



*African Ministerial Conference on the Environment*

**African Ministerial Conference on the Environment**  
**Seventeenth session**  
Ministerial segment  
Durban, South Africa, 11–13 November 2019

**Draft Durban Declaration on taking action for environmental sustainability and prosperity in Africa**

*We, African ministers for the environment,*

*Having met* in Durban, South Africa, on 14 and 15 November 2019 at the seventeenth ordinary session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment,

*Committed* to continuing to take environment and climate actions to unlock inclusive wealth creation that safeguards the socioeconomic well-being of the African people,

*Guided* by the outcomes of previous sessions of the Conference in its 34 years of existence,

*Guided also* by the decisions of the Assembly of the African Union that have provided leadership to the Conference on Africa's positions on environment and development matters,

*Acknowledging* the global outcomes of the various sustainable development agendas in contributing to Africa's development,

*Noting with appreciation* the progress made in implementing the decisions of the Conference,

*Aware* that there are gaps in the uptake and limited implementation of the decisions of the Conference by member States and stakeholders,

*Determined* to strengthen our steps and actions to implement, monitor and deliver the results of our decisions to achieve the 2030 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 of the African Union,

*Hereby declare our resolve:*

1. To express our full commitment to making the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment the principal forum for establishing regional environmental policies with effective mechanisms for implementation;
2. To commit ourselves to continuing to address the environmental challenges of, and take advantage of the opportunities available in and for, the African region;
3. To reiterate our determination to take concrete actions to implement past and future decisions of the Conference, and, in this regard, agree to and affirm our commitment to the key policy messages that guide our resolve as set out in the annex to the present declaration;
4. To reiterate our commitment to integrating climate actions into our socioeconomic and environmental policies, plans and programmes to secure our development pathways.

*We also:*

5. Express our profound appreciation to the African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme and other development partners and institutions, among others, for their continued support to the work of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment;

6. Mandate the President of the Conference to convey the priorities and positions contained in the present declaration and in the decisions, key messages and report of the seventeenth session of the Conference to all parties, including partners and organizations, with a view to enlisting their support and collaboration, and to report thereon to the Conference at its eighteenth session;

7. Mandate the President of the Conference to submit the report of the seventeenth session of the Conference, including the present Durban Declaration on Taking Action for Environmental Sustainability and Prosperity in Africa and the annex thereto, to the African Union Commission for further action by the policy organs of the African Union;

8. Thank Gabon for its presidency of the Conference during the period 2017–2019 and welcome the presidency of South Africa for the period 2019–2021;

9. Pay tribute to the President of South Africa, Mr. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, and the Government and the people of South Africa for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to participants, for the excellent facilities made available, and for the generosity extended to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment at its seventeenth session.

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## Annex

### Key policy messages

#### On taking action for environmental sustainability

1. We commit ourselves to taking measures to evaluate our progress in the implementation of our decisions and address emerging issues.
2. We reaffirm our commitment to using all policy tools at the national and regional levels to achieve strong, harmonized, coherent delivery of environmental and natural-resources-related programmes to enable the achievement of a sustainable development path and eradicate poverty.
3. We welcome the establishment of the African Environmental Partnership Geospatial Portal as a mechanism to support decision-making on, monitor implementation of and track progress in Africa's sustainable use of its environmental resources.
4. We call upon the African Union, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and other partners to support the African Women Innovators for Sustainable Environment and the Network of African Women Environmentalists and similar women's and youth networks for sustainable environment management.

#### On the circular economy

5. We recognize the value of the circular economy and its potential to improve the way in which we produce and consume goods and services, reduce waste, create jobs and contribute to sustainable development.
6. We agree to raise the political visibility and awareness of the circular economy in Africa through the development of policies, regulatory frameworks and institutional arrangements.
7. We commit ourselves to replicating, scaling up and using circular economy approaches as part of our region's transformation efforts as contained in Agenda 2063 of the African Union.
8. We encourage the private sector and other non-state actors to promote and invest in the circular economy to create employment and sustainable trade in and markets for green products and services.
9. We commit ourselves to the implementation of a circular economy approach in Africa to assist with reducing the dependence on natural resources and reducing pollution in Africa.
10. We resolve to implement a circular economy in order to contribute to economic growth and job creation and divert waste away from landfills through capacity development programmes and initiatives.

#### On the blue economy

11. We commit ourselves to raising awareness of the blue economy.
12. We recognize that oceans and freshwater sources play a critical role in the economic development of the continent, and the need to promote a more sustainable balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability.
13. We stress the need to enhance the environmental contribution to the development of the blue economy of Africa as well as to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters such as floods and cyclones.
14. We commit ourselves to celebrating the African day of seas and oceans on 25 July of every year.

#### On biodiversity

15. We will raise the visibility and importance of the contribution of our biological resources and their services to sustainable development through promoting the opportunities offered by the biodiversity economy.
16. We commit ourselves to addressing the threats facing our biological resources in order to mitigate the impact of the challenges that the continent is facing.

17. We commit ourselves to providing political direction and momentum to highlight the urgency of action at the highest levels in support of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
18. We reaffirm our pledge to swiftly implement the Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience as part of Africa's commitment to implementing the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030).
19. We are committed to continuing to cooperate with each other and speak with one voice on regional and global agendas with regard to matters of biological resources.
20. We will recognize and mainstream the importance of biodiversity resources in Africa's agricultural productivity and ensure that agricultural practices do not negatively impact ecosystem health and biodiversity.

### **On land degradation, desertification and drought**

21. We reaffirm our commitment to providing adequate resources to address the drivers of migration related to desertification, land degradation and drought.
22. We reaffirm our commitment to the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and recognize the value of land degradation neutrality and its potential to improve development and prosperity and to create decent jobs, including green jobs and other employment-generating opportunities, for vulnerable communities in degraded areas.

### **On the United Nations Environment Assembly**

23. We commit ourselves to taking action for environmental sustainability and prosperity for the continent in order to find common solutions to environmental challenges, recognizing the link between the themes of the previous sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly, including the theme for the fourth session of the Assembly, and nature-based solutions.
24. We express our appreciation to the Africa Group in Nairobi for its work in all negotiations during the intersessional period and during the sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly, work that is based on the political guidance provided by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, and acknowledge the centrality of the Conference in formulating African positions in all matters related to the environment.

### **On climate change**

25. We emphasize the recent findings of the international scientific community regarding – change, including the three recent special reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – on global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius, on climate change and land, and on the oceans and cryosphere in a changing climate –, which reflect the specific circumstances of Africa and the linkage between Africa's vulnerability to climate change and urgent development challenges.
26. We reaffirm the commitment of the African countries to the full implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement in line with the principles and provisions of the Convention, ensuring balance between adaptation and mitigation, and ensuring the availability of adequate support for African countries to enhance their efforts to combat climate change.
27. We emphasize the intrinsic relationship that climate-change-related actions, responses and impacts have with equitable access to sustainable development and eradication of poverty, stressing the importance of enhanced, predictable, sustainable and facilitated access by African countries to support, in particular climate financing and technology transfer on concessional and preferential terms, especially for adaptation and loss and damage, to allow for the implementation of the full scope of nationally determined contributions.
28. We highlight the importance of the forthcoming twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, under Chile's presidency, and appreciate the offer of the Government of Spain to host the sessions, confirming Africa's commitment to securing successful outcomes.

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**On plastic pollution**

29. We commit ourselves to supporting global action to address plastic pollution, which will require further work in order to engage more effectively on global governance issues relating to plastic pollution, including reinforcing existing agreements or the option of a new global agreement on plastic pollution that takes a comprehensive approach to addressing the full life cycle of plastics, from production and design to waste prevention and management, while ensuring coherence among and coordination of activities undertaken by existing regional and international instruments while highlighting the importance of technology transfer, research on alternatives to plastic, and adequate financing to enable African countries to deal with plastic pollution.

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