



United Nations
Environment
Programme



African Ministerial
Conference
on the Environment

Distr.: General
4 September 2006

Original: English

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

Twelfth session

Johannesburg, 7–12 June 2008

Report of the Bureau of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment on the work of its extraordinary meeting held in Cape Town, South Africa

Introduction

1. An extraordinary meeting of the Bureau of African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was held in Cape Town, South Africa on 29 September 2006.

I. Opening of the meeting

2. The meeting was opened by the President of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and Minister of Environment of Congo, Mr. Henry Djombo at 9 p.m. on 29 September 2006. The President welcomed members of the Bureau and other participants to Cape Town and the first extraordinary meeting since the Bureau was formed in Brazzaville in May 2006. He stated that he took advantage of the third GEF Assembly to convene an extraordinary meeting of the Bureau to create the necessary conditions for communication and initiate discussions on the expected role of the Bureau during their tenure. He advocated for high visibility for the Bureau in the discharge of its functions. He particularly welcomed his colleague Minister from Egypt who was unable to attend the 11th regular session held in Brazzaville, Congo in May 2006.

3. H.E. Mr. Maged George Elias Ghatas, the Minister of Environment of Egypt, expressed his pleasure to be at the extraordinary meeting. He reaffirmed Egypt's support for AMCEN. He said that he was fully supporting the preparation of a strategy for the implementation of the environment initiative of NEPAD. He said further that Egypt had been actively involved in the NEPAD process. He also emphasized the need for capacity building initiatives.

II. Organizational matters

A. Adoption of the agenda

4. The Bureau adopted the following agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda prepared by the Secretariat :

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Organizational matters.
3. Follow-up to the 11th regular session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment.
4. Some key matters of relevance to Africa arising from the GEF Assembly held in Cape Town on 29 and 30 August 2006.
5. South Africa and Egypt's support to other African countries to develop their designated national authorities for CDM.
6. Sustainable hydropower development in Africa
7. UNFCCC COP 12 & COP/MOP 2 of Kyoto Protocol
8. 21st session of the meeting of the Bureau of AMCEN
9. Other matters
10. Closure

B. Attendance

5. The following members of the Bureau attended the meeting.

President: S.E. Monsieur Henri Djombo (Congo)

Members:

S. E. Monsieur Jean Pierre Babatundé (Benin)

H.E. Mr. Maged George Elias Ghatas (Egypt)

H.E. Patricia Hjabakiga (Rwanda)

6. A full list of all the participants can be found in the Annex.

III. Follow-up to the 11th regular session of the African Ministerial conference on the Environment

7. At the invitation of the President, the Secretariat introduced the topic highlighting the *decisions* (1,2,4 and 11), taken by AMCEN at its eleventh session held in Brazzaville from 22 to 26 May 2006, and the aspect of the work programme of AMCEN that would involve the Bureau in their implementation. In conformity with the request of the President of AMCEN, the Secretariat also introduced the subject on the expected role the Bureau members during their tenure of office.

8. In his opening remarks on Decision 1, which is on the implementation of the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD, the President stated that there was a need to develop lines of communication between AMCEN, development partners and governments. He called for a special meeting with UNEP to marshal support for the implementation of the Action Plan during the twelfth Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the second Meeting of the Parties of the Kyoto Protocol (UNFCCC COP12 and COP/MOP2 KP). H.E. Ms. Patricia Hjabakiga of Rwanda stated that the Secretariat should ensure that the necessary preliminary work is done by UNEP in order to have a successful meeting.

9. H.E. Mr. Maged George Elias Ghatas stated that the mode of communication between African countries should be clearly articulated. He also said that AMCEN could have support with regard to communication between the Conference and UNDP and other partners. He said further that this would require the preparation of a framework or strategy for communication for support from other partners other than UNEP. He also stated that Egypt could support and assist other African countries in the implementation of the Action Plan. He elaborated further by stating that Egypt had programmes, among others, on persistent organic pollutants (POPs), desertification, green belt formation using sewage water treatment. He offered Egypt's assistance to other African countries, through AMCEN, wishing to prepare specific projects for donor funding.

10. In concluding the discussions on Decision 1, the President stated that suggestions made by Egypt had been well noted and steps should therefore be taken to have them executed.

11. Decision 2, which is on the institutional linkages and harmonization of activities in the context of the implementation of the environment initiative of NEPAD, was briefly discussed by members of the Bureau. The members advocated for close contact with the African Union in order to implement *decision 2* effectively. In this regard the President suggested that the Bureau should pay a working visit to the African Union Commission for further discussions on the matter.

12. Decision 4 is on the status and use of the general trust fund for AMCEN. Two items of this *decision* fell within the purview of the Bureau; namely, making proposals for sponsorship of regular and extraordinary sessions of AMCEN (to be done in collaboration with African Union); and payment of outstanding contributions to the general trust fund of AMCEN. The Bureau mainly discussed the first of the two items. The consensus reached was that this (sponsorship of regular and extraordinary sessions of AMCEN) was to be discussed with the African Union Commission during the working visit of the Bureau to the AU Commission. The President called for the mission to the AU Commission to be done before the end of the year.

13. The Secretariat made a brief presentation on the progress made in establishing African Environment Facility at the African Development Bank (Decision 11). The Bureau was informed that a feasibility study had been completed in accordance with the understanding reached between the African Development Bank (ADB) and AMCEN. The view was expressed that the establishment of the African Environment Facility (AEF) could be delayed by the ongoing restructuring at the ADB. As a result of this, the President recommended that the active dialogue between AMCEN and the ADB should be stepped up. He also said that the Bureau should send a mission to ADB to further advance the establishment of the AEF.

14. S.E. Monsieur Jean Pierre Babatundé stated that since *decision 11* was very important it should be given utmost support. He urged the Secretariat to take up more responsibility to ensure its execution. H.E. Ms Patricia Hajabakiga supported the suggestion by the President that a mission should be sent to ADB. She requested that Rwanda should be included in the delegation that would meet ADB. She also stated that the President of Rwanda could join his counterpart in Senegal, President Wade, in lending support to the establishment of the Africa Environment Facility at the ADB.

15. H.E. Maged Ghatas expressed his support for the AEF and requested for a copy of the feasibility study. The President concluded the deliberations on *decision 11* by reiterating the importance of the AEF to AMCEN.

16. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the finalization and adoption of the sub-regional environmental action plans of the environment initiative of NEPAD (SREAPs) were expected to be completed by the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in time for the 12th regular session of AMCEN scheduled to be held in South Africa. After brief discussions on this subject, the Bureau members agreed to play a lead role during the sub-regional ministerial consultations on the SREAPs prior to their adoption by the RECs.

17. Upon invitation by the President, the Secretariat introduced the subject *the role of the Bureau of AMCEN*, as contained in AMCEN/BUR.EX.Mtg./CT/3, stating that the main functions of the Bureau were to oversee the Conference affairs and the implementation of the decisions of the Conference as well as the relations between the Conference and the member States and the RECs between sessions. It was agreed that since the vice Presidents and the Rapporteur were elected by their respective sub-regions, they were responsible for AMCEN related matters at the subregional level. In this regard, two of the six specific functions were considered crucial; namely (i) To coordinate AMCEN related matters in the sub-regions and report on same to the Bureau periodically; and (ii) To encourage the implementation of the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD in member States in the sub-region.

18. The President reiterated that he looked forward to knowing what each member of the Bureau could do in their respective subregions. He stated that he envisaged a facilitating role for each Bureau member and suggested that they should endeavour to contact the countries, including the relevant institutions, in the subregions. He said that there were examples in each of the subregions that could be show-cased, citing the exemplary management of some invasive alien species in Benin.

19. H.E. Jean Babatundé stated that even though the management of invasive alien species was expensive, there was merit in continuing with the control measures. He stated further that each member of the Bureau should start thinking about how the activities in the subregion would be financed. In response to this suggestion, the President said that the responsibility for funding of the activities in the subregions fell on their respective Governments. He also stated that if resources from the general trust fund of AMCEN had been utilized before then it should be continued.

IV. Some key matters of relevance to Africa arising from the GEF Assembly held in Cape Town on 29 and 30 August 2006

20. The Bureau discussed relevant matters arising from the debate on the recommended decision of the third GEF Assembly on the proposed amendment to *the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility*; and a mechanism for feedback (from African representatives on GEF Council) and consultations on GEF related matters. It was recalled that Congo proposed an additional amendment to recognize GEF as the financial instrument for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in the GEF Instrument. However, following the Chief Executive Officer of GEF's explanation that the GEF Council had agreed to consider the issue at its next meeting in December 2006, the Congo withdrew its proposal.

21. The Bureau however reiterated its concern that GEF had not implemented the decision made at its second Assembly to create a financial mechanism for land degradation and desertification. H.E. Maged Ghatas stated that there was need for a concerted effort to ensure that GEF implemented the above-mentioned decision. He mentioned that the allocation of land degradation activities reached 1% from the total GEF allocations in the previous period. He said further that Egypt would support measures that would be taken to maintain contact with GEF on this important issue. H.E. Patricia Hajabakiga concurred with Egypt on the issue raised. She stated that some members of the Bureau or the Secretariat should follow up on the implementation of the above-mentioned decision as a matter of urgency. H.E. Maged Ghatas suggested that the issue should be further discussed at the forthcoming regular meeting of the Bureau scheduled to be held in November 2006 in Nairobi back-to-back with UNFCCC COP12 and COP/MOP2. This would enable AMCEN to present a paper on their position before the next GEF meeting.

22. The President stated that the Bureau should maintain contacts with the Chief Executive Officer of GEF to ensure that land degradation and desertification were included in the GEF funding portfolio. H.E. Jean Babatundé agreed with the President and suggested that a letter be written to the Chief Executive Officer of GEF to reiterate Africa's position.

23. On the question of replenishment of GEF funds, H.E. Patricia Hajabakiga said that there was the need to ascertain what the developed countries would contribute. She said further that African countries should be encouraged to canvass for increased support through ambassadors in their countries. She stated that African representatives in the GEF Council had not been reporting back. She stated further that there was a need to strengthen the capacity of the representatives and also develop a feedback mechanism that would facilitate consultations.

V. South Africa and Egypt's support to other African countries to develop their designated national authorities for CDM

24. Upon invitation by the President, the Secretariat informed the Bureau that African Ministerial Conference on Hydropower and Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg from March 6 – 9, 2006 reached a number of conclusions, recommendations and decisions contained in the Ministerial Declaration and an action plan for sustainable hydropower development in Africa. Paragraph 5 of this action plan called on South Africa and Egypt to support other African countries to develop their designated national authorities for Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and provide technical assistance in project development. In response to the introduction made by the Secretariat, H.E. Maged Ghatas said that Egypt and South Africa had conferred on the matter. He said further that the two countries would be signing protocol to support African countries in CDM projects. He reaffirmed that Egypt had the requisite experience. He invited the members to view the Egyptian publications distributed on the DNA and the CDM process.

VI. Sustainable hydropower development in Africa

25. A representative of Congo informed the Bureau that the African Ministerial Conference on Hydropower and Sustainable development held in Johannesburg in March 2006 highlighted the urgent need to develop water and energy infrastructure in Africa to reduce poverty, promote growth and sustainable development to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They also recognised the need to incorporate environmental and social issues in the planning and management of the infrastructure.

26. The Secretariat also informed the Bureau that in accordance with paragraph 19 (b) of the Ministerial Declaration made at the above-mentioned Conference, a planning meeting was held by

representatives of African Ministerial Council on Water (AMCOW), the Forum of Energy Ministers of Africa (FEMA), AMCEN and UNEP in Nairobi, Kenya. The aim of the meeting was to review the Declaration of the Conference and ‘unpack’ the Plan of Action into a detailed draft roadmap with specific concrete actions implementable with the coordinating support of UNEP. This was achieved after two days of deliberations. The Bureau was further informed that in order to implement the roadmap when finalized, the meeting recommended that an *Implementation Committee* be established to oversee the implementation of the roadmap when finalized. The secretariat sought the approval of the Bureau for AMCEN to become a member of the *Implementation Committee*.

27. After a brief discussion on the matter, the Bureau approved the request that AMCEN should become a member of the *Implementation Committee* comprising AMCOW, the African Energy Commission (AFREC), FEMA, AMCEN and UNEP.

VII. Twelfth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the second meeting of the Parties of the Kyoto Protocol

28. At the invitation of the President, the Secretariat introduced the agenda item and informed the Bureau that a preparatory meeting on the COP for climate change and the Meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol would be held for African Ministers in Nairobi in November 2006. The Bureau was further informed that South Africa was providing support to the Kenyan Government in organizing UNFCCC COP12 COP/MOP2. Furthermore, the South African Government had provided financial support for a consultative meeting of African negotiators scheduled to be held in Naivasha, Kenya in September 2006. H.E. Maged Ghatas also informed the meeting that Egypt was providing support to the idea that Kenya would host the UNFCCC COP12 and COP/MOP2.

VIII. Twenty first meeting of the Bureau of AMCEN

29. The Bureau agreed that the twenty first meeting of the Bureau should be held in November 2006 in Nairobi back-to-back with UNFCCC COP12 and COP/MOP2 of the Kyoto Protocol. The exact date for the meeting and the venue would be communicated to members of the Bureau as soon as possible.

IX. Other matters

30. No new matter was introduced under this agenda item.

X. Closure of the meeting

31. After the exchange of customary greetings the President brought the meeting to a close at 11.15p.m.

ANNEX

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