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Consideration of the report on the implementation of the decisions of the twelfth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

**Draft African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
climate change communications strategy**

Note by the secretariat

Introduction

1. Climate change is a global problem whose effects reach down to the regional, national and local levels. Regional impacts will be determined by a variety of circumstances, including geography, topography, the location of settlements, population density and the range of climatic variability likely to be encountered.
2. Climate change and variability pose a major threat to Africa, given both its geographical position and its considerably limited adaptive capacity, which is further exacerbated by widespread poverty and low levels of development. In Africa and other developing regions, climate change poses a threat to economic growth (as a result of changes in natural systems and resources), long-term prosperity and the survival of already vulnerable populations. The ensuing consequences include the persistence of economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities, particularly in the economic and livelihood sectors. Associated increased disaster risks pose an additional obstacle to sustainable development in Africa and a threat and impediment to efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals. Constraints in technological options, limited infrastructure, skills, information and links to markets further heighten vulnerability to climate stresses.
3. The existence and development of Africa's peoples is under threat from the adverse impacts of climate change, as the continent's population, ecosystems and unique biodiversity will all be the major victims of global climate change.
4. Although diverse information on climate change is available at various levels, there is a need for more innovative communication tools and mechanisms within the region to enable climate change information to be accessed, shared and used exponentially in the context of limited resources.
5. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) focused its attention on climate change during its twelfth session, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in June 2008, during which a set of policy actions and interventions was defined. The first part of AMCEN work on climate change in Africa focused on engaging lead climate change negotiators from African countries in a series

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of regional consultative meetings to enhance the development of, among others, a common negotiating position for Africa. That position was presented during the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, held in Copenhagen in December 2009. Work on climate change in Africa has also focused on building negotiators' capacity in relevant areas, when so requested.

6. The second part of the work involves the preparation of a comprehensive framework of African climate change programmes and its associated frameworks of subregional programmes. Two subregional consultative meetings were held during 2009, in Eastern Africa and in Central Africa. During the second meeting of the African high-level expert panel on climate change, held in Addis Ababa from 19 to 23 October 2009, representatives of African countries discussed Africa's common negotiating position and deliberated on the framework of African climate change programmes and its associated frameworks of subregional programmes.

7. One key gap identified at that meeting was the unavailability of statistics on climate change to provide a deeper understanding of facts and projections and the impacts for the continent and the various sectors. The available data on the impacts of climate change on the subregions and on the continent as whole are not harmonized and therefore cannot readily inform decision makers and negotiators.

8. In response to this need, and in preparation for the Copenhagen climate change summit, AMCEN developed background papers (fact sheets and briefing notes) for African negotiators, senior government officials, and African environment ministers. This was an initial measure, as it was deemed necessary to prepare a full communication strategy that could provide sustained, reliable and accessible information to the various stakeholders involved in and affected by the impacts of climate change.

9. It is important, however, to acknowledge that simply having information will not, in itself, spur effective problem-solving if the information is not supported by tools and mechanisms for capacity-building and the necessary skills to respond to problems. The present document provides a strategy for communicating climate change issues through AMCEN. The strategy will provide a platform and methodologies for enhancing access to and the development, sharing and use of climate change resources, including data, tools and relevant policy and technical documents, so that the understanding and capacities of African countries in responding to climate change and variability are enhanced.

10. It is anticipated that the strategy will equip African environment ministers and other climate change stakeholders engaged at the technical and policy levels with timely and relevant information that will enable them:

- (a) To discuss increasing climate change and variability phenomena and explain current climate events and possible future ramifications;
- (b) To convey the need to take action as proactively as possible and reactively as relevant to ameliorate the negative impacts of climate change;
- (c) To create the conditions for discussing the necessary adaptation and mitigation strategies while sharing knowledge, experiences and lessons learned within the region, between the subregions and with the rest of the world.

11. The strategy recognizes that climate change can be difficult to comprehend, especially for non-experts. It is therefore crucial for climate change messages – both for information and for action – to be communicated effectively and successfully to all stakeholders so as to influence and guide the necessary or relevant policy and technical actions and solutions for both mitigation and adaptation at all levels.

I. Scope

12. The strategy is intended to provide the secretariat with a framework for delivering key policy and technical responses and messages on climate change and variability to stakeholders. The key target groups are:

- (a) African environment ministers;
- (b) African climate change experts and climate science centres;

- (c) African Governments (in collaboration with regional institutions such as the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD));
- (d) Civil society, including the media and young people.

A. African environment ministers

13. Climate change being a complex issue, advocacy activities under the strategy will promote a relationship between perceptions of climate change and meaningful actions at the policy and technical levels. AMCEN and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Africa will continue to assist environment ministers in translating technical information into policy and political messages and in enhancing specific partnerships with pan-African and intercontinental counterparts.

B. African climate change experts and climate science centres

14. It is important to enhance the capacities of climate change experts and climate change scientists to use data to reach policymakers and the public. This will meet the current need to improve access to climate science data through the preparation of the tools necessary for building capacities in using maps and graphics to explain climate change.

C. African Governments (in collaboration with regional institutions such as the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development)

15. In collaboration with other regional institutions the strategy focuses its activities on developing communications to raise awareness of climate variability and change, highlighting the impacts and the necessary steps required through both adaptation and mitigation.

16. Given the diverse stakeholders from the livelihood and economic sectors that are directly involved in and affected by this variability and change, AMCEN is proposing the design and development of tools and mechanisms to coordinate responses and to plan activities and promote interaction at both the regional and national levels. The initiatives that Africa regards as relevant to the subregions must be linked to the wider climate change agenda and will thereby raise awareness of climate change.

E. Civil society, including the media and young people

17. There remains no effective, coherent and focused media capacity to bring the latest data and information to decision makers and the public through effective and accurate messaging and reporting that promotes the understanding of the risks of climate change.

18. This need was highlighted in a recent survey of studies on climate change reporting, which showed that, although the media profile of climate change had never been higher, the news might not be reaching all people equally, and was particularly missing in the economically poorer communities of Africa, Asia and Latin America.¹

II. Aims and objectives

A. Short-term objectives

19. The short-term objectives are as follows:

- (a) To collate and prepare technical and policy briefs of any new information, such as reports, research and science produced under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change since the Copenhagen climate change summit, in a format easily understood by both decision makers and the public. This will include the translation of the science of human-induced climate change and associated climate risk into information that is useful and accessible;

¹ Briefing paper prepared by Mike Shanahan for the International Institute for Environment and Development, entitled "Talking about a revolution: climate change and the media". Available from <http://www.iied.org/pubs/pdfs/17029IIED.pdf>.

(b) To document the processes of AMCEN activities and make available to key partners and relevant stakeholders the most important documents and outputs generated from consultations and decision-making processes, both inside and outside the region and subregions;

(c) To identify and evaluate existing African climate change expertise and strengthen linkages between African climate change research, policy and practice to ensure sustained planning and action in efforts to combat the adverse effects of climate change;

(d) To define and establish an AMCEN climate change knowledge arena to establish a coordinated and accessible forum for enhancing research, technology diffusion, the exchange of know-how, leadership and for exchanging and learning from good and bad practices in the region, subregions and beyond.

B. Long-term objectives

20. The long-term objectives are as follows:

(a) To raise awareness of the adverse impacts of climate variability and change and highlight the possible options (institutional, policy, technical and financial) and actions (including behaviour) to respond through adaptation and mitigation;

(b) To make available tools and mechanisms that will promote the use of credible information and data through partnerships with established climate change experts at both the individual and institutional levels;

(c) To build capacities by sharing key information (drawn from the global, regional and subregional levels) on climate change and variability, data and information collection techniques and improved observing and monitoring;

(d) To develop trusted working relationships with professional networks for journalists and the media to promote accurate reporting and take forward the Africa climate change debate and advocacy. Making reliable, current and factual climate change information accessible will assist journalists in pursuit of information to report to the public and decision makers.

III. Proposed activities

21. The proposed activities outlined in the present section are also described in tabular form in chapter VIII of the present document.

A. Translation, documentation and dissemination

22. Given that Africa is identified as the continent most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change and variability, it is important for information on trends (facts and figures), projections and good practices to be available to provide impetus to regional, subregional and national actions.

B. Repackaging or branding climate change messages for the region

23. Climate change information needs to be repackaged around core ideas and values that most Africans already care about, in particular as they relate to both economic and livelihood sectors. This means shifting the public lens from global impacts by recasting climate change as a regional problem with local impacts and solutions.

24. Both the Central and Eastern African subregional climate change studies undertaken by AMCEN have shown the need to provide reliable, accessible and timely data on vulnerabilities that provide a basis for informed regional, national and local policymaking for both adaptation and mitigation processes and responses.

C. Documenting processes and key outputs

25. The documenting of products prepared, such as the subregional environmental action plans of the environment initiative of NEPAD, ought to be improved upon. Such products need to be documented and integrated into continuing discussions on environmental changes. One activity will therefore be to redesign and improve the way in which AMCEN documents key processes and outputs.

D. Updating the website and designing a database

26. The AMCEN website will include a database that will act as a first port of call for African environment ministers and climate change experts from the subregions. It will provide a means to disseminate information held by AMCEN and partners through postings and cross-links relating to:

- (a) Existing climate change forums, programmes and activities;
- (b) AMCEN climate change work in Africa;
- (c) Key reports (e.g., Framework Convention on Climate Change, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports), policy and technical documents on key adaptation and mitigation issues relevant to the region and subregions;
- (d) Current global events and meetings on climate change;
- (e) Training opportunities in respect of climate change;
- (f) Existing resource opportunities to which the continent could have access;
- (g) Results and progress of current programmes and initiatives (including the collated subregional climate change programmes) that can be communicated through policy and technical papers targeting the various sectors and stakeholders;
- (h) Scientific data with facts and projections.

E. Awareness and advocacy

27. Advocacy has to be sustained and continuing. Any campaign to raise awareness of, for example, mitigation cannot be a one-off. Awareness-raising in the form of communicating risks will take place at the ministerial level through the continuous preparation of targeted policy briefings to ensure that policymaking and actions are based on informed decisions. The purpose of developing key political, policy and technical messages regarding adaptation and mitigation is to give appropriate information to the relevant stakeholders at the right time and where it matters. Examples of key messages would include:

- (a) Africa is at risk and under threat;
- (b) Urgent action is required in terms of both adaptation and mitigation;
- (c) Inaction in the face of climate change will prove costly;
- (d) Adaptation is a priority for Africa but must be undertaken in parallel with mitigation and supported by new financing, technology and capacity-building.

28. To communicate climate change science and predictions, information, education and communication materials that are simplified for the general public will be designed, developed and circulated through the offices of environment ministers and during meetings. Mechanisms for preparing and updating such materials will be developed.

29. Intensified workshops and expert meetings of climate change groups and committees specializing in the African continent are necessary to enhance understanding of the implications of adaptation and mitigation for Africa and its subregions and of what needs to be done at each level.

30. To promote climate change advocacy further within the region and on the international scene, there is a need to identify and build the capacities of African climate change champions (who may be institutions, the media, social groups or individuals who can lead specific initiatives, programmes or activities to raise awareness). This will provide purposeful leadership and take forward the African climate change agenda.

31. Those champions will act as the conduit through which the secretariat can continue reinforcing key political, policy and technical messages, highlighting the priorities of the region in global, regional, subregional and national forums. The principles underlying the selection of these champions will need to be developed.

F. Designing, developing and managing the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment climate change knowledge arena

32. The AMCEN climate change knowledge arena will be defined in close collaboration with communications specialists in the UNEP Regional Office for Africa and will co-opt the existing regional institutions and forums to provide the platform for gaining access to and sharing information from expert group meetings, research, events and workshops on climate change.

33. The AMCEN climate change arena will:

- (a) Make provision for online meetings, conferences and discussions through blogs to facilitate virtual interaction and networking, so that the continent can be involved in the climate change debate and in promoting understanding of how humans and ecosystems both contribute to the problem of and are part of the solution to climate change impacts;
- (b) Provide a virtual platform for African environment ministers and other key stakeholders through which the following actions and activities can be achieved:
 - (i) Availability of an easily accessible one-stop portal with up-to-date information on key policy and technical documents on global, regional and subregional climate change issues for both adaptation and mitigation;
 - (ii) Preparation and presentation of documentation regarding high-level global and regional meetings including speeches, declarations and technical presentations;
 - (iii) Cross-links to relevant websites of regional climate change institutions and organizations and climate change networks, which will provide updates on planned and current activities on climate change;
 - (iv) Design and development of toolkits and targeted climate change manuals on specific adaptation and mitigation issues;
 - (v) Definitions of climate change terms as they apply to Africa and responses to frequently asked questions.

G. Capacity-building and strengthening

34. AMCEN partners capacities' must be built if the climate change agenda for the region is to be articulated comprehensively and prioritized based on informed decisions and defined leadership.

35. The following actions and activities are proposed with a view to developing the leadership of AMCEN partners:

- (a) Providing training through targeted toolkits, face-to-face round-table sessions, conferences, workshops and campaigns;
- (b) Identifying and defining incentives for climate change champions, for instance through annual climate change leadership awards offered to between two or three groups or individuals whose participation and representation in key climate change forums is supported;
- (c) Defining learning exchange programmes for stakeholders, including selected African environment ministers and climate change experts, to enhance the identification of adaptation and mitigation planning and initiatives. This would be carried out between subregions, regions and environment ministries worldwide. The secretariat will establish the activities of this learning exchange programme based on priority areas defined through subregional consultations and guided by the outcomes of key meetings such as those of the conferences of the parties to multilateral environmental agreements;
- (d) Identifying and establishing a possible twinning programme to enable knowledge to be exchanged within and between regions. Experts will participate, allowing for good case studies from both developed and developing countries to be showcased. This will be particularly useful when promoting technology options and for diffusion of both mitigation and adaptation actions;
- (e) Strengthening the information processing and transmission capacities of the media with regard to climate change data and information needs;
- (f) Promoting relationships with the media to ensure opportunities to deliver accurate and targeted climate change messages in both printed and electronic formats. Such an approach will support the preparation of targeted policy messages and precise themes for media campaigns and reporting.

H. Promote partnerships and linkages between climate change research, policy and practice

36. The possible activities envisaged under this section include:
- (a) Setting up an African climate change research magazine, journal or newsletter that will provide and collate research updates on adaptation and mitigation on the continent. Coordinated climate change research outputs will also deal with the current problem of intellectual rights and harness the existing climate change expertise in Africa;
 - (b) Preparing a subregional database of initiatives highlighting successes, challenges and needs. This compilation of case studies would not only readily offer information on what is available in the subregions but also guide agenda-setting and priority-setting for adaptation and mitigation interventions;
 - (c) Setting up specialized groups and committees for adaptation and mitigation. The aim is to unpack the various levels and issues and organize discussions and policy and technical papers to keep the region up to speed with global and regional events. This will further promote networking globally to enhance learning and the sharing and exchange of knowledge;
 - (d) Identifying and designing cross-sectoral programmes focusing on the livelihood and economic sectors affected by climate change;
 - (e) Holding side events and exhibitions during global and regional meetings to showcase AMCEN climate change activities in the region. This would highlight achievements, particularly the AMCEN role in supporting the definition and implementation of the African framework for climate change programmes. This activity will also stimulate informal discussions and the sharing of documents and outputs from subregions and the region as a whole to promote the development of analytical papers on adaptation and mitigation.

I. Designing, developing and implementing tools and mechanisms for collecting and sharing information

37. Activities under this section will involve reviewing and collating established tools, such as those pertaining to vulnerability assessments, data collection, climate mapping and projections. Expert support will be obtained in establishing new mechanisms for the region.
38. There will be a need to disseminate tools for collecting information, for developing climate change scenarios for the various sectors and for disseminating and sharing climate science data and projections. This gap has already been identified during subregional consultations.

IV. Methodology and strategies

39. There is need for a climate change communication campaign that focuses on providing empowering and practical options through strategies that integrate climate issues with the more immediate concerns of individuals, communities and Governments. Provision should be made for a five-year campaign with a phased timetable in line with the overall communications strategy.
40. Climate change messages should be factual, inspirational and positive, rather than instigate fear. The secretariat will continue to provide support in the development of key messages that also show linkages with existing messages on related issues (i.e., health, transportation and energy efficiency).
41. The development of toolkits will support the translation of the evidence base from global research and regional and subregional assessments into useable and accessible guides for the various levels and stakeholders.
42. To ensure more informed media debates and reports on climate change, campaign links and access to the relevant organizations, latest climate change news, factual updates, new presentational materials and images, among other things, can be made available to the media. It is important in particular that the capacity of the media and journalists is enhanced to influence policymakers to take action to adapt to climate change.

V. Key outputs and outcomes

43. The key outputs and outcomes are:
- (a) Developed and enhanced AMCEN regional and subregional climate change knowledge arenas linked to professional institutions and interregional and subregional forums;
 - (b) Enhanced monitoring and partnerships among and with AMCEN partners and supporters shown in improved sharing of evidence-based knowledge inside and outside the region;
 - (c) Key policy and technical papers prepared and disseminated in global forums and African climate change agenda-setting and priority-setting articulated by key stakeholders;
 - (d) AMCEN database developed to provide a one-stop portal to exchange knowledge and allow interaction between stakeholders and climate change experts in Africa;
 - (e) Readily available toolkits and manuals on climate change used within the region and by Governments;
 - (f) Significantly improved awareness of adaptation and mitigation issues with an increased number of initiatives for responding to climate change issues launched;
 - (g) Climate change leadership improved and Africa's climate change concerns effectively presented and considered in global debates and in key decision-making processes of financing, technology transfer and capacity-building.

VI. Funding

44. Developing and implementing an effective communications strategy will have major funding implications and require significant resources over a sustained period if the strategy is to be effective. Major additional funding, dedicated specifically to communicating climate change issues in Africa, needs to be allocated through UNEP core funds. This should also be coordinated and integrated with existing campaigns and funding mechanisms under the UNEP Regional Office for Africa, both to maximize effectiveness in the way in which the message is transmitted and to increase the cost-effectiveness of spending on any new campaign.

45. Communication will be a continuing process, meaning that AMCEN will require a communications coordinator to ensure that the communication strategy is implemented and monitored. The strategy will also be useful in leveraging the resources required to implement the regional and subregional frameworks for climate change programmes currently under development.

VII. Monitoring and evaluation

46. As the climate is changing, so too are responses to such changes. At the national level, most African countries are in various phases of sector and development reform processes with implications for decision-making and policymaking processes and planning.

47. In terms of flexibility and adaptability, AMCEN will review the communication strategy to accommodate new policies, actions and outcomes of key political and technical meetings and decisions inside and outside the region. The frequency of this review will be determined once the framework of African climate change programmes and its associated subregional programmes have been finalized. Other key factors to be considered in the monitoring process include:

- (a) Definition of a feedback mechanism to enable AMCEN to establish whether social learning has taken place through awareness-raising and capacity-building activities;
- (b) Time and scale, given that the communication strategy has to cater for various levels of stakeholders and deal with diverse issues of adaptation and mitigation;
- (c) Accuracy and reliability of the information posted through cross-links and collated through research and other initiatives;
- (d) Undertaking periodic desktop research.

VIII. Summary of activities and estimated costs

No.	Broad activity	Sub-activity	Cost	Total
1.0.	Translation, documentation and dissemination	<p>1.1 Translate, collate and prepare technical and policy briefs of any new information (e.g., documents produced in the wake of the Copenhagen climate change summit) including speeches, declarations and technical presentations</p> <p>1.2 Document and print the processes and outputs of AMCEN (and UNEP Regional Office for Africa) climate change consultative and technical and policy support activities</p> <p>1.3 Collate, translate and prepare scientific data and information on regional trends (facts and figures), projections and good practices</p> <p>1.4 Prepare toolkits for the translation of the evidence base from global, regional or subregional levels to useable and accessible guides</p>		
2.0.	Awareness and advocacy	<p>2.1. Prepare and print risk communication materials (briefs, flyers, fact sheets) targeting various groups</p> <p>2.2. Develop and undertake sustained campaigns on adaptation and mitigation actions</p> <p>2.3. Public service announcements (television and radio documentaries and clips)</p> <p>2.4. Establish a multimedia resource with campaign links and access to current climate change news, factual updates, images, presentations, etc.</p> <p>2.5. Organize workshops and expert group meetings for ministers, experts, media, civil society and young people, among others, at the regional and subregional levels</p> <p>2.6. Prepare targeted toolkits and manuals (e.g., for the media and journalists)</p> <p>2.7. Design a targeted training programme especially for media reinforcing key political, policy and technical messages</p> <p>2.8. Prepare a flyer containing frequently asked questions about climate change (with definitions of technical terms)</p>		
3.0.	Capacity-building and strengthening	<p>3.1. Design an AMCEN climate change knowledge arena</p> <p>3.2. Design and develop a one-stop portal (database with cross-links)</p> <p>3.3. Design and manage virtual forums: e-conferencing and meetings; targeted blogging for perceptions</p> <p>3.4. Undertake trainings: face-to-face round-table sessions; conferencing, workshops and campaigns</p> <p>3.5. Identify and establish an African climate change champion and leadership programme (e.g., twinning)</p> <p>3.6. Establish subregional, regional and intercontinental exchange programmes for ministers</p>		
4.0.	Promote partnerships and linkages between climate change research, policy and practice	<p>4.1 Set up an Africa climate change research magazine, journal or newsletter</p> <p>4.2 Prepare, collate and share coordinated subregional case studies</p> <p>4.3 Establish cross-links on current research outputs and documents</p> <p>4.4 Set up issue-specific, specialized groups or committees</p> <p>4.5 Set up and organize side events and exhibitions</p>		

Note: The budget will be decided once the activities have been agreed upon in order of priority and availability of resources.