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**Ministerial policy dialogue: African perspective on the
implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations
Conference on Sustainable Development**

United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development outcomes and their implications for Africa

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 64/236, the General Assembly called for the holding of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, to assess the progress of and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and to address new and emerging challenges. The Conference had two main themes: a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development. Countries and regions had almost two years to prepare for the Conference, with the support of the United Nations system. The preparatory process for the Conference was carried out at the national, subregional, regional and global levels, with varying levels of preparatory events held at the local level.
2. Africa carried out an extensive preparatory process at the national, subregional and regional levels. Preparations at the national level were aimed at engaging multi-stakeholders in dialogues addressing the two themes of the Conference. More than 20 countries were supported through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat of the United Nations in preparing their national reports for the Conference. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) partnered with more than 10 countries to organize national multi-stakeholder green economy workshops, addressing green economy issues in specific national contexts. At the subregional level, all five subregions of the continent were actively engaged in a process facilitated through the regional economic communities. The subregional reports produced through this process reviewed the progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments and provided a basis for the preparation of the regional review report.
3. The foundation for the regional preparatory process was laid by the decision of the seventeenth African Union Summit, held in Malabo in July 2011, which called for the active participation of African negotiators and experts to ensure that African interests regarding green economy issues within the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development and the institutional framework for sustainable development were clearly defined and taken into consideration. To ensure that Africa spoke with one voice, the summit designated the President of the Congo, Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, as the African spokesperson for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.
4. The fourth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), held in Bamako in September 2011, provided the foundation for responding to this call by defining the key elements that would constitute the African common position for the Conference. The

* AMCEN/14/1.

seventh session of the Committee on Food Security and Sustainable Development of the Economic Commission for Africa, held in October 2011, further developed the outcome of the special session of AMCEN, which became the African consensus statement for the Conference.

5. The eighteenth African Union Summit, held in Addis Ababa in January 2012, endorsed the Africa consensus statement and urged African negotiators and ministers to continue to speak with one voice during the negotiations leading up to the Conference. It further requested that the African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, UNEP, UNDP and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research organize a training programme to build the capacity of African negotiators for the Conference process. This training, held in March 2012, provided a useful platform to ensure a better understanding of the African position by the African diplomatic missions in New York and to enable the active and coordinated engagement of Africa in the negotiations regarding the outcomes of the Conference.

6. In addition to its direct engagement during the informal sessions and the preparatory meetings, the Congo, with the support of other African countries and development partners, made a significant effort to mobilize support for an African common position and to build common understanding and partnerships around the core issues, including the upgrading of UNEP to a specialized agency. Consequently, several key issues that were highlighted in the Africa consensus statement are captured in the final outcome document of the Conference, entitled “The future we want”. Overall, while Africa may have desired to see more ambitious and forward-looking outcomes, the final outcome document that was approved by the Conference reaffirmed the continued political commitment for promoting sustainable development and laid down the basis for some important processes that will help the international community to make progress in implementation.

7. The present working document aims to highlight some of the key outcomes of the Conference that are of particular relevance to African countries and to assist African countries in developing a coherent strategy of engagement in the main follow-up activities. To this end, section II focuses on highlighting the key relevant outcomes of the Conference, with particular focus on a green economy for poverty eradication and sustainable development, an institutional framework for sustainable development, including international environmental governance, and emerging issues. This is followed by a section on specific follow-up processes that are of importance to Africa, highlighting the follow-up actions that could be taken at the national and regional levels. The last section presents the suggested key regional flagship programmes that could support African countries in the implementation of the principal substantive outcomes of the Conference.

II. Analysis of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

8. The present section provides a synoptic analysis of the key outcomes that are of significant relevance to Africa by highlighting their potential benefits and implications for the continent.

2.1 Key issues for Africa with regard to an institutional framework for sustainable development and international environmental governance

9. This section examines the institutional framework for sustainable development section of the outcome document, in the context of the Africa consensus statement. The two key outcomes for follow-up on an institutional framework for sustainable development and international environmental governance are: the establishment of a universal intergovernmental high-level political forum for sustainable development to replace the Commission on Sustainable Development and the decision to invite the General Assembly to adopt, at its sixty-seventh session, a resolution to provide for the “strengthening and upgrading” of UNEP.

2.1.1 Outcome on the institutional framework for sustainable development in the context of the Africa consensus statement

We decide to establish a universal intergovernmental high-level political forum, building on the strengths, experiences, resources and inclusive participation modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and subsequently replacing the Commission. (“The future we want”, para. 84.)

10. Paragraph 15 of the outcome document reaffirms the principles of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Furthermore, it states that “we underscore the importance of a strengthened institutional framework for sustainable development which responds coherently and effectively to current and future challenges

and efficiently bridges gaps in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda” (para. 75). The document also recognizes that an improved and more effective institutional framework for sustainable development should “take into account national priorities...of developing countries” (para. 76).

11. The outcome document resolves to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable development, which would include promoting coherence and the balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development, the science policy interface, the “full and effective participation of all countries in decision-making processes”, the review and stocktaking of progress in implementation of all sustainable development commitments, including those related to the means of implementation, and enhancing the participation and “effective engagement” of civil society. It also calls for capacity-building, especially for developing countries, including in conducting their own monitoring and assessments.

12. Moreover, the outcome document states that the institutional framework for sustainable development should be strengthened through periodic high-level dialogues in the General Assembly (see paras. 80 and 81 on the General Assembly) and the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council and by ensuring the coordinated follow-up of the outcomes of all major United Nations conferences and summits (see paras. 82 and 83 on the Economic and Social Council). Paragraph 84 also emphasizes “building on...inclusive participation modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development”. This refers to the principle of non-regression on agreed practices and principles as raised by the major groups and stakeholders during the Conference process. This provides an opportunity for civil society to move beyond the traditional nine major groups and stakeholders model and develop more representative regional coverage for Africa, and attract additional stakeholders (as mentioned in para. 43). This will be an opportunity for African civil society organizations to have a greater say in global and international processes.

13. On the specific functions of an institutional framework for sustainable development, several of the priorities articulated by African ministers are also stated in the outcome document (see table 1). The consensus statement contained some issues specific to Africa that are not directly addressed in the section on an institutional framework for sustainable development. Nevertheless, most of these issues are covered elsewhere in the outcome document. In this regard, commitment to the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), which is highlighted in the Africa consensus statement as the basis for the continent’s work on an institutional framework for sustainable development, is acknowledged in section II.A of the outcome document, entitled “Reaffirming the Rio Principles and past action plans” (para. 16). The “special challenges facing the most vulnerable countries and in particular African countries...” (para. 32) is recognized, and it is also acknowledged that “more attention should be given to Africa and the implementation of previously agreed commitments related to its development needs that were made at major United Nations summits and conferences” (para. 35).

14. The Conference also recognized that progress in reducing poverty has been uneven, especially in the least developed countries and in Africa, and recommitted to the full implementation of the internationally agreed commitments related to Africa’s development needs, especially those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, NEPAD, the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the 2005 World Summit outcome document and the 2008 political declaration on Africa’s development needs (para. 35). Furthermore, the specific section on Africa in the outcome document (paras. 183 and 184) invites all of Africa’s development partners “to support African countries in strengthening human capacities and democratic institutions...with a view to furthering Africa’s development at all levels, including through facilitating the transfer of technology needed by African countries as mutually agreed”.

15. The Conference concluded that the Committee on Sustainable Development no longer meets current needs or challenges and therefore decided to raise the profile of the sustainable development agenda by establishing a “universal intergovernmental high-level political forum, building on the strengths, experiences, resources and inclusive participation modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and subsequently replacing the Commission” (para. 84). The proposed high-level forum “could”, among other things, follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments made at previous United Nations summits and conferences and strengthen the science-policy interface, including in the form of a global sustainable development report (see table 1).

16. To implement the strengthening of the institutional framework for sustainable development, the Conference decided to launch an intergovernmental open, transparent and inclusive negotiation process under the General Assembly to define the format and organizational aspects of the high-level

forum and the aims of the first session, to be held in September 2013, which coincides with the start of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. The outcome document also invites the Secretary-General to present a report on the needs of future generations. Following the adoption of the outcome document in Rio de Janeiro, the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, announced the appointment of a special representative for future generations. This issue is not addressed in the Africa consensus statement, but could be considered alongside the issues related to participation and access to information.

2.1.2 The environmental pillar

...we invite the General Assembly, at its sixty-seventh session, to adopt a resolution strengthening and upgrading UNEP in the following manner... (“The future we want”, para. 88)

17. The Africa consensus statement acknowledges “the need to strengthen international environmental governance within the context of the institutional framework for sustainable development, in order to promote a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development” (para. 38). The introductory paragraph (para. 87) to the section on the environmental pillar in the outcome document reiterates support for strengthening international environmental governance, but emphasizes that international environmental governance is not only important in its own right, but should be considered in the context of sustainable development governance and the overall institutional framework for sustainable development. This was, from the very beginning, an important prerequisite for Africa in setting the context within which international environmental governance would be discussed during the Conference.

18. Another issue that was central to the negotiations was that international environmental governance should not become stronger or more important than the other aspects of sustainable development, but rather be better balanced with the other two pillars. In addition, the outcome document also requests that strengthened international environmental governance should also promote better coordination within the United Nations system, and more specifically that the engagement of UNEP in key United Nations coordination bodies should be strengthened. Improved coordination is therefore an overarching objective of strengthened international environmental governance, an objective that is also articulated in the Africa consensus statement.

19. Throughout the Conference negotiating process, Africa and the European Union were proposing transforming UNEP into a specialized agency, but the proposal failed to achieve sufficient support from other political groups. As such, the Conference stopped short of the African Union decision to consider transforming UNEP into an “international specialized institution” but committed itself to strengthening and upgrading the role of UNEP, based on its existing mandates.

20. However, the decision taken by the Conference to “adopt a resolution strengthening and upgrading UNEP” (para. 88) includes several of the same characteristics ascribed to specialized agencies, as outlined in the African Union decision, including: universal membership; secure, stable, additional and predictable financing; strengthened regional presence and improved implementation at the national level; the authority to lead a process of United Nations system-wide strategic planning for the environment; promoting the science-policy interface; and providing direct capacity and technology support.

21. In addition, the outcome document includes decisions to progressively consolidate the headquarter functions of UNEP in Nairobi (para. 88 (g)), and to ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders and explore new mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society (para. 88 (h)). Table 2 compares the key characteristics of a specialized institution for the environment, as articulated in the Africa consensus statement and the outcome document, and highlights some potential implications.

2.1.3 Other issues regarding the institutional framework for sustainable development

22. With regard to the African statement on coordination within the United Nations system and between the United Nations system and international financial institutions, the outcome document reaffirms the importance of broadening and strengthening the participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making and norm-setting and in referencing recent decisions on the reform of the Bretton Woods institutions. It requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council on the progress made in mainstreaming the three dimensions of sustainable development throughout the United Nations system. It also awaits the outcome document of the independent evaluation of the “Delivering as one” initiative and calls on the United Nations system to take into account sustainable development practices in the management of facilities and operations.

23. The outcome document invites all relevant stakeholders, including regional organizations, to support developing countries upon request to achieve sustainable development (para. 68). It also underscores the need to support regional institutions and emphasizes that “regional and subregional organizations, including the United Nations regional commissions and their subregional offices, have a significant role to play in promoting a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in their respective regions” (para. 100).

24. African ministers also agreed that all institutional frameworks for sustainable development should be linked to the science-policy interface for environmental sustainability. The outcome document recognizes the importance of integrated social, economic, and environmental data and information, in addition to effective analysis, assessment and implementation of decision-making processes. It encourages action at the various levels to promote access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters. It also calls on countries to strengthen national, subnational and/or local institutions or relevant multi-stakeholder bodies and processes.

25. During the Conference negotiations, the Group of 77 and China stressed the need to focus on establishing a resource mobilization framework for sustainable development and also proposed developing an international mechanism for technology transfer under the General Assembly to promote, implement and monitor concrete actions for technology transfer. The call for “new and additional” sources of financing was not quite addressed in the outcome document, but there are references to seeking funds from a “variety of sources” and from “new partnerships”. As a compromise, it was agreed that a discussion would be initiated at the United Nations to look at options for a sustainable development financing strategy. The United Nations was asked to prepare a report on a technology-facilitating mechanism for the General Assembly to discuss.

26. Regarding the mechanism for technology transfer, delegates were reluctant to launch a process without understating its aim and relationship with other ongoing United Nations processes. However, delegates requested relevant United Nations agencies to identify options for a facilitation mechanism that promotes the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies. Commitments were made to enhance financial support from all sources for sustainable development for all countries and to fulfil official development assistance obligations. Furthermore, the outcome document outlines the main achievements of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and requests support for further simplification of procedures and assistance to Africa in accessing GEF resources. With regard to the means of implementing an institutional framework for sustainable development, it was agreed that the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly would also decide on establishing a working group to develop global sustainable development goals, to be agreed by the General Assembly.

2.2 A green economy in the context of poverty reduction and sustainable development

...we recognize the transition to a green economy could offer new opportunities for advancing the achievement of Africa’s sustainable development objectives through economic growth, employment creation, and the reduction of poverty and inequalities, in accordance with the principles and recommendations of the 1992 Rio Summit and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. (Africa consensus statement, para. 22.)

...we consider green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication as one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development and that it could provide options for policymaking but should not be a rigid set of rules.” (“The future we want”, para. 56.)

2.2.1 Analysis of the outcome decisions on a green economy

27. The 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development resulted in an outcome document that touched on several dimensions of the sustainable development debate and recognized green economy as one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development. The Conference put green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication on the global development policy agenda. At the Conference, world leaders viewed the transition to green economy as a common undertaking. It was further agreed that the transition to green economy should respect national sovereignty and be consistent with all previous international agreements, including common but differentiated responsibilities and assist in the attainment of international development goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals. In this respect, the following was agreed on:

(a) “We affirm that there are different approaches, visions, models and tools available to each country, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities, to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions which is our overarching goal. In this regard, we consider green

economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication as one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development and that it could provide options for policymaking but should not be a rigid set of rules. We emphasize that it should contribute to eradicating poverty as well as sustained economic growth, enhancing social inclusion, improving human welfare and creating opportunities for employment and decent work for all, while maintaining the healthy functioning of the Earth's ecosystems." ("The future we want", para. 56);

(b) "We affirm that policies for green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication should be guided by and in accordance with all the Rio Principles, Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and contribute towards achieving relevant internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals." (para. 57);

(c) "We view the implementation of green economy policies by countries that seek to apply them for the transition towards sustainable development as a common undertaking, and we recognize that each country can choose an appropriate approach in accordance with national sustainable development plans, strategies and priorities." (para. 59).

28. Secondly, the outcome document captures the national and regional aspirations of African countries, including poverty eradication, sustainable development, inclusive economic growth, national sovereignty over natural resources and sustainable consumption and production. Similarly, the outcome document also provides international guidelines for the transition to a green economy in terms of technology transfer, official development assistance and trade and transboundary resource management. In this context, the following outcomes were agreed on:

"We affirm that green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication should: (a) be consistent with international law; (b) respect each country's national sovereignty over its natural resources taking into account its national circumstances, objectives, responsibilities, priorities and policy space with regard to the three dimensions of sustainable development; (c) be supported by an enabling environment and well-functioning institutions at all levels with a leading role for governments and with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society; (d) promote sustained and inclusive economic growth, foster innovation and provide opportunities, benefits and empowerment for all and respect of all human rights; (e) take into account the needs of developing countries, particularly those in special situations; (f) strengthen international cooperation, including the provision of financial resources, capacity-building and technology transfer to developing countries; (g) effectively avoid unwarranted conditionalities on official development assistance (ODA) and finance; (h) not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade, avoid unilateral actions to deal with environmental challenges outside the jurisdiction of the importing country, and ensure that environmental measures addressing transboundary or global environmental problems as far as possible, are based on an international consensus..." (para. 58).

29. The Conference also called for a multi-stakeholder and participatory approach green economy transition. It requested Governments to provide the necessary leadership and create the required conditions to attract private investment, including public-private partnerships. In this context, the following outcomes were agreed upon:

(a) "We acknowledge that involvement of all stakeholders and their partnerships, networking and experience-sharing at all levels could help countries to learn from one another in identifying appropriate sustainable development policies, including green economy policies. ..." (para. 64);

(b) "We underscore the importance of governments taking a leadership role in developing policies and strategies through an inclusive and transparent process. ..." (para. 67);

(c) "We invite relevant stakeholders, including the United Nations regional commissions, United Nations organizations and bodies, other relevant intergovernmental and regional organizations, international financial institutions and major groups involved in sustainable development, according to their respective mandates, to support developing countries upon request to achieve sustainable development..." (para. 68).

30. The outcomes of the Conference regarding a green economy include views and positions contained in the Africa consensus statement (see para. 22 of the Africa consensus statement and para. 56 of "The future we want"). The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Regional Preparatory Conference for Africa, held in Addis Ababa in October 2011, adopted the Africa consensus statement, which reiterated the need to define green economy as a tool for achieving

sustainable development, and to assess the opportunities and challenges related to this concept and the means of implementation needed to achieve a smooth transition to a green economy. In this context, they recognized that the transition to a green economy could offer new opportunities for advancing the achievement of Africa's sustainable development objectives through economic growth, employment creation and the reduction of poverty and inequalities, in accordance with the principles and recommendations of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. It was emphasized that a transition to a green economy in the region should be underlined by national objectives and social, economic and environmental development imperatives. Similarly, the fourth special session of AMCEN, held in Bamako in September 2011, reached the same decisions on the transition to a green economy in Africa.

31. The Conference placed responsibilities on all stakeholders. First, African Governments should provide the necessary leadership and mobilize their citizens to promote participatory and inclusive green economy policies that are consistent with national priorities, and create the enabling environment to encourage private sector involvement. Furthermore, statistical agencies should be supported and resourced to collect environmental data to evaluate green economy policies and programmes. The fourteenth session of AMCEN should consider adopting decisions to promote green economy policies that assist the continent, such as a regional programme on green economy in Africa, and should call on development partners and United Nations agencies to provide technical assistance.

2.2.2 Implementation of the outcome decisions on a green economy in Africa

32. Given that sustained and inclusive improvement of human welfare remains a challenge in Africa, many African countries are unlikely to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, the decisions and declarations at AMCEN will serve as an important avenue to translate the outcomes of the Conference into implementable programmes that promote sustained and inclusive improvement of human wellbeing on the continent. The following policies outline how this can be achieved:

(a) National green economy strategies: an increasing number of African countries are developing national green economy and green growth strategies. Notable examples include the national strategy on climate change and low carbon development for Rwanda, the climate-resilient and green economy strategy of Ethiopia, the green economy roadmap of Mozambique and the new growth path of South Africa. African countries need to further consolidate and strengthen this effort at the national level in order to ensure the development of their economies on a sustainable basis;

(b) Green economy advisory services to African countries: UNEP set up a Green Economy Advisory Services unit to provide policy advice, technical assistance and capacity-building in support of national and regional initiatives on green economy. The UNEP green economy advisory services have supported a dozen African countries through a pilot project that is expected to be scaled up and expanded to support implementation of the outcomes in Africa. Working with Governments and national institutions, UNEP helped to carry green economy assessments to examine the opportunities and challenges related to the transition to a green economy. Such assessments are under way in a number of countries, including Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa, while being initiated in many other countries. In addition, UNEP, UNDP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat of the United Nations are implementing a joint programme entitled "Supporting a green economy transition in developing countries and least developed countries: building towards Rio+20 and beyond" in 10 African countries, which is being funded by the Government of the Netherlands;

(c) In parallel, the International Labour Organization, through its Green Jobs Programme, has been providing technical assistance and policy support to African countries on employment-led development strategies whose prime objective is the creation of green jobs. Such strategies are based on initial national assessments of green job opportunities at sector level. Technical assistance programmes, such as the Youth Entrepreneurship Facility in East Africa, while practically implementing such green job strategies, are aimed at showcasing environmentally sustainable economic and social development;

(d) An African strategy for green growth: the African Development Bank has taken initial steps towards proposing a green growth strategy for Africa to enable sustainable growth and create prosperity by taking a holistic approach to development. The key points of the strategy are: promoting sustainable infrastructure, managing natural assets efficiently and sustainably and building resilience of livelihoods.

2.3 New and emerging challenges

33. The present section provides a brief analysis of issues raised as “new and emerging challenges” relevant to Africa in the outcome document. It compares issues that were tackled in the Africa consensus statement with those in the outcome document. It must be noted that the outcome document does not have a section dedicated specifically to “new and emerging challenges”. Instead the document has a section entitled “Framework for action and follow-up” under which several thematic and cross-sectoral issues are highlighted, thus making provision for challenges that could be labelled as “new and emerging”. It must be further noted that many of the issues raised are not “new or emerging” as such, but represent the challenges that need to be addressed to achieve global sustainable development.

2.3.1 Common issues with the Africa consensus statement

34. Almost all of the issues raised in the Africa consensus statement were included in the outcome document, albeit in a more detailed manner and with a global perspective. The context in which these issues were mentioned in the statement is summarized below:

(a) **Poverty eradication:** this theme highlights the need to address the uneven progress in poverty eradication and increased poverty, in certain African countries in particular. The theme also underlines the need to promote universal access to social services as a means of consolidating and achieving developmental gains;

(b) **Food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture:** issues raised with respect to this theme include the need to revitalize the agricultural, fisheries and rural development sectors in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner; the necessity to better address the needs of rural communities, such as access to credit, markets, secure land tenure, affordable technologies, et cetera.; the need to enhance agricultural research and extension services; and the need to address the root causes of excessive food price volatility;

(c) **Water and sanitation:** the main issues raised here include the need to integrate water into all aspects of sustainable development and the need to put in place measures to ensure the role of ecosystems in maintaining water quantity and quality. This theme also recognized the necessity to adopt measures to address water-related challenges including floods, droughts, scarcity and pollution;

(d) **Energy:** this theme highlights the need to address the challenges of access to sustainable modern energy services, especially for the poor. It also highlights the need to promote incentives in favour of, and removing disincentives to, energy efficiency and the diversification of the energy mix;

(e) **Sustainable consumption and production:** the endorsement of the global 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production emphasizes the need for a fundamental change in the way societies consume and produce resources. This section of the outcome document also refers to the need to phase out harmful and inefficient use of natural resources, including the removal of harmful fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption and undermine sustainable development. The 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production was adopted at the Conference, as developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The text from the nineteenth session, which designated UNEP as the secretariat of the programmes, was appended, making this a formal decision of the Conference. The decision in paragraph 226 of the outcome document also requests that the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly designate a member State body to “take any necessary steps to fully operationalize” the programmes. According to that decision, and the appended text of the programmes, the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly is expected to determine the reporting body for UNEP, as the secretariat, and also to consider the composition of and nominate a “small board” to guide implementation of the programmes;

(f) **Sustainable cities and human settlement:** this theme emphasizes the need to promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies through integrated planning and management approaches to the development of cities, urban development and human settlement;

(g) **Disaster risk reduction:** the main issue raised under this theme is the need to address disaster risk reduction and resilience with a renewed sense of urgency in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. The development of early warning systems as part of disaster risk reduction at all levels is also necessary;

(h) Climate change: in this theme, the rise in global greenhouse gas emissions and the negative impact of climate change on food security, poverty eradication and sustainable development was highlighted as a concern. Hence, the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change is an urgent and immediate priority;

(i) Forests and biodiversity: these themes highlight the need to effectively slow, halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation, the need to urgently address the continued loss of biodiversity and the need to mainstream biodiversity considerations into relevant programmes and policies at all levels;

(j) Desertification, land degradation and drought: this theme highlights the need to urgently reverse desertification and other forms of land degradation to achieve a “land degradation neutral world” in the context of sustainable development;

(k) Chemicals and wastes: in this theme, the issue of wastes including electronic waste and plastics, the growing global production and use of chemicals and their prevalence in the environment, and the lack of capacity for their sound management and hence the need for capacity-building were highlighted. The need for gradual phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons was also mentioned;

(l) Health and population: this theme highlights the need to increase efforts to achieve adequate health for the world populace as precondition for, an outcome of and an indicator of sustainable development. The theme also highlights the need to systematically consider the issue of population in national, rural and urban development strategies and policies;

(m) Employment, decent work and social protection: in this theme, the need to create an enabling environment and implement strategies that will ensure poverty eradication, full and productive employment and decent work and social integration and protection for all members of the society, was highlighted.

2.3.2. Issues in the outcome document that are relevant to Africa but not included in the Africa consensus statement

35. There are thematic areas mentioned in the outcome document that are not mentioned specifically in the Africa consensus statement, but warrant consideration because of their importance in the African context:

(a) Oceans and seas: this theme emphasizes the need to protect and restore the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems, maintain their biodiversity (including that of areas beyond national jurisdiction), and address the impacts of climate change (such as the rise in sea levels and ocean acidification) on these ecosystems. This thematic area is relevant to Africa, as a large proportion of Africa’s population depend on marine fisheries as their main source of animal protein and vitamins and for their food security. Furthermore, Africa is home to a good proportion of vulnerable marine and coastal ecosystems;

(b) Mining: this theme highlights the need to guarantee that all mining activities are carried out in a way that ensures the maximization of its social and economic benefits, while preventing negative environmental and social impacts. As in the case of sustainable consumption and production, this thematic area is important to Africa as many African countries are major sources of minerals and metals and therefore depend on the mining sector to achieve growth and development;

(c) Sustainable transport: this theme emphasizes the need to support and encourage the development of sustainable transport systems, including energy-efficient multi-modal transport systems, notably public mass transportation systems, clean fuels and vehicles, and improved transportation systems in rural areas. Africa is the fastest urbanizing continent globally. Furthermore, Africa is experiencing growth in different sectors of its economy. All of these would require the development of sustainable transportation infrastructure;

(d) Education: this theme highlights the need to strengthen international cooperation to achieve universal access to primary education, especially in developing countries, and the need for ensuring equal access to education for all. It also emphasizes the need to improve the capacity of education systems to prepare people to pursue sustainable development through enhanced teacher training, the development of curricula around sustainability and the development of training programmes that prepare students for careers in fields related to sustainability. The importance of improving sustainable related education and increased capacity-building in sustainable development related fields in Africa cannot be overemphasized.

2.3.3. Specific mention of Africa in the thematic and cross-sectoral issues

36. Paragraphs 183 and 184 of the outcome document are dedicated to Africa. These paragraphs recognize the progress already made in Africa towards the fulfilment of international commitments related to Africa's development needs, but emphasize the fact that significant challenges still remain. Paragraph 184 further commends efforts by development partners to strengthen cooperation with NEPAD and calls on all Africa's development partners, especially developed countries, to support African countries in strengthening human capacities and democratic institutions through facilitating the transfer of mutually agreed technology needed by African countries. The paragraphs also call on the international community to make continued efforts to increase the flow of new and additional resources for financing development from all sources, public and private, domestic and foreign, to support the continued efforts of African countries to create enabling environments for inclusive growth in support of sustainable development.

37. Apart from the dedicated paragraphs, Africa was specifically mentioned as a region of particular concern or priority in relation to two of the thematic and cross-sectoral issues: poverty eradication and desertification, and land degradation and drought. Furthermore, some of the thematic and cross-sectoral issues raised in the outcome document made specific reference to developing countries, several of which are in Africa. These themes include food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture, water and sanitation, energy, sustainable tourism, sustainable transport, health and population, employment, decent work and social protection, oceans and seas, disaster risk reduction, climate change, chemicals and wastes, education, and gender equality and women's empowerment.

III. Preparation for the follow-up processes to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

38. One of the key outcomes of the Conference is that it identified and suggested key follow-up processes that need to be undertaken through either the General Assembly or other international processes, with a specific time frame for their completion. This section presents the most important follow-up processes that are recommended by the outcome document and highlights the specific actions that need to be undertaken at the country and regional level. It also presents specific action for consideration by AMCEN.

3.1 Key processes recommended by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

39. The outcome document from the Conference includes numerous recommended follow-up actions that need to be taken to the General Assembly, United Nation agencies, national Governments and other stakeholders and major groups. This section only highlights the principal processes that are requested to be undertaken through the General Assembly. The table below contains seven of the major processes that would have significant importance for Africa and the related time frame for their completion.

Table 1

Key global follow-up processes from the Conference

| | <i>Paragraph of the outcome document</i> | <i>Key follow-up processes from the Conference</i> | <i>Time frame</i> |
|----|--|--|---|
| 1. | Paragraph 84 | Establish a universal intergovernmental high-level political forum on sustainable development | Launch of the forum at the beginning of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly |
| 2. | Paragraph 88 | Adopt a resolution strengthening and upgrading UNEP | Sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly |
| 3. | Paragraph 180 | Determine the modalities for convening the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in 2014 | Sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly |
| 4. | Paragraph 226 | Designate a member State body to fully operationalize the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns | Sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly |
| 5. | Paragraph 248 | Establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on sustainable development goals | Proposal on sustainable development goals submitted to sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly |

| | <i>Paragraph of the outcome document</i> | <i>Key follow-up processes from the Conference</i> | <i>Time frame</i> |
|----|--|--|---|
| 6. | Paragraphs 255 and 256 | Establish an intergovernmental process (comprising 30 experts nominated by regional groups) to prepare a report proposing options on an effective sustainable development financing strategy to facilitate the mobilization of resources and their effective use | Will conclude its work by 2014 |
| 7. | Paragraph 273 | Develop a facilitation mechanism that promotes the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies | Sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly |

3.2 Possible follow-up actions on and institutional framework for sustainable development and international environmental governance

40. The present section highlights some of the key follow-up actions that could be undertaken at the country and regional levels with respect to the key themes of the Conference.

41. The first high-level political forum will be held at beginning of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly from the end of September 2013. In preparation for this, African countries might want to consider the following actions:

(a) Develop a negotiation or engagement strategy and develop a common African position on the modalities of the high-level political forum;

(b) Enhance political visibility of the African sustainable development agenda and promote a stronger integration of the three pillars;

(c) Consider what functions of an institutional framework for sustainable development Africa wants to be exercised through the high-level political forum;

(d) If a monitoring and review process or mechanism is to be established, consider what it should cover and how it will be linked to support and commitments;

(e) Consider the relationship between the proposed high-level political forum, the Economic and Social Council and other United Nations bodies;

(f) Examine the role of the Commission on Sustainable Development during the transition.

42. The process of strengthening and upgrading UNEP is expected to take place between September 2012 and September 2013. In this context African countries could:

(a) Develop a negotiation or engagement strategy and determine the elements of a draft resolution;

(b) Ensure Africa's participation and engagement in the negotiations for the resolution through the active engagement of the African diplomatic missions in New York;

(c) Safeguard the positive results of the outcome document, especially the agreed functions of UNEP;

(d) Key issues to consider in the process are: how to strengthen UNEP in United Nations coordination bodies and what the relationship of UNEP to the high-level political forum will be; how to implement the increased financing for UNEP (the first opportunity to give effect to the request for increased financial resources for the United Nations regular budget will be during the preparations for the 2014-2015 budget to be discussed by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly); how to give effect to the strengthened regional presence and capacity-building to benefit Africa's priorities; and how to engage civil society;

(e) Determine whether to pursue a name change for UNEP as was expressed at the Conference.

43. On the issue of operationalizing the 10-year framework programme on sustainable consumption and production, African countries need to:
- (a) Take a decision on which body should serve as the reporting body for the UNEP-hosted secretariat of this framework, so as to sufficiently address Africa's needs;
 - (b) Determine what would be required to "fully operationalize" the framework for the African region.
44. Regarding the intergovernmental process on sustainable development goals, the intergovernmental body, composed of 30 members, is to be established by the opening of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. In this context, African countries need to:
- (a) Determine who should represent the African region;
 - (b) Develop inputs on how the goals should be selected and what their nature and scope should be.
45. On the issue of the development of a facilitation mechanism that promotes the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies, African countries need to follow-up on the request made to the Secretary-General to present a report at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly on options for the mechanism and assess the recommendations.

3.3 Possible follow-up actions on a green economy

46. On mobilizing the full potential and ensuring the equal contribution of both women and men to the green economy transition, African countries may consider:
- (a) Promoting a participatory and inclusive transition to a green economy;
 - (b) Recommending and developing mechanisms to monitor national green economy initiatives to ensure that they are inclusive;
 - (c) Recommending and adopting green economy programmes that are inclusive.
47. On promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns, African countries could consider:
- (a) Integrating sustainable consumption and production objectives into national development and sectoral policies and/or developing local and national plans on sustainable consumption and production;
 - (b) Developing recommendations to ensure that green economy policies do contribute to the achievement of sustainable consumption and production patterns, in accordance with paragraph 58 (o) of the outcome document;
 - (c) Strengthening the implementation of the African 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, as approved by AMCEN;
 - (d) Supporting the establishment of the partnership for sustainable consumption and production in Africa as a vehicle for the implementation of the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production.
48. On the implementation of green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, African countries may consider:
- (a) Mainstreaming green economy approaches and principles in national development planning and budgeting processes;
 - (b) Promoting regional and international cooperation, including South-South cooperation, for the transfer of resource-efficient and green technologies and know-how;
 - (c) Supporting the establishment of the African green economy partnership as a mechanism that provides coordinated support to African countries;
 - (d) Developing a national strategy on green economy.
49. On the important contributions that could be made by businesses and industry for the transition to a green economy, African countries need to:
- (a) Create favourable conditions and platforms that facilitate the involvement of the private sector;

- (b) Provide incentives for enterprises that are involved in the creation of new jobs, with a particular focus on the development of green businesses and green jobs;
- (c) Promote the active involvement of financing institutions, including national financing institutions, in the development of green businesses and investments.

3.4 Follow-up action on the means of implementation

50. The work on sustainable development financing will start with the establishment of an intergovernmental committee and is expected to be completed by 2014. In this connection, African countries need to:

- (a) Identify experts or policymakers within the countries that can participate as part of the intergovernmental process;
- (b) Start preparing Africa's common position and inputs to the intergovernmental process;
- (c) Plan and coordinate to ensure that issues and concerns related to Africa are sufficiently considered in the final outcome.

IV. Regional flagship programmes in support of the implementation of the outcome document in Africa

51. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development underlines the political commitment for the promotion of sustainable development and calls upon national Governments and development partners to further strengthen and consolidate their efforts to effectively integrate economic, environmental and social dimensions in their development policies and strategies. It further highlights some of the key measures that need to be taken at the national, regional and global levels to address key economic, environmental and social challenges. While the specific actions that need to be taken on the key issues covered under the outcome document may differ from country to country, there are some common measures that could provide the necessary support for actions that could be taken by all countries. Considering the key issues covered in the outcome document and the specific challenges faced by African countries and the opportunities they have, the following policies are proposed to be considered as regional flagship programmes that could be further developed and implemented in support of the implementation of the outcome document in Africa.

4.1 African green economy partnership (AGEP)

52. The outcome document recognizes green economy as one of the important tools for reducing poverty and enhancing sustainable development and calls upon development partners to provide support to countries that are committed to work on the transition to a green economy. The African region was one of the few that expressed strong support for the promotion of the transition to a green economy for poverty reduction and sustainable development. A number of African countries have already started taking more concrete strategic measures that place green economy at the centre of their national development strategy and an increasing number of African countries are requesting the necessary technical and financial support for making such a transition.

53. The African green economy partnership is proposed to provide a coordinated and consolidated support structure to African countries during their transition to a green economy. This support should:

- (a) Facilitate the effective integration of green economy and green job principles and approaches in national development policies and planning processes thereby laying the foundation for the development of the required institutional and physical infrastructure for the transition to a green economy;
- (b) Support the practical implementation of a green economy at the local level through the development of green villages, which could serve as model communities that could be replicated at the national level;
- (c) Lay a foundation for the mobilization of financial, technical and technological capacity and resources for the promotion of a green economy;
- (d) Provide a knowledge platform that consolidates key lessons and best practices from within and outside the region and promote their replication across the region;
- (e) Provide technical assistance and policy support for employment-led green economy development strategies and concrete programmes with the creation of green jobs, especially for young

people. The Youth Entrepreneurship Facility, promoting green entrepreneurship, could serve as example.

54. The proposed partnership for the promotion of a green economy in Africa should build upon existing initiatives and processes that include the Green Economy Advisory Services of UNEP, the inclusive green growth strategy of the African Development Bank and the related initiatives of the Economic Commission for Africa, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa and the International Labour Organization, including the Green Jobs Programme and the Youth Entrepreneurship Facility for Africa. The partnership shall also include African countries that have made a strategic commitment to the promotion of a green economy in their respective countries and the key development partners that are committed to supporting Africa in making this transition.

4.2 Ecosystem-based adaptation programme for Africa (EBAPA)

55. The outcome document of the Conference on Sustainable Development emphasizes that adaptation to climate change should represent an immediate and urgent global priority. Using small-scale targeted fast-track stimulus actions has proved effective and appropriate in providing integrated solutions for ecosystems in a cost-effective manner. The lessons learned from the UNEP-UNDP Climate Change Adaptation and Development Initiative (CC DARE) for Sub-Saharan Africa have shown that using small-scale fast-track demonstration actions on ecosystem-based adaptation can provide the right framework for leveraging funds for larger initiatives and building national and regional capacity in addressing climate risks.

56. Several years after the development of national adaptation programmes of action, many Sub-Saharan African countries are still struggling to implement adaptation actions that build the resilience of their ecosystems and communities. This programme is proposed to address this gap and prepare Africa to better utilize existing and emerging opportunities. Its main focus will be to:

- (a) Support the development of targeted small-scale ecosystem-based adaptation pilots, which will allow for fast-track implementation and generation of lessons learned for up-scaling;
- (b) Promote the effective integration of ecosystem-based adaptation in national policies and strategies and catalyse a larger framework of ecosystem-based adaptation programmes that could serve as a basis for leveraging external financing;
- (c) Facilitate access to larger-scale funding for ecosystem-based adaptation through technical support for project proposal development by Governments and communities, building on the demonstrated results from the innovative fast-track pilot projects;
- (d) Promote the establishment and strengthening of the African adaptation knowledge network with the purpose of enhancing adaptation management capacity in the region through research, technical assistance, knowledge sharing and partnerships.

57. The programme will build on the experience from CC DARE, national adaptation programmes of action and national communication processes in targeted countries, and will provide lessons, information and data to support project development under the Adaptation Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund, etc., and eventually the Green Climate Fund.

4.3 African programme on sustainable energy development (APSED)

58. The United Nations Sustainable Energy for All initiative, which was recognized as an important initiative in the outcome document, has three main goals that have critical importance for poverty reduction and sustainable development in Africa. These are: the development of renewable energy, the expansion of energy access and the promotion of energy efficiency. These goals are consistent with the objectives of the energy component of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa developed and promoted under the New Partnership for Africa's Development of the African Union. The development of the energy sector on a sustainable basis is critical for reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development in Africa.

59. The African programme on sustainable energy development aims to assist African countries in developing their energy sector on a sustainable basis, with a particular focus on the three main goals of the Sustainable Energy for All initiative and with the objective of eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development. The programme will focus on:

(a) Developing an African strategy for the implementation of the Sustainable Energy for All initiative which could be jointly endorsed and promoted by AMCEN and the Conference of Energy Ministers for Africa;

(b) Strengthening the support provided to African countries for the development of the energy sector, with a particular focus on the development of renewable energy resources, including geothermal, solar and wind energy, which are also favourable for the promotion of pro-poor energy access through off-grid energy systems;

(c) Promoting energy efficiency in buildings, industries and to the general public through technical support programmes and innovative demand-side management programmes.

60. The development and implementation of this programme will build upon existing experience within the United Nations system and be closely coordinated with the development and implementation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa under the African Union and the related support provided by the African Development Bank. It will also be closely coordinated with the support that could be provided through the International Renewable Energy Agency.

4.4 Partnership for sustainable consumption and production in Africa (PSCPA)

61. The African 10-year framework programmes on sustainable consumption and production, endorsed by AMCEN and the African Union in 2006, provided a valuable model during the Marrakech Process that supported the development of the programmes in the lead up to the eighteenth and nineteenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The African programmes have assisted a number of African countries in developing local and national sustainable consumption and production policies and facilitated the establishment of an Africa eco-labelling mechanism to improve access to sustainable African products in regional and global markets.

62. The work that has been done so far under the African programmes was supported through the Marrakech Process Taskforce on Cooperation with Africa, which was supported by the Government of Germany. However, the Marrakech taskforces have ceased to exist with the adoption of the global 10-year framework programmes on sustainable consumption and production. The establishment of the African partnership on sustainable consumption and production is therefore necessary.

63. The main purpose of the partnership is to:

(a) Build the capacities of existing regional networks and processes on sustainable consumption and production and on emerging production and consumption issues that are relevant to the region;

(b) Facilitate support for the development and implementation of local and national sustainable consumption and production programmes that contribute to poverty eradication and sustainable development;

(c) Coordinate and work with key development partners working in the field of sustainable consumption and production to develop regional initiatives that provide direct support to small and medium-sized industries and community groups that will be engaging in innovative sustainable consumption and production practices. The initial focus will be on developing a SWITCH-Africa programme in collaboration with the European Commission;

(d) Strengthen existing knowledge platforms and promote South-South cooperation on development, the dissemination of region-relevant knowledge and the replication of best practices;

(e) Ensure strong linkages and synergies between the African regional 10-year framework of programmes and the global 10-year framework of programmes, ensuring that the former is supported by the latter, and that lessons and best practices from Africa on shifting to sustainable consumption and production are disseminated through the global 10-year framework of programmes.

64. The development and launching of the partnership shall enhance existing institutional frameworks including the African Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption and Production, the coordination mechanism with regional institutions including the African Union and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. The partnership will also continue cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment of Germany. The partnership will engage with bilateral and multilateral aid agencies and development banks that express an interest in promoting the shift to sustainable consumption and production in the region.

4.5 Integrated waste management programme for Africa (IWMPA)

65. The outcome document of the Conference on Sustainable Development expressed deep concern about the lack of the capacity in most developing countries for the sound management of chemicals and wastes throughout their lifecycles. One of the growing challenges faced by African urban centres, owing to the growing rate of urbanization, is the expanding volume of municipal solid waste that goes far beyond the existing capacity of solid waste management facilities. The increasing volume of electronic waste that is being dumped is posing an increasing threat to human health and is changing the chemical composition of the waste, which used to consist largely of biodegradable organic waste. The conversion of waste into valuable resources is one of the key elements of the transition to a green economy, as it could promote the efficient use of resources, provide sustainable livelihoods through job creation and reduce the environmental hazards associated with waste.

66. The integrated waste management programme for Africa is proposed to enhance the capacities of African countries to develop and implement an integrated waste management programme that is mainly aimed at converting waste into valuable resources and thereby achieving the triple benefit of generating economic values, creating jobs and reducing environmental pollution. The programme will be aimed at:

(a) Building the capacities of African urban centres to develop and implement integrated solid waste management programmes that are based on the principles of reducing, reusing and recycling;

(b) Assist African countries in developing and implementing an e-waste management strategy that will help regulate the dumping of e-waste and the efficient management of regulated post-consumer e-waste through different forms of public-private partnerships that are based on the application of extended producers principles;

(c) Provide technical support to African countries to convert waste agricultural biomass into energy and other useful by-products through the replication of existing best practices and technologies.

67. The programme will build upon existing institutional experience within UNEP, UN-Habitat, the United Nations Centre for Regional Development, UNDP and any support that could be provided by other regional and global partnerships including the Global Partnership on Waste Management that is hosted by UNEP, the regional centres of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and the network of national cleaner production centres.

4.6 Integrated environmental assessment for sustainable development planning

68. The outcome document calls for the promotion of the science-policy interface through inclusive, evidence-based and transparent scientific assessments, and access to reliable, relevant and timely data in areas related to the three dimensions of sustainable development, building on existing mechanisms including the Global Environment Outlook process and its networks. It also called for strengthening the participation of all countries in international sustainable development processes and capacity-building, especially for developing countries, including in conducting their own monitoring and assessments.

69. One of the key areas of support that is being requested by African countries in the light of the growing interest in green economy transition is to have consolidated, reliable and up-to-date environmental information that could feed into the national planning process. It is also further recognized that the production of such information and data needs to be coupled with a strong capacity-building component at the national level to ensure the continuous and systematic updating of information. The proposed programme on integrated environmental assessment is aimed at providing the basis for sound decision- and policy-making at the national level. This will be achieved through:

- (a) Developing the required integrated environmental assessment tools and products for national development planning in the context of the transition to a green economy;
- (b) Enhancing national capacities on integrated environmental assessment for national development planning through a learning-by-doing approach;
- (c) Providing support to countries on the preparation of national integrated environmental assessment products that will feed into the planning process;
- (d) Strengthening the Africa Environmental Information Network as a regional knowledge platform on integrated environmental assessment.

70. The programme implementation process will be based on the effective utilization of existing capacities within the Division of Early Warning and Assessment of UNEP, GRID-Arendal and UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre. It further fosters strong synergy with UNEP on ongoing activities regarding mainstreaming the environment in development planning including: the African green economy advisory support project, mainstreaming environmental sustainability in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative.

4.7 Africa-Brazil-China Cooperation for Africa's Sustainable Development (ABC-CASD)

71. World leaders, including those from Africa, Brazil and China, who attended the Conference recognized green economy as one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development and encouraged each country to consider the implementation of green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. It further invited all relevant stakeholders, including the United Nations system, to support developing countries upon request to achieve sustainable development, including through green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, especially in least developed countries. The outcome document specifically recognized that more attention should be given to Africa and called on the international community to enhance support and fulfil commitments to advance action in areas critical to Africa's sustainable development.

72. The outcome document acknowledged the role played by middle-income developing countries as providers and recipients of development cooperation and reiterated its support for South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, which provide much needed additional resources to the implementation of development programmes. At the Conference, China announced its new contribution of \$6 million to UNEP, to be focused on capacity-building, monitoring and knowledge-sharing for the environment in developing countries. A matching contribution was made available to UNEP by the Government of Brazil. These are clear testimonies to the growing potential contribution that South-South cooperation could make to promote sustainable development in developing countries. Given the significant ties that Africa has with these two countries, it will be critical for the region to effectively utilize this emerging partnership opportunity through the Africa-Brazil-China cooperation policy as a foundation for more consolidated South-South cooperation. The key functions of this flagship programme are to:

- (a) Promote better understanding and harmonization of positions on key issues of global importance in the field of sustainable development in general and on ecosystem management in particular;
- (b) Provide strategic technical support that ensures the environmental sustainability of investments made by the two countries and companies from the two countries in Africa;
- (c) Facilitate the effective transfer of knowledge and technologies from China and Brazil to Africa so as to enhance the capacities of African countries for the better management of their natural resources during the transition to a green economy.

73. The proposed flagship on the Africa-Brazil-China cooperation policy will be developed through a tripartite consultative process and will build upon existing lessons and institutional structures that are relevant to the partnership. The development and implementation of this cooperation programme will also be closely coordinated with broader strategic initiatives, including the investment initiative that was recently announced at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.

V. Conclusion

74. Africa's preparations for the Conference on Sustainable Development and its participation in the negotiation process were highly appreciated and recognized by its development partners and the United Nations system. The Africa consensus statement, endorsed by the African Union Summit, provided a substantive basis for Africa's active participation and contribution during the negotiation process. As was highlighted in this report, the outcome document provides a useful basis to address some of the major implementation challenges in the promotion of sustainable development at the global level. It also suggests some useful mechanisms that could help developing countries to make progress in addressing their economic, environmental and social needs in an integrated and efficient way.

75. The nineteenth African Union Summit, held in July 2012 in Addis Ababa, urged the General Assembly to accelerate the process of implementing some of the key outcomes of the Conference, including the strengthening and upgrading of UNEP. It also called upon African countries to continue to speak with one voice and ensure the adequate representation of Africa in all the committees to be established as a result of the outcome document. The outcomes from the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly will be very critical in determining the progress that could be made in the years following the implementation of the outcome document. In this regard, the active engagement and involvement of African diplomatic missions in New York in voicing Africa's position on the various issues will be vital.

Table 2
Functions of an institutional framework for sustainable development in the Africa consensus statement and the Rio+20 outcome document

| <i>Africa consensus statement</i> | <i>Functions of institutional framework for sustainable development as articulated in the Rio+20 outcome document</i> | <i>Potential functions of the proposed high-level political forum</i> |
|--|--|--|
| <p>39. Take into account the specific needs of Africa for addressing implementation gaps, capacity-building, technology transfer and linking the science-policy interface for environmental sustainability;</p> <p>43. Enhance implementation of sustainable development through subregional initiatives;</p> <p>44. Consider establishing, reviving and further strengthening national sustainable development strategies and councils;</p> <p>Rio+20 to explore reactivating and reinvigorating the national councils for sustainable development to coordinate, consolidate and ensure the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues;</p> <p>45. Support regional and subregional institutions and facilitate institutional coherence and harmonization of relevant development policies, plans and programmes; and ensure effective linkage among global, regional subregional and national processes to advance sustainable development;</p> <p>47. Support the involvement of all ministries and other stakeholders to enable them to exercise their full responsibilities in sustainable development;</p> <p>48. Establish a global mechanism for revitalizing institutions at the global, regional and national levels for sustainable management of coastal, marine, and lacustrine resources;</p> <p>50. Develop a clear and actionable indicator framework for sustainable development at the national level;</p> <p>51. Have new reference indicators to assess the economic, social and environmental performance of African economics, alongside GDP, develop policies</p> | <p>76. (a) Promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development;</p> <p>(b) Be based on an action- and result-oriented approach giving due regard to all relevant cross-cutting issues with the aim to contribute to the implementation of sustainable development;</p> <p>(c) Underscore the importance of interlinkages among key issues and challenges and the need for a systematic approach to them at all relevant levels;</p> <p>(d) Enhance coherence, reduce fragmentation and overlap and increase effectiveness, efficiency and transparency, while reinforcing coordination and cooperation;</p> <p>(e) Promote full and effective participation of all countries in decision-making processes;</p> <p>(f) Engage high-level political leaders, provide policy guidance and identify specific actions to promote effective implementation of sustainable development, including through voluntary sharing of experiences and lessons learned;</p> <p>(g) Promote the science-policy interface through inclusive, evidence-based and transparent scientific assessments, as well as access to reliable, relevant and timely data in areas related to the three dimensions of sustainable development, building on existing mechanisms, as appropriate; in this regard, strengthen participation of all countries in international sustainable development processes and capacity-building especially for developing countries, including in conducting their own monitoring and assessments;</p> <p>(h) Enhance the participation and effective engagement of civil society and other relevant stakeholders in the relevant international forums and</p> | <p>85. The high-level forum could:</p> <p>(a) Provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development;</p> <p>(b) Enhance integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in a holistic and cross-sectoral manner at all levels;</p> <p>(c) Provide a dynamic platform for regular dialogue, and for stocktaking and agenda setting to advance sustainable development;</p> <p>(d) Have a focused, dynamic and action-oriented agenda, ensuring the appropriate consideration of new and emerging sustainable development challenges;</p> <p>(e) Follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments contained in Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Barbados Programme of Action, the Mauritius Strategy and the outcome of the present Conference and, as appropriate, relevant outcomes of other United Nations summits and conferences, including the outcome of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, as well as their respective means of implementation;</p> <p>(f) Encourage high-level system-wide participation of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and invite to participate, as appropriate, other relevant multilateral financial and trade institutions and treaty bodies, within their respective mandates and in accordance with United Nations rules and provisions;</p> <p>(g) Improve cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system on sustainable development programmes and policies;</p> |

| <i>Africa consensus statement</i> | <i>Functions of institutional framework for sustainable development as articulated in the Rio+20 outcome document</i> | <i>Potential functions of the proposed high-level political forum</i> |
|--|--|---|
| <p>whereby the true environmental costs of production and consumption are internalized into accounting models, and develop multifaceted empirical and scientific, evidenced-based standardization systems; and</p> <p>52. Consider the need to strengthen, consolidate and transform UNEP into an “international specialized institution” for the environment based in Nairobi, Kenya (see section below on international environmental governance).</p> | <p>in this regard promote transparency and broad public participation and partnerships to implement sustainable development;</p> <p>(i) Promote the review and stocktaking of progress in the implementation of all sustainable development commitments, including commitments related to means of implementation.</p> | <p>(h) Promote transparency and implementation through further enhancing the consultative role and participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders at the international level in order to better make use of their expertise, while retaining the intergovernmental nature of discussions;</p> <p>(i) Promote the sharing of best practices and experiences relating to the implementation of sustainable development and, on a voluntary basis, facilitate sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned;</p> <p>(j) Promote system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies;</p> <p>(k) Strengthen the science-policy interface through review of documentation bringing together dispersed information and assessments, including in the form of a global sustainable development report, building on existing assessments;</p> <p>(l) Enhance evidence-based decision-making at all levels and contribute to strengthening on-going efforts of capacity-building for data collection and analysis in developing countries.</p> |

Table 3
Comparison of references to international environmental governance in the Rio+20 outcome document and the Africa consensus statement and the potential implications

| <i>Rio +20 paragraphs</i> | <i>Africa consensus statement</i> | <i>Implications</i> |
|---|---|--|
| <p>87. We reaffirm the need to strengthen international environmental governance within the context of the institutional framework for sustainable development, in order to promote a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development as well as coordination within the United Nations system.</p> | <p>40. We recognize that IFSD is not an end in itself but is linked to the achievement of commonly agreed sustainable development goals, and should lead to the balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development, without putting any additional burden on developing countries or posing an obstacle to their development prospects.</p> <p>41. We acknowledge that sustainable development requires balanced integration of its three pillars - economic, social and environmental - by institutions and strategies that promote holistic and integrated approaches.</p> | <p>Paragraph 87 is an introductory paragraph to the section and reiterates support for strengthening international environmental governance (IEG), but it is qualified by two important factors. First, international environmental governance is not only important in its own right, but should be considered in the context of sustainable development governance and the overall institutional framework for sustainable development. This was, from the very beginning, an important prerequisite for Africa for discussing IEG at the Conference. Second, IEG should not become stronger or more important than the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development; but rather be better balanced with the other pillars. In addition, the conference also requests at the end of the paragraph that strengthened IEG should also promote better coordination within the United Nations system. Improved coordination is therefore an overarching objective of strengthened IEG, an objective that matches the emphasis on the coordination function of UNEP in paragraph 88 (c).</p> |
| <p>88. We are committed to strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. We reaffirm resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, which established UNEP, and other relevant resolutions that reinforce its mandate, as well as the 1997 Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP and the 2000 Malmö Ministerial Declaration.</p> | <p>53. In line with the Assembly of the African Union decision (Assembly/AU/Dec.381(XVII)), calling on member States to take into consideration the need to strengthen, consolidate and transform the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) into an international specialized institution for the environment based in Nairobi, Kenya, we strongly call on the Rio +20 Conference to endorse the decision of the Assembly of the African Union which recognizes that current institutional structures did not fully address Africa's needs in matters of the environment, sustainable development and climate change, within the context of revision of institutional frameworks for sustainable development.</p> | <p>While the Conference did not upgrade UNEP to a specialized institution, it clearly reaffirmed the mandate of UNEP as based on resolution 2997 (XXVII), which established UNEP, and on subsequent declarations that build upon it. The reference to UNEP as the leading global environmental authority that “sets the environmental agenda”, “promotes the coherent implementation” and “serves as an authoritative voice for the global environment” clearly stresses the leading role of UNEP.</p> <p>The authority of UNEP is also strengthened by the fact that the resolution to be adopted by the General Assembly will likely include language to “strengthen and upgrade” UNEP – a clear signal to the international community of the stronger future role of UNEP.</p> <p>The last sentence of the paragraph is important as it states that there should be a “resolution strengthening and upgrading UNEP”. The words “strengthening and upgrading” signal that, when giving effect to the functions, the new mandate should not regress from</p> |

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| | | the ambition that is already set out in the list of functions. In particular, the word “upgrade” provides ample scope for raising the institutional status of UNEP. |
| In this regard, we invite the General Assembly, at its sixty-seventh session, to adopt a resolution strengthening and upgrading UNEP in the following manner: | 54. In the context of the African position for the establishment of an international specialized institution, we affirm that any such institution, whatever its form, should have the following characteristics: | |
| 88. (a) Establish universal membership in the Governing Council of UNEP, as well as other measures to strengthen its governance as well its responsiveness and accountability to Member States | 54. (b) Be universal in its membership and decision-making, with each member State allocated one vote and decisions taken by consensus; | <p>During the negotiations regarding this paragraph, many countries attempted to flesh out how universal membership would be operationalized in the Governing Council. The suggestion that received the greatest attention was changing the Governing Council into an “Environmental Assembly” and creating an executive body, in the form of a board or a bureau. Given the lack of agreement on the set up of the governing body, lack of time and a concern that an agreement on universal membership might be risked entirely if the details were negotiated at the Conference, countries decided that the new institutional arrangements could be agreed at a later date. The result in the outcome document is a compromise, stating that the General Assembly will establish universal membership in the Governing Council of UNEP “as well as other measures to strengthen its governance as well as its responsiveness and accountability to Member States”. This opens the possibility for the General Assembly to negotiate the details of an assembly or executive body. Alternatively, the resolution, if not giving complete effect to this paragraph, could request the new, universal Governing Council to negotiate and adopt such “other measures”.</p> <p>Further to paragraph 88 (a), UNEP became the only other programme of the United Nations, along with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, to have universal membership.</p> |

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| (b) Have secure, stable, adequate and increased financial resources from the regular budget of the United Nations and voluntary contributions to fulfil its mandate | 54. (d) Have secure, stable, additional and predictable financing to fulfil its mandate; | Only 4per cent to 5per cent of the budget of UNEP comes from the United Nations regular budget. This constitutes roughly 0.28 per cent of the overall United Nations regular budget. The reference to the regular budget starkly differs from past references to stabilize the financing of UNEP. For example, the Cartagena Protocol called for the improved predictability of contributions to the Environment Fund through the introduction of a voluntary indicative scale of contributions. Instead, paragraph b refers specifically to the United Nations regular budget, which offers tangible and existing resources. The first opportunity to give effect to this subparagraph will be during the preparation of the budget for the biennium 2014-2015, to be discussed by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. |
| | (c) Be an autonomous body that could set the global policy agenda for environment and provide guidance for environmental financing; | UNEP remains a subsidiary body of the General Assembly and no explicit reference is made in the outcome document regarding UNEP providing guidance for environmental financing. |
| (c) Enhance the voice of UNEP and its ability to fulfil its coordination mandate within the United Nations system by strengthening UNEP engagement in key United Nations coordination bodies and empowering UNEP to lead efforts to formulate United Nations system-wide strategies on the environment | 54. (g) Have the authority to lead a process of United Nations system-wide strategic planning for the environment and to coordinate the inputs of the many agencies with environmental mandates in the international system; | This highlights some important functions that UNEP carried out in the past and which were eroded or changed during the United Nations reform process in the 1980s and 1990s. The first part of the subparagraph speaks of improving the authority of UNEP to fulfill its coordination mandate in the United Nations system, which is set out in its original mandate in resolution 2997 (XXVII) and the Nairobi Declaration on the role and mandate of UNEP. Specifically, the Governing Council is to “provide general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes within the United Nations system” ^a and “to strengthen its role in the coordination of environmental activities in the United Nations system in the field of the environment”. ^b The subparagraph satisfies the requirement for United Nations system-wide strategies on environment and also presents an opportunity to enhance the Environment Management Group’s presence and role in strategic environmental planning particularly with regards to the United Nations Development Group. |

a General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII), para. 2 (b).

b Nairobi Declaration, 1997, para. 3 (d).

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| <p>(d) Promote a strong science-policy interface, building on existing international instruments, assessments, panels and information networks, including the Global Environment Outlook, as one of the processes aimed at bringing together information and assessment to support informed decision-making</p> <p>(e) Disseminate and share evidence-based environmental information and raise public awareness on critical as well as emerging environmental issues</p> | <p>54. (h) Promote the science-policy interface to deal with pressing environmental sustainability concerns, and to support national and regional scientific networks and scientists; and</p> | <p>Previously, there had never been a specific reference to the words “science-policy interface”. The closest that the existing mandate of UNEP has come to it, apart from the general reference in resolution 2997 (XXVII), is the Nairobi Declaration, which only refers to making a link between the scientific community and policymakers. Subparagraph (d) opens up the opportunity to deepen the connection between science and decision-making through UNEP. It does so by, first, linking the need for information with decision-making and, second, by referring directly to a ‘science-policy interface’. This allows UNEP to concretize the assessment work it does and link it, on a permanent basis, with decision-making through a permanent science-policy interface under UNEP that carries out its own assessments, but also bringing together the results of other assessments from a holistic perspective of different environmental sectors.</p> <p>Given that Africa has identified several emerging issues, subparagraph (e) is important for continuing the work of UNEP in this area. Its original mandate was very close to subparagraph (e), stating that UNEP should “...keep under review the environmental situation in order to ensure that emerging environmental problems of wide significance receive appropriate and adequate consideration by Governments.” The subparagraph therefore reaffirms the importance of working on emerging environmental problems and it qualifies the mandate with the requirement that the information on emerging issues must be evidence- based. At the same time, it broadens the mandate from just providing information to Governments to include raising public awareness.</p> |

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| (f) Provide capacity-building to countries , as well as support and facilitate access to technology . | (i) Have the ability to enhance capacity and technology support , especially for Africa, monitor the effectiveness of implementation, and facilitate access to technology and technology transfer. | <p>Past references to capacity-building and facilitating technology transfer have been based on UNEP working through regional offices. The Nairobi Declaration refers to “advance the implementation of international norms and policies”. The Cartagena Protocol predicates UNEP activities on capacity-building and technology support as an implementing agency of the Global Environment Facility,^c through the work of its regional offices^d or through greater collaboration with UNDP.^e The Bali Strategic Plan has given UNEP some licence to work more directly at the country level, but it was not adopted but only welcomed by the General Assembly and thus does not change the mandate of UNEP.^f</p> <p>In negotiating this subparagraph, most countries recognized that there was increasing need for UNEP to have a more active role at the national level in certain areas of capacity-building and technology support where it had recognized expertise. The outcome document provides scope for African countries to engage UNEP directly in seeking support for capacity-building and technology transfer in priority areas.</p> |
| (g) Progressively consolidate headquarters functions in Nairobi, as well as strengthen its regional presence , in order to assist countries, upon request, in the implementation of their national environmental policies , collaborating closely with other relevant entities of the United Nations system | (f) Have a strengthened regional presence , and improved implementation at the national level through the development of operational capacity; | <p>The first part of subparagraph (g) refers to “progressively consolidating ‘headquarter functions’”, language that was intentionally left open to interpretation. Since this is the first reference in a decision concerning this topic it remains difficult to interpret the exact meaning of “headquarter functions”.</p> <p>The latter part (g) is an important step forward for UNEP to enhance its regional work and better address needs at the national level, as it is clear that UNEP should serve countries directly from its regional offices when the country so desires.</p> <p>It will be important to view how subparagraphs (e) and (h) are given effect by the General Assembly resolution. UNEP now has an opportunity to play a stronger operational role in assisting countries in implementing their policies and in providing capacity-building and supporting access to technology.</p> |

c Cartagena package, para. 34 (a).

d Ibid., para. 32.

e Ibid., para. 34.

f Compare with General Assembly resolution 60/189 of December 2005, para. 3.

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| <p>(h) Ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and exploring new mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society</p> | | <p>Though this was not addressed in the key characteristics in the Africa consensus statement, it is one of the strongest paragraphs regarding civil society in the outcome document. The paragraph calls on UNEP to “ensure the active participation of relevant stakeholders” and requests UNEP to draw on “best practices and models from multilateral institutions”, which means that UNEP can draw from well-known practices of stakeholder engagement, such as the Commission on Sustainable Development. The subparagraph also calls upon UNEP to explore “new mechanisms,” meaning that UNEP can improve its engagement of major groups and stakeholders’ and their participation in decision-making.</p> |
| <p><i>N.B. This is not part of the strengthening and upgrading of UNEP and is a standalone paragraph, 89. We recognize the significant contributions to sustainable development made by the multilateral environmental agreements. We acknowledge the work already undertaken to enhance synergies among the three conventions in the chemicals and waste cluster (the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants). We encourage parties to multilateral environmental agreements to consider further measures, in these and other clusters, as appropriate, to promote policy coherence at all relevant levels, improve efficiency, reduce unnecessary overlap and duplication, and enhance coordination and cooperation among the multilateral environmental agreements, including the three Rio conventions, as well as with the United Nations system in the field.</i></p> | <p>54 (e) Have increased authority to bring coordination and coherence to the range of multilateral environmental agreements, by promoting synergies while respecting the legal autonomy of the conferences of the parties to those agreements;</p> | <p>No additional mandate on multilateral environmental agreements was ascribed to the strengthening and upgrading of UNEP. Nevertheless, the paragraph is an important universal call that multilateral environmental agreements must continue promoting greater coherence, coordination and efficiency and take on further measures to increase these activities. The paragraph emphasizes the need for new work on other clusters although, again, similar language has already appeared in Conference of the Parties decisions, UNEP declarations and the United Nations Millennium Assembly outcome documents. There has been some commentary arguing that, given the absence of clear language on the role of UNEP, this somehow implied that UNEP does not have a further role to play in promoting multilateral environmental agreements synergies. However, this is clearly not the case. It should also be noted that paragraph 89 is a separate paragraph directly aimed at multilateral environmental agreements. Section C, containing both paragraphs 88 and 89, intentionally did not include “UNEP” in the title but rather “Environmental pillar in the context of sustainable development” primarily because the section was not only referring to UNEP but also to other parts of the environmental pillar, including multilateral environmental agreements. Given that paragraph 88 reaffirms the mandate of UNEP in resolution 2997 (XXVII),^g which gives UNEP a strong coordination role over United Nations environmental programmes, and the Nairobi Declaration, which requests UNEP to further enhance its role in</p> |

^g General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII), para. 2 (b), and Nairobi Declaration, para. 3 (b).

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| | | <p>the development of interlinkages among international conventions, there is no argument that the absence of a reference to UNEP in paragraph 89 somehow prescribes or changes the role that UNEP plays in the overall environmental coherence and coordination of the United Nations.</p> |
| <p>99 We encourage action at regional, national, subnational, and local levels to promote access to information, public participation, and access to justice in environmental matters, as appropriate.</p> | | <p>Paragraph 99 provides an opportunity for UNEP to continue its work in assisting countries in implementing the Bali Guidelines (actions at regional, sub-regional and local levels are foreseen), but also a basis to engage in the establishment of Regional Principle 10 conventions.</p> <p>UNEP should therefore strengthen its work and engagement with major groups through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthening MGS involvement in UNEP's work and increasing transparency with the vision to make UNEP a United Nations model organization on Principle 10 implementation. The related action would be to prepare a document for the GC/GMEF that presents best practices of civil society involvement from multilateral institutions and that proposes new mechanisms for civil society involvement such as but not exclusive of : (i) an International MGS Advisory Body; (ii) a Public Information Policy; (iii) and the revision of the rules and procedures for MGS participation (e.g. revision of rule 69 of the UNEP Governing Council rules and procedures; accreditation policy); ○ Continuing to work on the Bali Guideline Project, which focuses on further enhancing the application of Principle 10 at the national level; ○ Supporting the establishment of regional conventions on Principle 10: (i) provide support to LAC in establishment of Principle 10 conventions through the WRI-Access Initiative Partnership; (ii) identify member states willing to initiate a Principle 10 regional convention in Africa, and provide support for the establishment of such regional conventions. |