional settings were concerned, the ministers decided at the first session of AMCEN, in 1985, that the Conference would meet every two years, that a bureau would be established to act on its behalf between meetings and that UNEP would serve as the secretariat for the Conference in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity. These structures remained more or less unchanged until the fourth session.

1. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

(a) Conference

25. African ministers responsible for environmental issues are members of the AMCEN Conference. Prior to the existence of AMCEN, ministers used to meet every two years in the margins of the regular sessions of the Governing Council of UNEP. At its second session in 1987, AMCEN decided, however, that future sessions of the Conference could be held outside Nairobi if an African Government made an appropriate offer. The main tasks of the Conference were to review progress in the implementation of the Cairo Programme and to consider and decide on priority activities for the following biennium. At its fourth session in May 1991, AMCEN broadened the mandate of the Conference. It was then decided that the Conference should provide a forum for discussing all environmental issues and initiatives of relevance to Africa. This included, but was not limited to, the Cairo Programme of Action.

(b) Bureau

26. The Bureau of AMCEN was composed of the President, five Vice-Presidents and the Rapporteur elected at the Conference in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution among the subregions of Africa. It met every year to review progress made in the implementation of the Cairo Programme as reported by the AMCEN secretariat and to decide on priority actions to be taken and recommendations to be submitted to AMCEN at its following session. The Bureau was responsible for ensuring the implementation of the decisions of the Conference between sessions. It was also responsible for taking decisions on recommendations and proposals submitted to it by the committees and networks of AMCEN.

(c) Secretariat

27. At its first session, AMCEN accepted the offer of the Executive Director of UNEP to provide the permanent secretariat of the Conference in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity. One of the secretariat's principal tasks was to undertake the organization of work between sessions and provide secretariat services to AMCEN during its sessions and to other AMCEN organs under the direction of the President and the Rapporteur. Another duty was to assist the President of the Conference and its Bureau in the implementation of the decisions adopted by the Conference. The secretariat was also expected to assist in the organization and maintenance of cooperation among the AMCEN committees, among its various networks, and between the networks, the committees and the AMCEN pilot projects.
28. At its third session, AMCEN requested the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity and the Executive Director of the Economic Commission for Africa to support the interim secretariat that had thus far been provided by UNEP alone. Following a meeting between the secretariat on the one hand and, on the other, the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Commission for Africa, the two latter bodies became more involved in assisting, arranging and serving sessions of the Conference and meetings of AMCEN organs such as the Bureau, the committees and the networks. At its fourth session, AMCEN stressed the desirability of an independent AMCEN secretariat in the long term and agreed to the interim arrangement that had been in effect.

(d) African Technical Regional Environment Group

29. At its second session, AMCEN established the African Technical Regional Environment Group, comprising all national focal points. The Conference had requested each African Government to designate a national focal point to be responsible for matters relating to the Cairo Programme. In cases where Governments had not designated focal points for the Cairo Programme, the heads of their national environmental institutions, which had hitherto been UNEP contact points, were formally

recognized as focal points for the Cairo Programme. These were the principal officers of the national environment agencies within the member countries.

30. The main task of the African Technical Regional Environment Group was to serve as a technical advisory group of African experts to AMCEN and assist the Conference secretariat in identifying problems and formulating proposals for adoption by the Conference. At the fourth session of AMCEN, it was decided that the Group should be the principal technical arm of AMCEN and the technical functions of the Bureau were transferred to it. At its fourth session AMCEN also decided that at its meetings the African Technical Regional Environment Group should consider subregional environmental issues and issues related to the five major ecosystems in Africa.
31. At the subregional level, the African Technical Regional Environment Group was intended to benefit from the existence of African subregional environment groups, which were established to bring together the heads of national environmental institutions in each subregion. At the fourth session of AMCEN, the bureau of the African Technical Regional Environment Group, consisting of the five subregional central focal points of the subregional environment groups, was renamed the steering group of the African Technical Regional Environment Group. It was also decided that the steering group should be more actively involved in the work of the secretariat. During the same session, the Conference encouraged the subregional environment groups to play an increasing role in the implementation of the Cairo Programme. In this connection, the Conference also urged African Governments to strengthen the African Technical Regional Environment Group and the national focal points of the subregional environment groups.

(e) UNEP task force

32. In order to ensure the consolidation of efforts in the implementation of the Cairo Programme, in July 1988 the Executive Director of UNEP established a task force for the Cairo Programme. The task force was composed of the AMCEN secretariat, UNEP programme officers involved in the implementation of the Cairo Programme and three external experts.

(f) Inter-Agency Working Group

33. The Inter-Agency Working Group consisted of representatives of the principal specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as other international organizations concerned. It was established on the recommendations adopted by AMCEN adopted at its first session. Its tasks were to coordinate the activities of the international agencies most important to the implementation of the Cairo Programme; to assist in relating the individual programmes of these institutions to the Programme; and to serve as a scientific and technical advisory body to the Bureau of the Conference through the secretariat, so that the fullest

possible use could be made of the expertise, experience and resources within the United Nations system for the implementation of the Programme. In addition to its advisory role as a body, the individual members of the Inter-Agency Working Group participated in various AMCEN activities, notably the committees and networks and pilot projects, as each organization deemed appropriate.

D. MAIN DECISIONS AND ACTIVITIES

34. During the first period of AMCEN (1985–1993), the Cairo Programme constituted the main basis of its work. The Conference's mandate was widened, however, at its fourth session in 1991 to include all environmental issues of concern to African countries.

1. Cairo Programme for African Cooperation

35. As stated above, the objective of the Cairo Programme was to halt the process whereby the environment was being degraded to satisfy the food and energy needs of the people of Africa. Self-sufficiency in energy and food was to be ensured through regional pilot projects and 29 priority subregional activities.

2. Regional pilot projects

36. The objective of the regional pilot projects was to apply all available African skills and experience in a quest for economically feasible, environmentally sound and socially acceptable solutions to the complex problems of development at the village level. At its first session, AMCEN decided that these projects should involve some 150 villages (three per country) and 30 semi-arid stock-raising zones (one in each of the 30 countries). The goal was to assist these 180 communities to become self-sufficient in food and energy within five years from the start of implementation.
37. The AMCEN pilot village projects tackled the issue of ecological degradation through soil and water conservation and the rehabilitation of plant cover to restore the ecological balance lost through over-exploitation and natural disasters. Through a combination of revitalizing traditional resource management systems and scientific and technical backstopping, it was believed that rural communities could achieve the goals of eco-development. The AMCEN pastoral zone projects aimed at testing alternative modes of management that were environmentally sound and that would maintain the balance between the use and the carrying capacity of semi-arid ecosystems.
38. The design of the AMCEN pilot projects was based on appraisal of local conditions, including the social, economic and political factors at work in each country concerned, its infrastructure and its financial and human resource constraints. Other elements such as communal or State ownership of farmland, rangeland and forest

and price mechanisms were to be considered. The projects aimed at using traditional techniques adopted in Africa, rather than introducing costly and inappropriate equipment and methodologies developed abroad. Furthermore, the participation of local people was stressed as crucial in order to ensure that the problems, needs and priorities of the population were addressed. The projects were supposed to be relatively small in scale so that they could be easily replicated. The primary responsibility implementation of the AMCEN pilot projects rested with African Governments. They had the obligation to finance the projects either with their own resources or by soliciting funds from the donor community.

3. Subregional projects

39. In order to strengthen subregional cooperation relating to the environment and eco-development, at its first session AMCEN decided to give priority to 29 identified subregional activities. One example of such an activity was the strengthening of the north Saharan green belt project. Others included the hydro-meteorological and geological surveys of the Volta river system and measures for regional cooperation in land and water management and conservation among the basin countries – Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo.

4. Emerging environmental issues in the late 1980s

40. At the end of the 1980s, the AMCEN Conference became concerned with emerging environmental issues additional to those addressed in the Cairo Programme. For example, at its third session, AMCEN requested the Organization of African Unity to adopt a decision at its following session on the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes. It also urged the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity to continue urging Governments to take the necessary action with regard to the Algiers Convention. Furthermore, ministers at the Conference requested Governments to contribute, through participation in environmental action plans, conventions and protocols, to international efforts exerted to address emerging environmental problems.
41. The Conference continued to widen its focus further at its fourth session, when AMCEN decided to broaden its mandate to cover all environmental problems of Africa beyond the Cairo Programme. AMCEN sessions thus became a regular forum at which African ministers of the environment could discuss and exchange ideas on the environmental problems of the continent.
42. By way of illustration, the Conference urged African Governments to take an active interest in the global negotiations on climate change and biological diversity and to incorporate appropriate programmes in their national development plans to prevent adverse changes in climate and to protect their biological diversity. It also urged them to sign the Bamako Convention as well as the Basel Convention and to

implement the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Furthermore, the Conference stressed the importance of protecting fresh water resources. With regard to transfer of technology, the Conference urged developed countries to make the necessary resources available to African countries for the use of environmentally sound and sustainable technologies.

E. OTHER ISSUES

43. Over the years, AMCEN deliberations have touched upon a wide range of related issues, including education, apartheid and women.

1. Education

44. At its first session, AMCEN also adopted a programme of action on environmental education and training in Africa. This was a follow-up to decision 10/25 A adopted by the Governing Council of UNEP on 31 May 1982, on environmental education and training in Africa. In this, the Council requested the Executive Director of UNEP to "convene a meeting of experts from Governments and scientific community within the region to develop a programme of action for environmental education and training in the region".

45. Such a meeting was held in Nairobi in April 1983, and produced a proposed programme of action for environmental education and training in Africa. The Governing Council of UNEP endorsed the experts' recommendations in May the same year and appealed to the Governments of the region to cooperate with the Executive Director in formulation of a programme of action. This programme was adopted by AMCEN at its first regular session. The Conference agreed to implement it by developing and integrating education and training at all levels of society in Africa through formal and informal means, and by orienting the programme of action towards the solution of specific urgent environmental problems.

2. Apartheid

46. Furthermore, at its first session AMCEN drew particular attention to the impacts of apartheid on the environment of peoples in Namibia and South Africa, particularly their land, natural resources, human settlements, health and physical, mental and social welfare. Thus, it strongly condemned the apartheid system and deplored its impact on the environment

3. Women

47. The United Nations conference convened to review and appraise the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, held in Nairobi in 1985, adopted the United Nations Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, recommending that:

“Awareness by individual women and all types of women’s organizations of environmental issues and the capacity of women and men to manage their environment and sustain productive resources should be enhanced. All sources of information dissemination should be mobilized to increase the self-help potential of women in conserving and improving their environment. National and international emphasis on ecosystem management and the control of environment degradation should be strengthened and women should be recognized as active and equal participants in this process.”

48. Recognizing the potential of this vast human resource, AMCEN agreed to involve women at all levels in the implementation of the Cairo Programme, whether in the activities of the committees, networks or the pilot and subregional projects.
49. In an effort to mobilize African women, the AMCEN secretariat, through the UNEP Senior Women’s Advisory Group on Sustainable Development, set up the African Women’s Assembly on Sustainable Development. The Assembly was held in Harare in February 1989. It provided a forum to define the role of African women in the implementation of the Cairo Programme and in establishing a network of African women to further its implementation. Women active in government programmes, non-governmental organizations, grass-roots movements, the AMCEN committees and pilot projects and the Africa scientific community took part in the work of the Assembly.
50. At its fourth session, AMCEN urged the secretariat to continue supporting women’s activities in the field of environmentally sound development, especially within the framework of the African Women’s Assembly, and to encourage AMCEN organs to pay greater attention to relevant grass-roots programmes involving women.

4. Civil society

51. Because the Cairo Programme demanded the full participation of people at the grass-roots level, it aimed at involving both individuals and local communities within and outside existing non-governmental organizations. The Cairo Conference recognized the increasingly important role that non-governmental organizations had in environmental affairs and decided that the African non-governmental organizations environmental network should be represented in each of its committees.

5. United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

52. Some 20 years after the first global environment conference, the United Nations sought to help Governments rethink economic development and find ways to halt the destruction of irreplaceable natural resources and pollution of the planet. To that end, the Earth Summit was organized in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.
53. In the preparations for this conference, AMCEN played a particular role reflecting Africa's priorities. At the fourth session of AMCEN in 1991, the representative of the Economic Commission for Africa briefed the meeting on the preparatory activities for the Earth Summit in the region, particularly the African Preparatory Conference to be held in Cairo in July that same year. The Conference urged the Economic Commission for Africa to incorporate into its document to be reviewed at the Cairo Conference important elements relating to Africa's pressing environmental concerns in fields such as education and training, public awareness and the involvement of people in critical areas of environment and social, cultural and economic development. The Conference also called upon the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity, in their preparations for the Earth Summit, to ensure that African environmental concerns, including the Cairo Programme, would figure prominently in the Summit.

F. ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE CAIRO PROGRAMME

1. Achievements

54. The Cairo Programme was very ambitious and comprehensive. Nevertheless, at its fifth session in 1993, AMCEN considered that it had made every effort to rise to the challenges and expectations. AMCEN functioned both as a forum for discussing environmental issues and a facilitator of technical cooperation. Creating environmental awareness was another achievement of the Programme.

(a) AMCEN Conference: Forum function and awareness creation

55. During its first period, AMCEN gained political leadership in the field of environment. And in line with the decision adopted by AMCEN at its fourth session, the Conference provided a forum for discussion of all environmental issues and initiatives of relevance to Africa, not only those addressed in the Cairo Programme. Through AMCEN ministers could give political direction regarding the key environmental issues. As a forum, AMCEN was a vehicle for African ministers to engage in policy dialogue on environmental issues and common approaches.
56. The political leadership of AMCEN was evident in a number of initiatives. One example is the adoption, in January 1991, of the Convention on the Ban of the Import into

Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes Within Africa (Bamako Convention). Prior to the adoption of this instrument, AMCEN had taken note, at its third session in 1989, that the uncontrolled release of hazardous wastes and toxic chemicals in the environment resulting from industrial, agricultural and domestic activities caused chronic and acute health and environmental hazards. The ministers at this session reiterated the deep concern expressed by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government and the Council of Ministers about the dumping of hazardous wastes on the African continent. In addition, they requested the Organization of African Unity authorities to adopt a decision at the Organization's following session with regard to the Basel Convention. At its fourth session in May 1991, AMCEN urged Governments to sign the Bamako Convention as well as the Basel Convention.

57. Another example of AMCEN leadership role was the adoption of the African Common Position on Environment and Development. This was Africa's statement of commitment to the Earth Summit in 1992. Ministers at the fourth session of AMCEN in 1991 urged the Economic Commission for Africa to incorporate in its preparatory document for the Earth Summit important elements relating to Africa's pressing environmental concerns in areas such as education and training, public awareness and the involvement of people in critical areas of social, cultural and economic development. AMCEN also called upon the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity in their preparations for the Summit to ensure that African environmental concerns, including the Cairo Programme, would figure prominently in Rio. As a United Nations body, the Economic Commission for Africa was responding to the request of the African countries. AMCEN thus functioned as an effective forum for exchange of views by Ministers of Environment in Africa.
58. One of the major aims of the Cairo Programme was to create awareness among African peoples of the crisis faced by the environment and both the deterioration and degradation of the continent's resources. Among the achievements of AMCEN in this regard was to raise the awareness of ministers of environment about the serious nature of environmental and resource degradation. This led to Governments in Africa giving higher priority to the environment.
59. The Cairo Programme also contributed to environmental awareness at the village level where the pilot projects were implemented. School children too were targeted as environmental education became part of school syllabuses in a number of countries.

(b) Technical cooperation

60. One of the objectives of the AMCEN programme was to strengthen cooperation between African Governments. Technical cooperation was achieved through the networks, committees and the pilot projects.

61. AMCEN promoted national institutions through the eight networks on key subject areas. The first five networks were launched between 1985 and 1988. The education and training network was established in 1989, while the networks on genetic resources and environmental education and training were set up in 1990. For this purpose, national institutions dealing with respective subject areas of the individual networks had been identified. The networks organized several activities, including studies, field missions and training workshops. The five ecosystem committees on which African experts served had also been established. The networks and committees organized several meetings and workshops. These meetings were essential in creating common understanding among Africans about environmental issues. The meetings were the first step in strengthening cooperation between African Governments.
62. During the first period of African cooperation through AMCEN, the countries gained experience in implementing eco-development pilot projects using environmentally sound, economically feasible and socially acceptable approaches. At the time of the fourth session of AMCEN in May 1991, 29 pilot projects were under implementation in eight countries.

2. Challenges

63. During the first period of its history (1985–1993), the AMCEN programme became a major area of environmental activity in Africa. Its impact could however have been even greater if it had been able effectively to resolve the many problems which arose during its implementation. Thus, the secretariat informed ministers at the fifth session of AMCEN in November 1993 that implementation of the Cairo Programme had taken over three years to get under way and progress was slow.
64. At the beginning of the 1990s, the networks were still not fully operational, the achievements of the committees had been limited and expectations were far from being met. At the task force meeting in November 1989, it was reported that little had thus far emerged from the work of the networks that could be said to have really strengthened technical cooperation among African institutions in a productive sense, at least where the organization of existing knowledge in ways relevant to development was concerned. The impact of the networks had been largely negligible. Where the pilot projects were concerned, while a number of African countries selected sites for their implementation, only 29 pilot projects actually commenced such implementation in a mere eight out of 52 countries. The main challenges facing AMCEN at the beginning of the 1990s can be summed up as either structural or financial, many with political implications.

(a) Structural constraints

65. The Cairo Programme had drawn up complex structures as its operational organs. As a result, the networks had evolved into elaborate structures (regional and national coordinating units, the Planning and Management Group, etc.), and the five ecosystem committees of the African Technical Regional Environment Group. The organization and operation of these elements distracted from the basic functions of providing support to national members and to regional coordinating units so as to allow the above-mentioned elements to respond to national and regional requests. Poor communication facilities had constrained the exchange of information between the secretariat and the regional coordinating units and between the regional coordinating units and the network members. In addition, the absence or loose nature of network linkages with many decision-making institutions in the countries hampered efforts by Governments to support the member institutions of the networks.
66. In some cases, lack of technical and administrative skills for networking within the regional coordinating units also constrained the networks' activities. Another challenge was posed by the focus of some networks on subject areas with which many Governments did not normally deal. This applied to areas like environmental monitoring, climatology on a regional or global scale, energy and genetic resources. Thus, there were no potential national members who could participate in the networks. The five ecosystem committees also faced similar challenges.
67. Besides there seemed to be duplication between the activities of the African Technical Regional Environment Group and the AMCEN committees. The African Technical Regional Environment Group was formed in response to the conviction that the Cairo Programme should offer an African solution to an African problem. Hence there was a need to involve 12 African experts. This problem surfaced when, at the fourth session of AMCEN, it was decided that the committees would be only functional during sessions of the AMCEN Conference and the African Technical Regional Environment Group was declared the principal technical arm of AMCEN.
68. In addition, the pilot projects experienced structural problems owing to poor communication between the focal points for the pilot projects and the secretariat during the five years of the programme. According to an evaluation report from 1992, the main mistake consisted in the persistent efforts to develop a sui generis programme oblivious of other existing activities by other development agencies. To the credit of the Conference, however, at its third session AMCEN called for a re-assessment of its operational and organizational structures, particularly its committees and networks, with a view to incorporating a clear definition of their terms of reference and interlinkages and emphasizing the need for the efficient and cost-effective operation of AMCEN organs. At its fourth session, AMCEN requested the secretariat to undertake a study to reassess the AMCEN programme in order to streamline organs which had overlapping or marginal functions.

(b) Financial constraints

69. Finances for the conference operations as originally conceived at the first AMCEN session were supposed to come from two sources:
- (a) Voluntary contributions by African Governments from an agreed percentage of funds provided by respective United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country offices under budget lines generally known as indicative planning figures (IPF);
 - (b) Contributions from assistance provided by World Bank, donor countries and agencies.
70. It was reckoned that, on the basis of 5 per cent IPF contributions per country per year, an amount of US\$ 32 million would be realized from African Governments themselves over a five-year period. At its first regular session, AMCEN decided that the Cairo Programme should primarily be financed by African Governments themselves. It was also felt that this approach would be important in attracting support from donors. None of the AMCEN member States, however, implemented the plan of allocating funds under their IPF budget lines. As a result, lack of funding became one of the main constraints of the committees and the networks, hampering them from discharging the responsibilities assigned to them. Lack of financial resources is also a major underlying reason for the failure to implement many more pilot projects.
71. Faced by the problems of mobilizing financial resources, at its fourth session AMCEN endorsed the idea of establishing a trust fund to fund the AMCEN programmes. Contributions by member States to the fund were voluntary. AMCEN also appealed to donor Governments to make generous contributions to the trust fund. By 1993, however, only Egypt and Seychelles had made contributions to the fund, which therefore remained more or less moribund during that period.
72. The difficulties of obtaining funds from African sources remained a major obstacle. With technical and financial cooperation from the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Commission for Africa also lacking, since the inception of the Cairo Programme the burden of funding fell almost entirely on UNEP. Governments had failed to cover costs of the participation of their experts and institutions in the activities of the networks and of the committees. Thus, the limited UNEP resources had to cover the costs involved instead of being spent on the implementation of the Cairo Programme and its pilot projects. UNEP found itself alone in bearing the burden of the difficult task of organizing, on a continent-wide basis, the operation of an established machinery from village to regional level.
73. In the majority of cases the African Governments did not receive donor funding for AMCEN activities. AMCEN organized its first donors' meeting in September 1986, at which 31 projects were submitted via the AMCEN secretariat. The donors did not

want to be approached in this way, however, and they advised the AMCEN secretariat to revise the project proposals and to ask African governments to submit their proposals bilaterally. During the second donors' meeting in March 1988 the original 31 project proposals were resubmitted unrevised. Another 20 new proposals were also submitted. The programme failed to raise funding through these attempts as well.

74. By 1992, most of the United Nations agencies and donors had still provided no funding. Some pilot projects had, however, been funded by UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other donors. One reason why AMCEN had not received more support from United Nations agencies was that Governments had not made full use of United Nations mechanisms and procedures available to them at the national level, in particular technical assistance from locally based representatives of the United Nations.
75. Financial constraints also affected the operation of the secretariat. Although it was planned that secretariat services would be provided jointly by UNEP, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity, in the end UNEP alone provided the AMCEN secretariat. The Organization of African Unity indicated that funding problems prevented it from supporting the secretariat, while the Economic Commission for Africa provided occasional assistance. The AMCEN secretariat lacked the staff and other resources for its many functions, preventing it from fulfilling its mandate. As a result, both the Bureau and the secretariat were unable to detect and correct in time problems that came up during implementation. The secretariat's coordination and follow-up function for committees, networks, and project activities was inadequate. This resulted in discrepancies between what had been planned and what was eventually put into effect.

III. 1993–2000: NEW POLICY ORIENTATION

76. Following such events as the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 and the challenges of implementing the Cairo Programme, the need for change and the refocusing of AM-CEN became more and more apparent in the beginning of the 1990s. The new policy orientation adopted at the fifth session of AMCEN in 1993 correspondingly represented a shift of focus from the running of operational programmes to emphasis on policy guidance. During this period in the history of AMCEN (1993–2000), the Conference was reconfirmed as the main forum for discussing environmental issues on the African continent.

A. BACKGROUND

77. At its fifth session, held in 1993, AMCEN adopted a new policy orientation with strong emphasis on the provision of political leadership and guidance in respect of major environmental issues and programmes of the region. Accordingly, it was decided that AMCEN should disengage from the operational projects and programmes identified in the Cairo Programme. Instead, it was to focus on the identification of priorities for action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels. It was to provide political support and policy guidance for implementation of the priorities identified by the Conference. Emphasis was to be placed on mobilizing support for sound environmental policy and environmental programmes and on the review, monitoring and coordination of environmental programmes and policies at the national, subregional and regional levels.
78. AMCEN was also to strengthen the capacity of the Conference to guide and lead Africa's participation and active involvement both in global negotiations and in international agreements on the environment. In addition, the Conference was to serve as a forum for identifying and promoting strategies for the mobilization of new and additional funding for environmental programmes and for ensuring that the Conference provided a framework for marshalling cooperation among African countries, international organizations, the United Nations and donor agencies active in environmental management in Africa.

B. OBJECTIVES AND MANDATE

79. At its fifth session, AMCEN decided that the primary objective of the Conference was to contribute positively to Africa's transition to sustainable development. The mandate of the Conference was reviewed, first, to provide continent-wide political and

technical leadership on sustainable development within the framework of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community and to agree on African positions on environment and development. This was to be carried out in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, UNEP, the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, the regional economic communities and the competent regional institutions and forums. Second, the mandate of the Conference was to give active support to the efforts of African States relating to national, subregional and regional issues pertaining to environment and sustainable development.

80. The constitution adopted by AMCEN at its seventh session in 1997 states that the objectives of the Conference should be:
- (a) To promote the harmonization and coordination of African environmental and sustainable development programmes and policies in collaboration with Governments, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and the private sector, including the business and industrial sectors;
 - (b) To facilitate the harmonization of Africa's consensus and common position on global environment and development issues of concern to the continent;
 - (c) To enhance Africa's participation in global dialogue and interdependence-oriented activities, in pursuit of mutual environmental and sustainable development goals.

C. ORGANIZATIONAL AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURES

81. At the fifth session of AMCEN in 1993, ministers adopted certain major changes relating to the structure of AMCEN and later, with the adoption of the Constitution in 1997, AMCEN became an institutional intergovernmental body on the environment and development. Thus, the Conference was reconfirmed as the main forum for the consideration of environmental issues at the continental level.

1. Operational and organizational structures

(a) Conference

82. At its fifth session, AMCEN decided that the main functions of the Conference were, among other things, to provide policy guidance and coordination; to monitor inter-African and intra-African commitments relating to the environment; to facilitate the harmonization of Africa's position and encourage active participation in the negotiation of conventions, and also in promoting their ratification; and to support the activities of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The constitution of 1997 confirms that the Conference shall be the policy-making body of AMCEN. The Conference makes decisions on environmental matters of concern and on biennial work programmes. The work programmes contained the areas for action which were identified by the Conference.

(b) Bureau and President

83. The functions of the Bureau and the President were also clarified. It was stated that during each ordinary session, the Conference would elect the officers constituting the Bureau, namely, the President, five vice-presidents and the rapporteur. The President would preside over the sessions of the Conference and the meetings of the Bureau and would conduct the affairs of AMCEN between the ordinary sessions of the Conference. The Bureau of the Conference would be responsible for the implementation of the decisions of the Conference and for relations between the Conference and the member States and observers between sessions.

(c) Secretariat

84. During this period, a shift in responsibilities from the secretariat to the countries was recommended. Both the countries themselves and African institutions and organizations were to take the lead in implementing the decisions of the Conference. It was also decided that the role of the secretariat should be one of coordination, promotion and facilitation.

(d) Committees

85. At its fifth session, AMCEN decided to transform the five ecosystem committees into standing committees of the Conference, which would function only at sessions of the Conference. According to the 1997 Constitution, however, each committee should hold an ordinary session at least once a year and might hold extraordinary sessions at any other time as circumstances might warrant. The committees should coordinate, monitor and report to the Conference on environment and development activities, including the implementation of conventions, protocols and agreements relevant to their respective ecosystems. The committees should also promote the ratification and implementation of agreements, facilitate and coordinate the exchange of information with other relevant institutions, review the results of monitoring activities in their area of competence and submit necessary reports to the Bureau.

(e) Networks

86. At its fifth session, AMCEN decided to locate the regional coordination unit of the networks within already existing African national, subregional or regional institutions. In addition, at the same session, AMCEN also decided that the role of United Nations agencies in providing support for the networks was to be strengthened. According to the constitution, AMCEN was to take measures to strengthen the regional technical cooperation networks on environment and eco-development. Each network was responsible for strengthening horizontal cooperation between national technical departments and scientific institutions; seeking solutions to environmental problems that transcended national boundaries; using scientific and technical tools to support

development projects; collecting, processing, storing and disseminating basic data provided by national technical departments; and providing scientific and technical assistance to African countries in analysing, collecting and correlating data.

(f) Inter-Agency Working Group

87. At its fifth session, AMCEN decided that the Inter-Agency Working Group should be retained as an advisory body but that its role should be reviewed in the light of Agenda 21. In that way, it would enable the Conference to receive and consider progress reports on the activities of its members with regard to the support being provided to African countries and organizations in the implementation of Agenda 21. In addition, this session decided that relevant non-governmental organizations should take part in the activities of the Working Group.

(g) Subregional environmental groups

88. According to the 1997 Constitution, each member State was to designate experts to serve as focal points and to constitute a scientific and technical group of experts, thus forming African subregional environmental groups to advise the ecosystem committees on subregional and regional issues. The subregional environmental groups were to play lead roles in the networking of institutions and experts and to assist the AMCEN secretariat promote and coordinate the implementation of Conference decisions.

(h) Subregional ministerial conferences

89. At its fifth session AMCEN further decided that subregional ministerial conferences should be convened between sessions of the Conference to review and monitor policies, programmes and initiatives on the environment at the subregional level.

2. Institutionalization of AMCEN and its relation to the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity

90. Since its inception in 1985 the Conference operated informally as an intergovernmental institution, with rules of procedure for its meetings. At its sixth session in 1995, AMCEN adopted a legislative framework and institutionally binding instruments for its operation. This step had become necessary with time and increased interaction with other institutions, particularly the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity.
91. Thus, at its sixth session, AMCEN was formally established as an intergovernmental body on environment and development governed by rules and procedures approved

by member States.¹ Its institutional status was to be formalized with the necessary legislative framework, including a constitution and related rules and regulations. Accordingly, the secretariat facilitated the drafting of a constitution, which was adopted at the seventh session.

92. At the first session of AMCEN, in 1985, the Executive Director of UNEP offered to provide the secretariat functions for AMCEN, in close cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity. This secretariat arrangement was maintained until the adoption by the Economic Commission for Africa of its resolution on streamlining the intergovernmental machinery of the Commission in May 1993. Pursuant to this resolution, the Conference of Ministers established the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Sustainable Development and the Environment, which subsumed the functions of AMCEN. The Conference of Ministers thereby also abolished AMCEN, as determined in its decision below:

“This Conference subsumes the functions of the following existing subsidiary organs: the Conference of African Ministers of the Environment and the Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment, which are hereby abolished.”

93. This decision was not relayed to the other members of the AMCEN Secretariat, including both the Organization of African Unity and UNEP, nor was it communicated to any of the other AMCEN organs, such as the Bureau and the Conference of Ministers. Accordingly, at the first session of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Sustainable Development and the Environment, held in March 1996, disagreement arose as to the authority of the Conference of Ministers to abolish AMCEN, which was not its subsidiary organ. It was considered that the Conference of Ministers did not in fact have the legal capacity to abolish AMCEN since AMCEN was not established by Economic Commission for Africa and had a joint secretariat which comprised, beside the Economic Commission for Africa, the Organization of African Unity and UNEP.
94. In the light of this determination, the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of Ministers Responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning in May 1997 adopted a resolution abolishing the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Sustainable Development and the Environment. This resolution also gave due recognition to the importance of AMCEN as the leading African intergovernmental body on the environment and stressed the need for the Economic Commission for Africa to avoid the adoption of measures which would lead to duplication of the AMCEN mandate.

1 Egypt, Gabon, Nigeria and South Africa expressed a reservation on this decision.

95. Where the relationship between AMCEN and the Organization of African Unity is concerned, two different views were expressed at the fifth session of AMCEN. One group of ministers considered that the mandate of AMCEN was “under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity”. The other believed that its mandate was to be implemented in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Commission for Africa, UNEP and the African Development Bank. Accordingly, the ministers concluded that there was a need to keep under periodic review the institutional relationship between AMCEN and institutions such as the Organization of African Unity.

D. MAIN DECISIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Work programmes

96. Over the period 1993–2000, biennial work programmes were adopted at the corresponding sessions of AMCEN. Follow-up to the Earth Summit and issues related to multilateral environmental agreements were accorded particular importance during this period.

(a) 1994–1995 work programme

97. Over the period 1994–1995 AMCEN underwent a new policy orientation. At its fourth session, in 1991, AMCEN had decided that it would be concerned with all environmental issues of relevance for the African continent, and not exclusively with the Cairo Programme. This gradual shift away from the Cairo Programme was commenced along with the development of an indicative conference programme for 1994–1995, in which combating poverty and environmental degradation was identified as the main objective in the new policy orientation.
98. Under the new work programme, emphasis was placed on the very close linkages between poverty and environmental degradation. Indeed, poverty was identified as the major cause of environmental degradation. Poverty, in the absence of alternative means of livelihood, was also closely linked to the mismanagement of natural resources and the consequent environmental pressure out of which environmental degradation arose. The programme activities were to be undertaken concurrently at the national, subregional and regional levels, with a view to alleviating poverty and thereby minimizing environmental degradation in Africa.
99. At its fifth session, in 1993, AMCEN adopted and ranked in order of priority 12 programme areas for implementation in Africa, namely:
- *Subprogramme 1: Capacity-building (within the context of Agenda 21) at national level with special focus on environmental economics, accounting and*

management tools, environmental law, institutions and policies, environmental education and training;

- *Subprogramme 2:* Environmentally sound management of terrestrial ecosystems and their resources with special focus on preventing and reversing desertification, mitigating the impacts of drought, environmentally sound management and sustainable use of forests and savannah woodlands, promotion of the environmentally sound use of microbial resources and related biotechnologies, environmentally sound management of soils and agricultural lands;
- *Subprogramme 3:* Environmentally sound management of freshwater resources;
- *Subprogramme 4:* Environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes and all types of wastes and toxic chemicals;
- *Subprogramme 5:* Environmentally sound management of marine and coastal areas, including island ecosystems;
- *Subprogramme 6:* Promoting human welfare, environment and development with special focus on managing demographic change and population pressures, development of human settlements, planning and management;
- *Subprogramme 7:* Managing the environmental impacts of climate change and climate variability;
- *Subprogramme 8:* Securing greater energy efficiency and sufficiency;
- *Subprogramme 9:* Monitoring and assessing the state of the African environment;
- *Subprogramme 10:* Promotion of subregional and regional cooperation;
- *Subprogramme 11:* Promoting the role of major groups in Africa's environmental management;
- *Subprogramme 12:* Mobilization of support for the implementation of Africa's environment programme at the national, subregional and regional levels.

100. Apart from adopting this indicative work programme, at its fifth session AMCEN decided to step up efforts in support of the Organization of African Unity and other regional efforts aimed at ensuring that Africa's interests were fully taken into account in the Convention to Combat Desertification. It expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Commission for Africa, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and urged African countries to take an active part in the initiatives that had been launched. At that same session the Conference also took note of and expressed appreciation to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa for African Strategies for the implementation of Agenda 21 and decided that the Conference secretariat

should undertake the necessary consultations in order to convene an African regional meeting on biological diversity for the purpose of adopting an African common position.

(b) 1996–1997 work programme

101. At its sixth session in 1995, AMCEN decided to continue the 1994–1995 work programme for the next biennium as well and to include the following additional priorities: sustainable industrial production, consumption and industrial development, including aspects relating to the Framework Convention on Climate Change; environmentally sound management of all types of wastes; promotion of the development of the African common perspective and position on the Convention on Biological Diversity; rational management of African forests; support for implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification; and new and emerging issues that had implications for AMCEN, such as participation in activities relating to the environmental impacts within the framework of the United Nations Agenda for Peace and the Agenda for Development and Rio-related programmes of action and platforms. The Conference also decided again to focus on the organization of seminars and workshops on conventions, to support the drawing up of national action plans, and to support the integration of environmental impact assessment in development projects.

(c) 1998–1999 work programme

102. The programme priorities adopted by AMCEN at its seventh session in 1997 were to continue with the 1996–1997 work programme into the next biennium, including the following additional priorities for 1998–1999: sustainable development and equitable management and use of freshwater resources. At its seventh session AMCEN also decided:
 - (a) To call on member States to ensure the integration of agriculture, population and environmental considerations in the planning, development and implementation of national action plans; and to participate fully in negotiations on the biosafety protocol² and the revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;³
 - (b) To urge member States that had not yet ratified the Montreal Protocol, the Bamako Convention, the Basel Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, The Convention to Combat Desertification, CITES and the Framework Convention on Climate Change to do so. The Organization of African Unity should initiate action to facilitate the ratification and effective implementation

2 The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was adopted in January 2000.

3 The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture was adopted in November 2001.

of the Bamako Convention by all African countries. The AMCEN secretariat should continue to build consensus, raise awareness and encourage common positions on the implications of these conventions and also promote their implementation. The AMCEN secretariat should also urge the convention secretariats to continue assisting countries that had ratified the conventions in their efforts to achieve effective implementation;

(c) *To urge African Governments to continue to strengthen their institutions and programmes in the field of capacity-building.*

2. Follow-up to Agenda 21

103. The secretariat organized two major meetings that dealt with post-Rio follow-up: the meeting of the central focal points of the African subregional environmental groups and the extraordinary meeting of the Bureau in December 1992. The main purpose of these meetings was to review and make suggestions as to how AMCEN could be restructured and strengthened to serve as Africa's main mechanism for the implementation of major African initiatives in the light of Agenda 21. The secretariat also participated in a post-Rio African regional workshop held in January 1993. The aim of the workshop was to exchange ideas and information on the action taken by countries since the Earth Summit and also to identify strategies for the implementation of Agenda 21 within the context of the African Common Position.
104. The Inter-Agency Working Group met in November 1992 and expressed the need to Africanize Agenda 21 in order to reflect the needs and capacity of African Governments and also to ensure that programmes and activities were implemented within available resources. They also recommended the refocusing of relevant elements of the AMCEN programme to bring it into line with the Africanized Agenda 21.
105. Several AMCEN-related activities were convened in order to implement Agenda 21. The AMCEN secretariat commissioned the Earthcare Africa Institute to review and evaluate the implementation of Agenda 21 in the respective African countries. The fifth meeting of the AMCEN Committee on Forests and Woodland was held in December 1993 to review the implications of the Forest Principles of Agenda 21 and map out strategies for their implementation at the national level.
106. Following that meeting, in January 1995, UNEP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) co-sponsored a workshop to review progress in the implementation of the Forest Principles and also to identify and highlight for the Commission on Sustainable Development issues of particular importance to the African region. In order to enhance knowledge that would be used in the development of appropriate policies, strategies and action programmes on sustainable management and use of forests in Africa, UNEP contracted the International Centre for Forest Research to undertake a review of the state of the art in sustainable forest management in the humid zone in West Africa.

107. Within the framework of the Committee on River and Lake Basins and the Network on Water Resources, an expert group meeting was held in October 1995 on the implementation of Agenda 21 for integrated water management in Africa. Despite such undertakings, according to an evaluation report that reviewed the achievements of the Regional Office for Africa in the late 1990s, there was little restructuring of policy to make either the Regional Office or AMCEN more responsive to the environmental challenges identified by Agenda 21.

3. Conventions and international agreements

108. At its fifth session, AMCEN decided to monitor the implementation of regional and global conventions and agreements of relevance to the African region and to facilitate the harmonization of Africa's position and encourage active participation in all major negotiations. This included the issues of desertification, natural disasters, African strategies for the implementation of Agenda 21, and an African regional meeting on biological diversity. At its seventh session, AMCEN confirmed the importance of the ratification of international environmental conventions and protocols. Member States that had not yet ratified certain conventions and protocols were urged to do so.
109. The Conference also called upon the Organization of African Unity to initiate action that would facilitate the ratification and effective implementation of the Bamako Convention by all African countries. It also decided that the AMCEN secretariat should continue to build consensus, raise awareness and encourage common positions on the implications of those conventions and also promote their implementation. Moreover, the AMCEN secretariat should urge the convention secretariats to continue assisting countries that had ratified the conventions and protocols in their efforts to achieve effective implementation of their provisions.
110. Among these agreements were the Convention on Biological Diversity; the Framework Convention on Climate Change; CITES; the Montreal Protocol; the Convention to Combat Desertification; the Bamako Convention; and the re-negotiations of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources.

(a) Convention on Biological Diversity

111. The work carried out by AMCEN in relation to the Convention on Biological Diversity provides a good illustration of how the Conference followed up on multilateral environmental agreements. At its fifth session, AMCEN requested the secretariat to prepare a position paper, to undertake the necessary consultations to ensure the timely preparation of the position paper and to convene an African regional meeting on biodiversity to discuss the region's concerns regarding the Convention on Biological Diversity.

112. Several activities were undertaken to follow up on this decision. First, a team of experts prepared a position paper entitled "The Convention on Biological Diversity: issues of relevance to Africa". This position paper reviewed the status of biodiversity in Africa, causes of losses or threats to that biodiversity, and the particular problems and issues affecting it in specific situations such as protected areas and natural ecosystems. It considered a range of issues, including methods of biodiversity conservation, the legislation and laws applicable to implementation of the Convention, the financial needs associated with implementation, and the implications for African countries of ratifying and implementing the Convention. In addition, the special rights and benefits that accrue to signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity were enumerated, followed by recommendations on follow-up actions by African Governments, ranging from the need to ensure ratification to other actions of an immediate and mid-term nature and the consequences of delaying ratification or of non-ratification.
113. Second, an African regional ministerial meeting on the Convention on Biological Diversity was convened in Nairobi in October 1994, preceded by a meeting of experts. Both the experts and the ministerial meetings further reviewed the position paper. The outcome of this review was the adoption of a paper entitled "African common perspectives and position on the Convention on Biological Diversity". This paper provided a review of Africa's approaches to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and also the actions that needed to be undertaken by African countries to ensure that Africa would enjoy the full benefits of the Convention.
114. Both meetings also agreed on lists of agenda items of concern to Africa for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in the Bahamas in late 1994. In addition, the secretariat prepared a proposal to mobilize financial resources to support the full participation of African countries at the Conference of the Parties. A sufficient volume of resources was raised to support the participation of delegates from over 30 African countries.

(b) Other multilateral environmental agreements

115. Where the other multilateral environmental agreements are concerned, AMCEN encouraged the active participation of African countries in their negotiation and development and urged them to ratify and implement those that had been adopted. For example, in the case of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, two regional African ministerial preparatory conferences were convened in 1991.
116. Within the framework of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the AMCEN secretariat facilitated the participation of African countries in the Convention's formal negotiation meeting held in June 1995. In addition, the secretariat facilitated the participation of African countries to the African consultation of government-designated experts to review the draft international technical guidelines on safety in biotechnology and related capacity-building requirements.

117. Some of this work was also undertaken through the networks and committees. For example, the secretariat of the Committee on Desert and Arid Lands continued to play an important role in building consensus and strategies for implementation of the provisions of the Convention to Combat Desertification. In March 1997, the interim secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification, working in close cooperation with the AMCEN secretariat, organized a pan-African conference under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity.

4. Other issues

118. Where protection of the environment and sustainable agriculture is concerned, at its seventh session AMCEN called on all member States to ensure the integration of agriculture, population and environmental considerations in the planning, development and implementation of national action plans.

E. ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE NEW POLICY ORIENTATION

1. Achievements

(a) New policy orientation

119. With the adoption of the new policy orientation, the role of AMCEN as a forum for African ministers to discuss common environmental concerns and to coordinate African positions was considerably strengthened. Notwithstanding the challenges which they faced, the networks and committees still facilitated technical cooperation.
120. The adoption of the new policy orientation highlighted the function of AMCEN as a forum for the discussion and identification of common priorities and concerns. The AMCEN conferences facilitated coordination among African Governments and also enhanced their preparations for international meetings. AMCEN provided continent-wide leadership on the environment by promoting awareness-raising and consensus-building on global and regional environmental issues, particularly those relating to the multilateral environmental agreements.

(b) Promotion of African common positions, ratification of environmental instruments and continent-wide cooperation

121. AMCEN also developed and harmonized Africa's perspectives and common positions. These positions served to guide African representatives in the negotiation of legally binding international instruments on the environment. They also promoted their active participation in international dialogue on global issues of crucial importance to the region. In addition, AMCEN promoted the ratification by African countries of multilateral environmental agreements of relevance to the Africa region. By

April 2000, most African countries had ratified the various major environmental conventions such as the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification, or were on the verge of so doing. In addition, AMCEN facilitated the effective participation of African countries in sessions of the Governing Council of UNEP and promoted African representation in the Council's Bureau.

122. AMCEN made a positive contribution to Africa's transition towards sustainable development through its cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Commission for Africa and other institutions. AMCEN also undertook follow-up to the provisions and recommendations of Agenda 21.

(c) Technical cooperation

123. Within the framework of the regional technical cooperation networks, AMCEN continued to promote technical cooperation in various fields directly related to environment and sustainable development. The networks functioned as forums for the exchange of information and experience, with a view to facilitating the identification, planning and implementation of actions that needed to be taken at national and international levels. Several of the networks organized workshops bringing together experts from different African countries. The work of the networks helped boost the capacity of participating countries and centres to tackle issues taken up in the various networks. AMCEN established ecosystems committees and environmental networks for the exchange of information and assessment of the state of the African environment.
124. In this way AMCEN has prepared many Africans in the field of environmental management through its seminars, workshops and symposiums. Many African scientists and technicians have acquired skills through AMCEN that have enabled them to promote environmental management more effectively. Through its programme, AMCEN has also strengthened a number of institutions through the provision of equipment and other tools essentials for capacity-building.
125. AMCEN contributed positively to environment and development issues at national, sub-regional and regional levels with active support from African states, individually and collectively. AMCEN also monitored progress in the implementation of the commitments and programmes relating to the integration of environmental and developmental goals through analysis and evaluation of reports submitted both by countries and by intergovernmental bodies of the region.
126. In the area of environmental assessment and early warning, AMCEN organized a regional workshop on capacity-building in environmental impact assessment. In relation to policy review, analysis and development, it has organized a conference on

coastal management, a meeting of its committee on protection of the sea and a regional workshop on fresh water.

2. Challenges

127. Notwithstanding all its achievements, the Conference continued to come up against many problems. The main explanations for the shortcomings of AMCEN are the financial, structural and political obstacles which it faced.

(a) Financial constraints

128. The main challenge which AMCEN had to overcome consisted in the financial constraints on its work, as implementation of the AMCEN programme continued to be seriously hampered by lack of funds. As a result, it was not possible to take full action on all the subprogrammes of the work programme for the 1994–1995 biennium; in consequence, most of the activities endorsed at the sixth session could not be implemented as expected.
129. Given the financial constraints which had hampered its activities, AMCEN decided to set up a trust fund to ensure a sustainable financial basis, thereby rendering the Conference more effective.
130. The Trust Fund was established in 1991, on the basis of voluntary contributions. At the sixth session of AMCEN it was felt, however, that mandatory contributions would be necessary in order to mobilize the financial resources required to implement the programme. By that time, only Egypt and Seychelles had made contributions. Five years later, by January 2000, 8 out of 53 countries had contributed: Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ghana, Mauritania, Seychelles, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The ministers remained convinced that the idea of the AMCEN trust fund was still the most important means of securing the commitments of African Governments to AMCEN.
131. Between 1993 and 2000, the activities of AMCEN continued to be carried out largely through the support of UNEP, which also hosted its secretariat. In the mid-1990s, however, UNEP was itself facing financial difficulties owing to a sharp drop in contributions paid by Member States to the United Nations, low cash carry-over from 1995 to 1996 and less favourable exchange rates. These difficulties affected programme delivery of UNEP. Thus, during this period AMCEN received dwindling financial resources from UNEP and, as a result, its activities had to be drastically reduced.
132. Although the Inter-Agency Working Group was established to play an active and supportive role in the implementation of the AMCEN programme, many organizations and donor countries failed to give any tangible support to AMCEN. At the AMCEN sessions, organizations and donor countries would express their intention to support the programme, but many of these promises of support were not translated

into actions or funding. Similarly, AMCEN failed to build partnerships and appropriate measures with the private sector, and with non-governmental and community-based organizations active in the region to ensure their effective participation in the planning and design of projects and implementation of the AMCEN priorities.

(b) Structural constraints

133. The structural constraints hampering implementation of the Cairo Programme in the first phase of the history of AMCEN were partly remedied when, at its fifth session, AMCEN decided that the ecosystem committees would only operate during its sessions. Another structural problem faced by AMCEN, however, was the absence of structural links between the meetings of environmental ministers in the framework of AMCEN and their counterparts in other ministries like planning and finance, foreign affairs, agriculture, education, health, industry and labour. In view of this, it was difficult to integrate environmental issues in national development plans.
134. In addition, despite the establishment of the Inter-Agency Working Group, AMCEN faced serious problems in building strategic partnerships with key players in the international community, in particular the World Bank and multilateral funding agencies, and with donor countries, which were expected to supplement resources that would be earmarked from UNDP IPF sources.
135. Structural problems also arose in the Conference's secretariat arrangements. UNEP had provided the secretariat of AMCEN since its inception. In response to a request made by AMCEN at its fourth session, the secretariat had been located at the UNEP Regional Office for Africa, rather than at the Office of the Executive Director. During the 1990s, however, the Regional Office for Africa faced constraints which impaired affected the effectiveness of its secretariat services.
136. For example, the professional staff members from the Regional Office who ran the secretariat were also fully engaged in other programme work. It was therefore difficult for them to carry out all the functions of AMCEN, beyond its biennial sessions. Major follow-up activities to AMCEN meetings and decisions were not effectively implemented because of the programmatic commitments of those staff-members. Thus, although the successive AMCEN sessions continued to be hosted every two years, the organization remained silent for the rest of the period till the eve of its next session.

(c) Political constraints

137. One of the major problems that AMCEN continued to encounter was the reluctant political will of African Governments. The effective implementation of AMCEN activities had not been accorded very high priority at the national level. The majority of the countries participating in AMCEN had not been very successful in translat-

ing into action the agreed priorities or in putting in place the necessary financial resources for their implementation at the national, subregional and regional levels. The lack of political commitment by Governments was also a reflection of the limited capacity in African countries in terms of human, technical, financial and institutional resources.

138. For example, in 1995 the Conference had agreed on the establishment of a trust fund, yet some five years later only a few countries had made contributions to the fund. The lack of sustained and predictable financial resources for the implementation of the programme is illustrative, to a large extent, of the lack of political will and commitment on the part of African Governments to the aspirations of AMCEN agreed upon in 1985. This also ran directly counter to the increasingly urgent concerns voiced by African Governments about the environmental problems confronting them at the national level.
139. As a result AMCEN had not been able to build strong support and mechanisms for integrating its priorities in policy, decision-making and programme-planning processes at the national and subregional levels. At the same time, a considerable number of African countries had continued to implement programmes on the environment which were not entirely consistent with the original concept of the AMCEN priorities.

IV. 2000–2005: REVITALIZING AMCEN FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

140. Despite several attempts to strengthen AMCEN during the new policy orientation period (1993-2000), the Conference remained hampered partly owing to its orientation, limited resources and the irregular nature of its operation. For example, by the time the eighth session of AMCEN was convened in Abuja in April 2000, there had been no sessions of the Conference or meetings of its Bureau since the seventh session in November 1997.
141. The above constraints having severely curtailed the activities undertaken by AMCEN in the late 1990s, the Conference's eight session was convened with the specific purpose of revitalizing AMCEN as an instrument to prepare Africa for the environmental challenges of the twenty-first century.
142. This revitalization exercise has been remarkable in many ways, as it coincided with the implementation of a series of initiatives which have benefited enormously from AMCEN leadership. These include the holding of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa and major political transformation at the continental level, which has seen the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union, coupled with the launch of a new and ambitious development programme, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In turn, these events have also had extensive spin-off benefits for AMCEN because they have provided the necessary motivation to galvanize and energize AMCEN member States.

A. BACKGROUND

143. At its eighth session, AMCEN agreed upon a strong political commitment from its member States to revitalize the Conference. African ministers agreed on a new and dynamic AMCEN through their adoption of the Abuja Declaration, which outlined the way forward for the Conference. It incorporated a series of proposals for policy and institutional change and for a medium-term work programme that was to enhance and revitalize AMCEN. It was believed that these decisions would catalyse regional efforts to tackle the growing problems of environmental deterioration and to enhance the ability of African countries to defend their interests in international environmental negotiations, especially in such new and complex areas as biological diversity, climate change, desertification, trade and the environment.

144. Among the main reasons for this revitalization of AMCEN were:

- (a) Limitations in the implementation of the previous strategies to enhance the work of AMCEN;
- (b) Challenges brought about by major political developments in the continent: The Organization of African Unity summit of 1999 had decided to examine ways of linking AMCEN with the Organization in the future as a basis for the formation of common African policy. There were specific AMCEN initiatives which needed special attention. For example, confidence needed to be restored in the moribund Nairobi and Abidjan conventions on protection of the marine environment in Africa. Furthermore, AMCEN needed a strategy for the development of partnerships in major environmental forums, to respond to shifts in local and global environmental policy orientations. In addition, emerging issues of the twenty-first century of particular importance to AMCEN included advocacy measures to tackle the growing deterioration of the environment both in Africa and worldwide; increasing social and economic inequality in and among countries with its associated impact on the environment; accelerating pace of economic globalization and its impact on the environment in Africa; and rapid changes in the global economy and environment, in technology, in consumption patterns and in demographic trends. These challenges required changes in the approach, focus and organization of the work of AMCEN;
- (c) New policy on Africa adopted by UNEP: At its twentieth session in 1999, the UNEP Governing Council approved the following five new focal areas: first, environmental assessment and early warning; second, fresh water resources; third, industry and technology transfer; fourth, coordination of environmental conventions; and, fifth, support to Africa. In effect, Africa became a UNEP priority because of its special needs. The UNEP Governing Council was taking note of the fact that Africa not only faced some of the world's most severe environmental challenges, but also had the most limited institutional, human and financial resources to deal with them. It is in Africa that the need for truly sustainable development is most acutely felt. The overriding priority was to alleviate poverty – the major cause of environmental degradation – among the majority of Africa's people. Similarly, at its twenty-first session, the Governing Council reiterated that Africa was the focus of considerable attention and adopted a specific decision, 21/15, on support to the continent;
- (d) Need for reform of AMCEN: Since the inception of AMCEN in 1985, its achievements had been modest compared to the aspirations of its founding States. This was due in part to the direction taken by the Conference, which led to the formation of complex and ineffective structures, limited resources and diminished interest among participating countries. In response to perceived chronic weaknesses that had afflicted, AMCEN, the ministers at the

eight session decided that AMCEN had to develop a stronger identity. They adopted a new institutional structure and policy priorities.

B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

145. During the first years of the new millennium, AMCEN perceived the need to review its constitution. A series of consultations were held to identify AMCEN goals and objectives in the light of the new and emerging issues confronting Africa, as spelled out during the eight session of AMCEN. A vision based on the realization that AMCEN should become a strategic instrument for policy-setting and guidance for Africa in the field of environment and sustainable development was articulated in the context of the revision process. According to the new draft constitution, the vision and mission of AMCEN are, first, to create a framework, at regional level, which is conducive to environment protection, sustainable development and elimination of poverty. Second, its mission is to provide political environmental stewardship and a voice of conscience in the context of the growing deterioration of the environment in Africa and worldwide, the increasing social and economic inequality and its associated impact on the environment and the accelerating pace of economic globalization and its environmental impact on Africa.

146. The overall objective is to foster closer cooperation for the judicious, sustainable and coordinated management, protection and use of the environment, and to advance the African agenda of regional integration and poverty alleviation. The specific objectives are the following:
 - (a) To promote shared responsibility and cooperation in environment management among member States, with a view to protecting the environment from degradation and contributing to the environmentally sound social and economic development of Africa;
 - (b) To keep under regular review the state, conditions and trends of environment management in Africa, as well as new and emerging environmental issues, and to promote pragmatic responses and actions to achieve environmental security;
 - (c) To provide a framework for the establishment and consolidation of a sound partnership between member States and other bilateral and multilateral partners in ensuring the sustainable development of Africa;
 - (d) To strengthen public and political support and cooperation for regional, subregional and national environmental management initiatives by, among other things, mobilizing and directing African capacities and resources to solve the continent's environmental problems;

- (e) To promote the harmonization and coordination of Africa's environment and sustainable development programmes in collaboration with government, non-governmental and civil society organizations and the private sector, including the business and industry sectors; and
- (f) To promote political cooperation among member States and the evolution of common political values in environmental management.

C. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

147. At its eight session, AMCEN examined and agreed on the institutional and policy changes and reorientation required to make the Conference more effective. This new strategic direction has been further consolidated in follow-up sessions of the Conference. The ministers reaffirmed that AMCEN should meet every two years. They also decided that expert meetings and consultations with non-governmental organizations should precede AMCEN sessions. To support the work of the Bureau, the ministers decided to establish an inter-sessional committee and an inter-agency technical committee. The former strategy of working through the AMCEN networks and committees was abandoned.
148. These institutional changes were designed to strengthen the ability of AMCEN:
- (a) To take the lead policy role in dealing with new and emerging environmental challenges in Africa;
 - (b) To undertake systematic and regular reviews of environmental conditions and trends, with a view to articulating AMCEN policy positions to accelerate sustainable development;
 - (c) To strengthen and expand legal, economic and other instruments to deal with Africa's new and emerging environmental challenges;
 - (d) To facilitate the development of common positions and standpoints to strengthen Africa's participation in and influence on environment-related negotiations;
 - (e) To catalyse the mobilization of financial resources in support of efforts to meet environmental challenges.
149. A streamlined approach was implemented to draft, approve and review realistic medium-term programmes with contributions from AMCEN partners.

1. Operational and organizational structures

(a) Secretariat

150. At its eight session, AMCEN agreed that UNEP should still serve as the AMCEN secretariat and requested UNEP to provide a senior programme officer to serve as secretary to the Conference. Prior to that session, general staff at the UNEP Regional Office for Africa had provided the secretariat services for AMCEN.

(b) Bureau

151. At its eighth session, AMCEN decided that the Bureau should be composed of one representative from each of the five subregions. In this way, the number of vice-presidents was reduced from five to three and the total number of Bureau members to five. The role of the AMCEN Bureau is:

- (a) To give strategic direction to the Inter-sessional committee, the Inter-Agency Technical Committee and the secretariat;
- (b) To follow up the decisions of AMCEN and its subsidiary organs;
- (c) To assess progress made and actions needed for the effective implementation of the Conference's decisions and recommendations.
- (c) Inter-sessional Committee

152. The Inter-sessional Committee is composed of the five members of the AMCEN Bureau and one representative from each of the five geographical subregions: central, eastern, north, southern and west Africa. This Committee considered the reports and recommendations of the Inter-Agency Technical Committee, the development of common strategies, positions and perspectives for major international meetings and negotiations, the development of AMCEN responses to environmental emergencies, and other developments in the region requiring consultation and action.

(d) Inter-Agency Technical Committee

153. The Inter-Agency Technical Committee comprises representatives from the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union); the Economic Commission for Africa; the African Development Bank; UNEP; African subregional organizations and economic groupings; specialized agencies, programmes and organs of the United Nations system, including secretariats and multilateral environmental agreements; and specialized non-governmental organizations, private sector, civil society and women's groups. These groups have a shared interest in environmental concerns in Africa. The objective of the committee is to achieve a higher level of coordination and integration of activities in the continent. The five African geographical subregions were represented on this committee, as their membership facilitated the implementation of programme activities at subregional and country level.

2. Revision of the AMCEN constitution and emerging institutional linkages with the African Union

154. In line with changes in its policy and institutions and with the new medium-term programme, ministers at the eight session of AMCEN in 2000 recommended that the AMCEN constitution should be reviewed to accommodate the new functions of the Conference and its organs. Meanwhile, shortly thereafter, at the political level, African heads of State had embarked on a process of transforming the Organization of African Unity into something more akin to a regional integration instrument, the African Union. Discussions were under way on what would later emerge as NEPAD. The ministers at the ninth session of AMCEN in 2002 decided that the AMCEN secretariat should recruit a consultant to complete the draft constitution and to initiate a process for further intergovernmental consultations, taking into account the need to keep closely in step with the evolving institutional arrangements of the African Union and NEPAD. At its tenth session in 2004, AMCEN noted that few countries had submitted comments on the draft revised constitution. Accordingly, it requested the secretariat to circulate the draft revised constitution to all African countries for their review and comments. The session also requested the Bureau to hold further consultations with the newly established African Union Commission while this draft was under review, in view of the fact that relationship between AMCEN and the African Union would influence the future role and form to be taken by the Conference. Two dates are of particular importance and significance in this process, first, the launch of the African Union, with the adoption of its Constitutive Act, and, second, the launch of NEPAD.
155. In July 2003, African leaders launched the African Union with the adoption of a constitutive act which, among other things, established the institutions and organs of the Union, including the specialized technical committees. These Committees are composed of ministers and high government representatives responsible for their sectors. Since this new arrangement was bound to have an impact on the way in which AMCEN operated, at its ninth session AMCEN requested the Bureau and the President to initiate consultations with the African Union Commission to ensure harmonization of the work of AMCEN with that of the Union.
156. Subsequently, at its summit meeting in Sirte in February 2005, the African Union requested the Chair of the African Union Commission to work with ministerial forums such as AMCEN to harmonize their work with the activities of the Commission and its specialized technical committees. In the case of AMCEN, the technical special committee of particular relevance is the Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, Energy, Natural Resources and Environment.
157. As a follow-up, a joint meeting of the African Union Commission and the AMCEN Bureau was held on this issue in Addis Ababa on 19 May 2005. It discussed the implementation of those provisions of the Sirte Declaration relating to integration of the

mandate of AMCEN into the activities of the African Union Commission. The meeting formulated a road map for that integration.

158. Although discussions were still under way, a set of practical approaches began to emerge. The meeting agreed on a number of conclusions and recommendations. First, since AMCEN and its various organs and facilities had been in existence for a long time, it was felt important that the full integration of AMCEN into the African Union should be approached with caution. Moreover, there was a need to ensure that all stakeholders were involved in the implementation of the new arrangements. AMCEN had already formulated its own mandate and that needed to be harmonized with the provisions of the Constitutive Act of the African Union relating to specialized technical committees. Participants noted that there was a need to fortify the African Union Commission with the contribution of AMCEN, since that would enhance co-ordination and programme delivery and facilitate the Commission's environmental work. Conversely, there was a need to strengthen AMCEN with the political support of the African Union. It was necessary for the African Union Commission to ensure that it implemented the decisions of the African Union Assembly in a harmonious, coherent and pragmatic manner.
159. It was also agreed that the current financing arrangements should remain in place for a limited period after AMCEN became a specialized technical committee of the African Union. It was further agreed that the integration of AMCEN within the African Union should not jeopardize or limit the work of AMCEN. The distinct voice of AMCEN should be accommodated in the new institutional arrangements.
160. For those reasons, the meeting recommended that AMCEN should become a separate and distinct specialized technical committee of the African Union.
161. The meeting supported maintaining the current arrangements in the interim, whereby UNEP provided AMCEN secretariat functions. Furthermore, the Commission should hold discussions with UNEP on ways of expediting the transfer of the AMCEN secretariat functions to the Commission in such a way that the link between AMCEN and UNEP was preserved and all the benefits deriving from UNEP involvement were sustained. Finally, it was agreed that the Commission should submit a draft decision for the consideration of the Assembly of the African Union, requesting further consultations with AMCEN and UNEP on the final practical modalities for implementing the above recommendations.
162. In the meantime, the Regional Office for Africa and the Office of the Commissioner on Rural Economy and Agriculture have adopted specific and practical approaches with a view to ensuring that they work together to meet the needs of AMCEN.

D. MAIN DECISIONS AND ACTIVITIES

163. After the adoption of the decision to revitalize AMCEN in 2000, one medium-term programme (2000–2004) and one biennial programme (2005–2006) have thus far been adopted. These programmes are designed to tackle the increasing number of emerging environmental issues that have growing implications for Africa's social, economic and emerging environmental security. The preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the work on multilateral environmental agreements, the Africa Environment Outlook and the Action Plan were the main concerns of AMCEN during the first years of the new millennium

1. AMCEN work programmes

(a) 2000-2004: Medium-term

164. The AMCEN medium-term programme (2000–2004) focused on actions in which African countries should collectively invest to achieve sustainable development, thus ensuring that their environmental status improved and enabling them to contribute to international efforts to achieve a sustainable global environment. This medium-term programme, which was subsequently integrated into the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD, had two main clusters:

(a) The first cluster incorporated activities in the following four areas:

- (i) Environmental information, assessment, early warning and environmental security;
- (ii) Global negotiations and multilateral environmental agreements;
- (iii) Coastal and marine environment (revitalization of the Nairobi and Abidjan conventions),
- (iv) Role of AMCEN in securing Africa's stake in the ten-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 2002 at the summit level (what was to be the World Summit on Sustainable Development) and in the governing sessions of UNEP, the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Commission for Africa;

(b) The second cluster incorporated the following four areas:

- (i) Trade and environment;
- (ii) Industry, technology and pollution;

- (iii) Freshwater resources management;
- (iv) Managing forest resources.

165. In May 2000, the Inter-sessional Committee agreed on the following priorities for implementation in the 2000–2001 biennium:

- (a) Regional environment outlook;
- (b) Negotiations on multilateral agreements: the Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Protocol on Biosafety, the soon-to-be-concluded Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Montreal Protocol;
- (c) Implementation of regional agreements: Nairobi and Abidjan conventions and Cape Town Declaration;
- (d) Preparations for the ten-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 2002 at the summit level.

(b) 2005–2006 biennium

166. The AMCEN work programme for the 2005–2006 biennium consists of the following programme elements: the role of AMCEN in the implementation of the action plan of the environmental initiative of NEPAD; capacity-building; land degradation and desertification programme; coastal and marine ecosystems; managing forest resources; climate change; environmental assessment, early warning and environmental security; African Environment Outlook; Africa Environment Information Network; sustainable consumption and production; integrated environmental management (river basins and wetlands); post-conflict environmental assessments; poverty and environment programme; wastewater management and use for afforestation; sound management and sustainable use of chemicals; human settlements management programme; and small island developing States – aspects of sustainable development. It is noteworthy that the AMCEN work programme for the biennium 2005–2006 is being implemented by the AMCEN secretariat and AMCEN partner institutions and organizations.

2. Africa Environment Outlook and Africa Environment Information Network

167. In 1997, UNEP published the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) report. This was the first in the UNEP series of reports that review the state of the world's environment. In order to highlight the state of the environment in Africa, at its eight session, AMCEN decided to request the production of an Africa Environment Outlook report. This decision was affirmed at a meeting of the AMCEN Inter-sessional Committee in

May 2000. In response to this, and working in cooperation with the UNEP Division of Early Warning and Assessment, the AMCEN secretariat embarked on the process of producing the first Africa Environment Outlook report (AEO-1), which was launched at the ninth session of AMCEN in 2002.

168. The AEO process was based on wide consultation and participation between UNEP and various partners in the Africa region. It reflected a variety of regional and sub-regional perspectives and priorities. The AEO process involved six collaborating centres producing subregional environment assessment and policy briefs for central, eastern, northern, southern and western Africa and the western Indian Ocean islands. These centres engaged experts, both from institutions and working in their individual capacity, at the national and subregional levels. At its second meeting, the AMCEN Inter-Agency Technical Committee reviewed and approved the draft AEO report in January 2002. The production of the AEO report was also an input into the Africa preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.
169. The AEO report was launched at the ninth session of AMCEN in July 2002. The ministers at this session also adopted the AEO process as a monitoring and reporting mechanism for sustainable environmental management in Africa. It was also envisaged that the AEO process would provide a framework for national and subregional integrated environmental assessment and reporting. At the same session AMCEN established the Africa Environment Information Network (AEIN) as a tool for regular production of the AEO report and of subregional environmental outlook reports. The AEIN initiative is designed to promote access to and harmonization of data in the Africa region. It will also act as a basis for tracking environmental changes. In particular, the initiative is intended to provide information support for the implementation of the NEPAD environmental component. It is worth noting that the production of AEO-2, the second report in the series, will be completed by mid-2006.

3. Conventions and international agreements

170. During the first years of the new millennium, multilateral environmental agreements, including those of regional scope, remained of particular importance for the work of AMCEN.

(a) Emergence of common positions

171. At the eighth session of AMCEN ministers decided to develop common positions on all environmental negotiations and urged UNEP to continue to support consultations among African experts on conventions. In addition, they invited international financial institutions, the African Development Bank and donor countries to support African countries in their capacity-building efforts to enhance the effective implementation of the conventions on climate change, biological diversity and desertifi-

cation. These requests were further noted during the Conference's ninth and tenth sessions. Another concern voiced by ministers at these sessions was that, owing to their limited negotiating skills, African participants in global negotiations had been unable to secure positions of advantage for Africa.

172. At the regional level, the ministers at the ninth session of AMCEN endorsed the Rabat Declaration on the Environmentally Sound Management of Unwanted Stocks of Hazardous Wastes. This declaration was adopted by the ministers and other representatives of Parties to the Basel Convention and of other States on the occasion of the first Continental Conference for Africa on the Environmentally Sound Management of Unwanted Stockpiles of Hazardous Wastes and their Prevention, held in Rabat from 8 to 12 January 2001. The ministers also endorsed the Nairobi Declaration for Sustainable Development of African Mountain Regions and its recommendations. This declaration and its recommended actions were prepared during the African High Summit on Mountains, held in Nairobi from 6 to 10 May 2002.

(b) Algiers Convention

173. At the ninth session of AMCEN, ministers requested the African Union to conclude the process of intergovernmental negotiations to revise the 1968 African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Algiers Convention). They also urged all Parties who had not made comments on the convention to do so, in order to enrich and expedite the negotiation process, and called upon the State Parties to sign and ratify or accede to the revised convention and to commit resources for its implementation. UNEP and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) had already been approached by the Organization of African Unity, in 1999, to revise the Algiers Convention, with a view to showcasing it and launching the signature process at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. The revised draft was submitted to AMCEN and the Organization of African Unity, at its last summit in Durban, in July 2002. The Organization of African Unity held further consultations on the matter with technical experts.
174. The Algiers Convention, which had been adopted by the Organization of African Unity at its fifth ordinary session, in Algiers, on 15 September 1968 was one of the first major events in the then still brief history of that body. The Convention is the African successor to the Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in Their Nature State (London Convention) of 1933, which had a global dimension in that European colonial powers were the lead Parties.
175. The call for an "African Convention" first started being voiced in the 1950s, with support from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), but the main impetus to begin work on such an instrument came in 1964–1965, when the Organization of African Unity requested IUCN to assist in the preparation of the draft text for presentation to its Council of Ministers. The draft was

presented to the Council of Ministers before its adoption by Organization of African Unity at its summit meeting. It entered into force nearly one year later, on 16 June 1969. By the time of its revision, there were 30 Contracting States.

176. The Convention was adopted at about the same time as the United Nations General Assembly decided to convene the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, which was held in 1972 in Stockholm. Added to which, during the years following the adoption of the Convention, there had been a rapid development of environmental thought and treaty law. Accordingly, in 1980 the contracting States Cameroon and Nigeria called upon the Organization of African Unity, as the depositary, to embark on a process to revise the Convention to bring it into line with other treaties in related areas, such as the 1971 Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Convention on Wetlands), the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1973 and the evolving United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which was finally adopted in 1982, and also with the assortment of so-called "soft law" provisions arising out of the Stockholm Conference.
177. Consequently, in 1980 the Organization of African Unity requested IUCN to prepare a draft revised text of the Convention. This was completed and submitted to the Organization of African Unity one year later. The draft was presented to a meeting of experts under the Organization of African Unity in November 1983. It was duly endorsed and presented for review by the Council of Ministers. Discussions on the draft revised text continued until 1986, but there was no follow-up because of rapid staff changes at the Organization of African Unity.
178. The revision process was revamped in 1996 by the Government of Burkina Faso. Under the guidance of AMCEN, the Organization of African Unity requested IUCN and UNEP to assist in the process. After three inter-agency meetings, which were facilitated by the AMCEN secretariat (i.e., the UNEP Regional Office for Africa), agreement was reached on the preliminary version of the draft text and it was decided to convene a meeting of experts from Organization of African Unity member States to review the text and make recommendations for further action.
179. The meeting of experts convened by the Organization of African Unity and hosted by UNEP from 14 to 18 January 2002 adopted the final text of the revised 1968 Convention on 18 January 2002, with a recommendation for its adoption by the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity. Ultimately, the revision process was concluded by the time the summit meeting of the African Union was held in July 2003, in Maputo. The revised text was first adopted by of the Executive Council of the African Union at its third ordinary session, held from 4 to 8 July 2003. Subsequently, the text was adopted by the Assembly of the African Union at its second ordinary

session, held in Maputo from 10 to 12 July 2003 (decision Assembly/AU/Dec.4 (II), on the draft revised 1968 African Convention (Algiers Convention) on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources).

180. The launching of this revised and comprehensive instrument of international environmental law by the African States made a significant contribution to the World Summit on Sustainable Development and sent a positive signal that the African States were ready to take decisive action on sustainable development.

(c) *Nairobi and Abidjan conventions*

181. AMCEN also supported the revitalization of the Nairobi and Abidjan conventions on protection of the marine environment. Conferences of the parties to the Nairobi and Abidjan conventions were held in Maputo in January 2002 and in Abidjan in March 2002, respectively.

(d) *Support for other multilateral environmental agreements*

182. Among the activities of AMCEN regarding multilateral environmental agreements during this period the following are worthy of note:
 - (a) African preparatory conference for the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification, held in August 2001: an African common position was adopted on many issues that came up for negotiations at the Conference of the Parties;
 - (b) African preparatory conference for the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change in September 2001: the resulting common position was presented to AMCEN at its special session in October 2001;
 - (c) African preparatory conference for the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in March 2002;
 - (d) Meeting of the Inter-sessional Committee convened in April 2001, among other purposes, to give guidance and inputs to African Governments on the then stalled Kyoto Protocol negotiations;
 - (e) Provision of policy guidance to African countries at its special session in October 2001, by encouraging their full participation in the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, scheduled to take place in Morocco;
 - (f) African preparatory meeting for the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification, held in Nairobi in October 2005: the resulting African common position was presented to the Conference of the Parties at its high-level segment;

- (g) African preparatory meeting for the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the first Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, held in October 2005: the resulting common African position was presented to both bodies at their high-level segment, held in Montreal in December 2005;
- (h) In the context of the African Union, AMCEN has started providing support for the preparations for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Bamako Convention, due to held in May 2007.

4. Preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development

183. AMCEN played a key role in spearheading Africa's preparations for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, organized under the auspices of the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development. This event took place ten years after the Earth Summit, in Rio in 1992. The World Summit on Sustainable Development reviewed progress made since Rio, particularly with regard to the implementation of Agenda 21, and adopted among other things the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.
184. The decision to take a lead role in the preparatory process was taken by AMCEN at its eighth session in 2000, when ministers agreed to join hands with the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank and UNEP to develop an African common position for the World Summit.
185. Africa's preparation for the World Summit took place at three levels: national, sub-regional and regional. The national assessments gave the status of implementation of Agenda 21, also identifying the constraints encountered in the course of this implementation. At the subregional level, each of Africa's five subregional organizations – the Arab Maghreb Union, the Economic Community of West African States-Inter-State Committee for Combating Drought in the Sahel (COWAS-CILSS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development-Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (IGAD-COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) – led the process in their respective subregions. They worked closely with Organization of African Unity, the Economic Commission for Africa, UNEP, UNDP and the African Development Bank in carrying out their assessments of the main achievements in the region in the implementation of Agenda 21 and other outcomes of the Earth Summit.
186. The AMCEN secretariat was a member of the expanded joint secretariat that spearheaded the regional preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development through a broad consultative process, including subregional consultations and high-level regional consultation with participation by ministries of en-

vironment, finance, economic planning, development and also industry. In January 2002, there was a joint meeting of AMCEN and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE). The result of the preparations was the African Common Position that was presented in the African ministerial statement to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, as well as a regional report adopted by ministers during a preparatory meeting held at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi on 17 and 18 October 2001.

187. AMCEN members participated actively in the World Summit and also held a number of events in its margins, including the Partnership Conference of the African Process, which had been called into existence by a decision of the Organization of African Unity at its thirty-seventh summit meeting, held in July 2001

5. Action plan for the environmental initiative of NEPAD

188. AMCEN has been particularly active since the launch of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), a vision and a strategic framework for development in Africa. The NEPAD strategic framework document arises from a mandate granted by the Organization of African Unity to the five initiating heads of State (Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa) to develop an integrated social and economic development framework for Africa. At its thirty-seventh summit meeting, in July 2001, the Organization of African Unity formally adopted the strategic framework document.
189. With extensive contributions from AMCEN, the environment featured as one of the eight priority initiatives when the heads of State launched the major development programme of Africa known as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).
190. In its chapter 8, NEPAD includes an environmental initiative that identifies the following eight areas for intervention: combating desertification, wetlands conservation, invasive species, coastal management, global warming, cross-border conservation areas, environmental governance and financing.
191. Once these environmental issues had been identified as priorities for NEPAD, the need emerged for the development of a full action plan for the environment initiative. Development of this plan took place under the leadership of AMCEN, working closely with the NEPAD secretariat and other key institutions such as UNEP and the Global Environment Facility. AMCEN and UNEP proceeded to establish a steering committee in February 2002 to spearhead the process. Four meetings of the steering committee were held to work on a framework for the action plan (Pretoria, 17 January 2002; Algiers, 11 and 12 March 2002; Dakar, 12–14 June 2002; and Maputo, 23 and 24 April 2003). UNEP provided technical back-up for the meetings.

192. A special steering committee meeting at the level of ministers and with the attendance of the President of Senegal was held in Dakar on 15 April 2002 to adopt the framework for the action plan.
193. The environmental initiative was prepared in two phases. In the first phase, as outlined above, the framework for an action plan was prepared. During the second phase, eight thematic workshops and a consultative meeting with civil society groups were organized in early 2003. More than 800 African experts participated in the thematic workshops. The process resulted in a document entitled: "Action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD".
194. The framework for the action plan was endorsed by AMCEN at its ninth session, held in Kampala from 1 to 5 July 2002. A decision on the way forward was also agreed upon, including additional work, in the form of thematic workshops, to finalize the action plan. These thematic workshops were held to prepare specific chapters of the action plan (on invasive alien species, on 23 and 24 January 2003 in Pretoria; on wetlands, on 17 November 2002 in Valencia; on the marine and coastal environment, on 24 and 25 February 2003 in Abuja; on health and the environment, on 17 and 18 February 2003 in Dakar; on desertification, on 19 and 20 January 2003 in Algiers; on climate change, 26 and 27 February 2003, Rabat; on forests, on 10 and 11 February 2003 in Yaounde; and on poverty and the environment, on 23 and 24 January 2003 in Bamako).
195. The action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD was endorsed by AMCEN at a special session held in Maputo, from 28 to 30 May 2003. The AMCEN-endorsed action plan was subsequently adopted by the African Union at its second ordinary session, held in July 2003 in Maputo. In addition, the Union decided on the organization of partners' conferences.
196. The first partners' conference on the implementation of the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative took place in Algiers, on 15 and 16 December 2003. The aim of the conference was to deliberate on how to implement the action plan. The partners' conference agreed that the capacity-building component would constitute the basis supporting implementation of the action plan.
197. The second partners' conference took place in Dakar in March 2005. This conference decided on the establishment of an African environment facility at the African Development Bank and requested the President of Senegal to assist in this process. The President of Senegal followed up on the recommendations of the conference by calling for a meeting in the premises of the African Development Bank on 24 November 2005, at which his representative and the President of AMCEN led discussions on the issue, together with the President of the Bank. The principle for the establishment of the facility was adopted and a feasibility study was launched in May 2006.

198. The action plan is to be implemented at the national, subregional and regional levels. Where subregional implementation is concerned, consultative meetings of experts on the development of subregional environmental action plans for the environment initiative of NEPAD were organized for all the subregions of Africa in 2005. It is envisaged that such subregional environmental action plans will be developed for all the subregions in Africa before the twelfth regular session of AMCEN in 2008. The preparation of national action plans had been initiated in a number of countries in 2006.

6. Other issues

199. Although the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the work on multilateral environmental agreements, the Africa Environment Outlook and the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative were areas of focus of AMCEN during the first years of the new millennium, the Conference has also addressed a range of other issues.

200. For example, many stakeholders are involved in work to enhance the environment in Africa. Accordingly, at the eighth session of AMCEN ministers decided to build strategic partnerships with the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations, women's groups, community-based organizations, the private sector and donor countries. At its tenth session in 2004, AMCEN decided, among other things, to develop a strategic approach to international chemicals management and to phase out the use of leaded gasoline in sub-Saharan Africa, an objective achieved by 2006.

201. At its meeting in Durban, in June 1995, AMCEN recognized and endorsed the usefulness of environmental impact assessments and identified a number of priorities for immediate action to build the capacity of African countries to conduct such assessments. In response to this call, a number of initiatives were undertaken, culminating in a consultative meeting – held in the Hague in May 2000 – between African representatives and the donor community, on environmental impact assessment capacity development in Africa. One of the main outcomes of the meeting was the formation of the Capacity Development and Linkages for Environmental Impact Assessment in Africa (CLEIAA) network and the subsequent establishment of capacity development and linkage nodes for this purpose in the four subregions of sub-Saharan Africa. CLEIAA was subsequently transformed into the Capacity Development and Linkages for Environmental Assessment in Africa (CLEAA) network. The project to build such capacity has now been expanded in scope and geographical range to include North Africa. Efforts were then launched to secure formal recognition by AMCEN of the programme for capacity development and linkages for environmental assessment at its eleventh regular session in Brazzaville in May 2006.

E. ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE REVITALIZED AMCEN

202. The new political will manifested by African ministers in 2000 and further amplified during the period that followed gave new spirit and impetus to the work of AMCEN. Thus its function as a forum was strengthened and its role as facilitator enhanced.

1. AMCEN Conference: forum function

203. Over the period from 2000 to 2005, AMCEN continued to be instrumental in advancing the environmental agenda in Africa in several areas. These included highlighting environmental issues at all levels of society, including the linkages with poverty reduction, human and animal health and trade. The Conference still functioned as a forum for the exchange of views and building of consensus on issues of common concern among African policy makers. Thus, AMCEN served as a conduit for the articulation of Africa's concerns on the environment to other regions and to the international community as a whole. Thanks to its long and continuous existence and institutionalized nature, AMCEN was ideally positioned to speak for Africa in environmental matters. During this period, AMCEN started to explore formal institutional linkages between AMCEN and the corresponding bodies of the African Union and NEPAD.

204. In practical terms, AMCEN continued to provide guidance in key political events related to the multilateral environmental agreements, giving particular attention to the implementation of the post-Rio environmental conventions, regional conventions, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and development of the action plan for the environmental initiative of NEPAD. With regard to the multilateral environmental agreements, AMCEN also organized meetings for negotiators prior to key global conferences to build consensus on critical issues of concern to the region and enhance African participation.

205. AMCEN has matured into a productive forum influencing major intergovernmental processes, such as the Governing Council and the work of UNEP. This has led to priority being accorded in these processes to Africa's environmental challenges. In addition, AMCEN has been successful in shaping such processes as the World Summit on Sustainable Development and NEPAD, to ensure that they incorporate the environmental concerns of Africa.

2. Technical cooperation

206. Where technical cooperation is concerned, work on the Africa Environment Outlook provided the primary vehicle for technical cooperation during the first years of the new millennium. The Africa Environment Outlook reporting process was an umbrella programme for environmental assessment and reporting at the national, subre-

gional and regional levels. The efforts mounted by AMCEN have resulted, through the preparation of the African Environmental Outlook report, in the successful development in the region of a critical mass of experts in the field of environmental assessment. The capacities of the UNEP collaborating centres in Africa have also been strengthened.

3. Viability

207. The outlook for the future looks considerably improved, with streamlined institutional arrangements, better financial prospects, with the total committable resources available in the AMCEN trust fund significantly increased, and the likely establishment of an African Environment Facility. The perennial problem of financial constraints, however, continues to hamper the realization of the full potential of AMCEN.

V. CONCLUSION

208. In recent years, between 2000 and 2005, AMCEN has undertaken a process of streamlining its structural organization to make it more effective. Over this period AMCEN has grown to become the major forum for African ministers responsible for the environment.
209. In this report we have reviewed the history of AMCEN through three different periods, with correspondingly different emphases and focuses. Despite these differences in approach, there is an evident continuity in the performance of AMCEN. From the very outset, the Cairo Programme was established to provide African solutions to African problems. It was essential that local communities in Africa should identify their needs and problems and African experts were involved in the quest for solutions to those problems. The action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD was developed in a manner entirely consistent with this concept.
210. Furthermore, AMCEN has taken cognizance of the link between poverty and environment throughout its twenty-year history. In the Cairo Programme this link is recognized as a vicious circle: people are poor because of the degradation of resources, when they are poor they rely heavily on harvesting environmental resources in an unsustainable manner, thus escalating the process of environmental degradation. This link is also taken to task in the action plan, which forms part of the work of fostering economic development on the African continent.
211. Another central tenet of AMCEN is the belief that African countries are facing many similar environmental challenges. In consequence, there is great potential for them to learn from one another's experiences in tackling these challenges. More important, many environmental problems are transboundary in scope. The most effective way of solving these problems is for African countries to cooperate among themselves: facilitation of this cooperation is the main objective of AMCEN.
212. Throughout its history, the member States of AMCEN have shown flexibility in their ability to adapt to changing circumstances. This ability might be useful in tackling emerging issues, including the work involved in transforming AMCEN into a specialized technical committee of the African Union Commission and in determining the location of the AMCEN secretariat.

ANNEX I: MAJOR EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF AMCEN

- 1983** The Governing Council of UNEP invited the Governments of Africa to convene a ministerial conference to discuss national environmental priorities and identify common problems, and to prepare a regional programme of action to deal with serious environmental problems in Africa.
- 1984** A preparatory process was launched, involving consultations with African Governments, African experts and several United Nations agencies concerned with African development.
- 1985** The Cairo Programme for African Cooperation adopted by AMCEN at its first session.
- 1986** The first meeting of the Bureau approved the terms of reference for the eight regional networks and selected regional coordination units for the networks selected for priority attention. AMCEN organized its first donors' meeting.
- 1987** At its second session AMCEN established the African Technical Regional Environment Group, composed of all AMCEN national focal points, which was to serve as a technical advisory group of African experts to AMCEN. The four committees established by AMCEN at its first session convened their first meetings and five out of eight networks were established.
- 1988** AMCEN organized its second donors' meeting.
- 1989** At its third session AMCEN established a committee on African island ecosystems. An African Women's Assembly was convened, bringing women together as managers of natural resources to discuss sustainable development in support of the Cairo Programme.
- 1991** At its fourth session AMCEN endorsed the establishment of an AMCEN trust fund as a necessary measure for implementation of the Cairo Programme. AMCEN became a forum for discussing all environmental issues of concern to African Governments, and not exclusively the Cairo Programme.

- 1993** The new policy orientation of AMCEN shifted the focus from operational programmes of the pilot projects to policy, such as developing a common African position on multilateral environmental agreements.
- 1994** The work programme of 1994–1995, consisting of 12 subprogrammes, stressed the need for efforts to combat poverty and environmental degradation.
- 1997** At its seventh session AMCEN adopted a constitution outlining the rules and procedures for the Conference.
- 2000** Following a restructuring exercise at its eighth session, AMCEN established the Inter-sessional Committee and the Inter-Agency Technical Committee, adopted the medium-term programme, promoted a new funding mechanism and recognized the important role of the civil society.
- 2001** NEPAD was launched at the inaugural meeting of the Implementation Committee of Heads of State and Government, held in Abuja on 23 October 2001.
- 2002** At its ninth session AMCEN endorsed the framework of an action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative.
- 2003** At its second special session AMCEN endorsed the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative.
- 2004** At its tenth session AMCEN charted the way forward for the implementation of the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative.
- 2005** The relationship between AMCEN and the African Union was discussed at the nineteenth meeting of the Bureau and at the subsequent joint meeting between the AMCEN Bureau and the African Union Commission.

ANNEX II: MEMBERS OF THE BUREAU

The Bureau of the Conference is responsible for the implementation of the decisions of the Conference, and also for maintaining relations between the Conference and its member States and observers between the sessions. The Bureau meets in ordinary session once a year and at any other time that circumstances warrant. The members of the Bureau are elected by the Conference at its biennial sessions. The composition of the Bureau during the Conference's first 20 years is set out below.

Year	Session	Office	Country
1985	1st, Cairo	President	Egypt Zaire Zimbabwe
		Vice-Presidents	Senegal Kenya Algeria
		Rapporteur	Nigeria
		President	Egypt Zaire Zimbabwe
1987	2nd, Nairobi	Vice-Presidents	Senegal Kenya Algeria
		Rapporteur	Nigeria
		President	Kenya Egypt Ethiopia
1989	3rd, Nairobi	Vice-Presidents	Gabon Senegal Zambia
		Rapporteur	Nigeria

Year	Session	Office	Country
1991	4th, Dakar	President	Senegal Central African Republic Djibouti
		Vice-Presidents	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya Mauritania Mozambique
		Rapporteur	Mauritius
1993	5th, Addis Ababa	President	Zimbabwe Cameroon Uganda
		Vice-Presidents	Morocco Botswana Burkina Faso
		Rapporteur	Ghana
1995	6th, Nairobi	President	Central African Republic Benin South Africa
		Vice-Presidents	Tunisia Congo United Rep. of Tanzania
		Rapporteur	Lesotho
1997	7th, Dakar	President	Egypt Sudan Guinea
		Vice-Presidents	Sao Tome and Principe Swaziland Tunisia
		Rapporteur	Gambia

Year	Session	Office	Country
2000	8th, Abuja	President	Nigeria
		Vice-Presidents	Uganda
			Morocco
			South Africa
Rapporteur	Cameroon		
2002	9th, Kampala	President	Uganda
		Vice-Presidents	Cameroon
			Mauritius
			Côte d'Ivoire
Rapporteur	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya		
2004	10th, Sirte	President	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
		Vice-Presidents	Central African Republic
			Mali
			Namibia
Rapporteur	Sudan		

ANNEX III: MEETINGS OF AMCEN ORGANS

A. SESSIONS OF THE AMCEN CONFERENCE

Session	Venue	Date
1st session	Cairo (Egypt)	16–18 December 1985
2 nd session	Nairobi (Kenya)	4–6 June 1987
3 rd session	Nairobi (Kenya)	10–12 May 1989
4 th session	Dakar (Senegal)	22–24 May 1991
5 th session	Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)	26–27 November 1993
6 th session	Nairobi (Kenya)	14–15 December 1995
7 th session	Dakar (Senegal)	27–28 November 1997
8 th session	Abuja (Nigeria)	3–6 April 2000
1st special session	Nairobi (Kenya)	16 October 2001
9 th session	Kampala (Uganda)	4–5 July 2002
2 nd special session	Maputo (Mozambique)	9–10 June 2003
10th session	Sirte (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)	29–30 June 2004

B. MEETINGS OF THE AMCEN BUREAU

Meeting	Venue	Date
1st meeting	Nairobi (Kenya)	7–9 October 1986
2nd meeting	Cairo (Egypt)	31 March–2 April 1987
3rd meeting	Nairobi (Kenya)	22–23 March 1988
4th meeting	Cairo (Egypt)	1–3 March 1989
5th meeting	Dakar (Senegal)	8–10 March 1990
1st extraordinary meeting	Nairobi (Kenya)	9 May 1990
6th meeting	Nairobi (Kenya)	27 February–1 March 1991
7th meeting	Bangui (Central African Republic)	13–15 April 1992
8th meeting	Maputo (Mozambique)	31 March–2 April 1993
9th meeting	Nairobi (Kenya)	2–6 December 1996
10th meeting	Cairo (Egypt)	17 January 2000
11th meeting	Algiers (Algeria)	8 September 2001
12th meeting	Kampala (Uganda)	3 July 2002
13th meeting	Durban (South Africa)	25 August 2002
14th meeting	Nairobi (Kenya)	4 February 2003
15th meeting	Kampala (Uganda)	10 March 2003
16th meeting	Maputo (Mozambique)	8 June 2003
17th meeting	Tripoli (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)	11–12 February 2004
18th meeting	Tripoli (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)	29–30 January 2005
19th meeting	Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)	18 May 2005
2nd extraordinary meeting	Nairobi (Kenya)	21 October 2005



The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) is a permanent forum where African ministers of the Environment discuss mainly matters of relevance to the environment of the continent. AMCEN was established in 1985 when African ministers met in Egypt and adopted the Cairo Programme for African co-operation. The Conference is convened every second year. The objective of AMCEN is to halt environmental degradation and promote sustainable development in Africa by enhancing inter-governmental co-operation among African countries.

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