

**DRAFT STATEMENT BY the Arab Republic of Egypt, ON BEHALF OF THE
AFRICAN GROUP AT THE FIRST SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY, 23 JUNE, 2014, NAIROBI, KENYA**

The President of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP,

Your Excellencies,

The Executive Director of UNEP,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me the floor to make this statement on behalf of the African Regional Group.

On behalf of the African Group, I wish to congratulate you on your election as the President of this First Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP. I thank the UNEP secretariat for the excellent organization made for this meeting. Allow me to express our gratitude to the Government of Kenya for the warm hospitality accorded to us since our arrival in Nairobi.

Let me also congratulate Mr. Achim Steiner for his reappointment as the Executive Director of UNEP for the next two years. It is our sincere hope that this extension will facilitate the swift implementation of initiatives, programmes and projects which have been developed under his leadership.

Allow me also to align myself with the statement given by H.E. the Ambassador of Thailand on behalf of the Group G77+China.

Mr. President,

I now take this opportunity to highlight a few issues of concern that need to be addressed during our discussions this week. These include:

- Africa has consistently supported the strengthening of UNEP in the hope that sufficient resources will enable it to fulfil its mandate and to more effectively support our efforts to address environmental challenges facing the African continent and to exploit our immense potential. The Programme of work of UNEP for 2016/2017 should move us closer to a more responsive, more results-focused UNEP whose impact will be felt in our countries.

- We welcome the on-going efforts to give regional offices a more prominent role, not only for coordination and representation but also in programme delivery at the regional, sub-regional and national levels. We also welcome the establishment of the Sub-regional office in Abidjan, as a first step to enhancing UNEP's presence on the continent. However, these offices should not be a one-person office; they should rather have sufficient capacity to undertake their responsibilities and we would therefore like to see the already existing offices in Addis Ababa and Pretoria strengthened. In this regard, the Africa Group calls upon UNEP to seriously consider putting in place a regional strategic delivery framework to enhance coherence and impact in Africa and other regions.
- For the African group, means of implementation, including capacity development, technology transfer and financial resources remain among our top priorities. It is only through meaningful inclusion of these priorities in the global environment agenda that will enable Africa to meet her environmental obligations and implement various sustainable development decisions including RIO + 20 outcomes. We believe that UNEP has major role to play in mobilizing human capacity and financial resources. It is therefore UNEP's role to ensure that Africa's priorities are fully reflected in the Programme of Work of UNEP.
- **Illegal Trade and Wildlife**
The global attention should shift to eliminating demand on illegal trade in wildlife in recipient countries. This is in addition to existing efforts of strengthening enforcement in source countries. The time has come for the world to agree on a common strategy on how to deal with parties that are involved, whether knowingly or unknowingly, in this illegal trade. All nations should apply zero tolerance approaches, take decisive and urgent actions to strengthen laws and policies so as to create deterrence and punish wildlife criminals and related activities.
- **Post 2015 development agenda**
Africa has a Common African Position (CAP) on the post-2015 Development Agenda that was endorsed by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union Assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, during the 22nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union on 31st of January 2014. The post-2015 Development Agenda should be Member State-driven, and in this regard, Africa will stand together in solidarity in

negotiating an outcome that will result in our collective ownership of the new agenda. SDGs and Post-2015 should have stable, predictable and easily accessible financing mechanisms. African nations still need those unfulfilled promises of technology transfer, capacity building so as to achieve real and tangible implementation of the SDGs and Post-2015 Agenda. Africa also hopes that the post 2015 agenda and the SDGs will have a strong and verifiable monitoring and reporting systems to ensure that all countries commitments are fulfilled.

- On the matter related to Stakeholders engagement policy, Africa supports engagement of all relevant stakeholders in the UNEP's work. However we need to emphasize the intergovernmental nature of UNEP as a subsidiary organ of the United Nations General Assembly should be respected. Within this policy we support enhanced participation of stakeholders, including through a mechanism of accreditation that permits the participation of NGOs, particularly those from developing countries. NGOs from developing countries should take part in the same way as the international NGOs in the work of UNEP. The necessary financial support should be provided for their participation.
- As we emphasised in the last Governing Council, the Consolidation of Headquarter functions in Nairobi should be given high priority. Under no circumstances should we entertain any attempts to reinterpret a decision that member states took on this matter in Rio and at the General Assembly. We look forward to the speedy implementation of this decision.

In conclusion, Mr President and dear colleagues, rest assured of the full support of our Group for the work of this important body. The African group stands ready to work constructively under your leadership during this session and we have full confidence in your chairmanship.

I thank you all for your kind attention.