



AMCEN



AU



UNEP

Distr.: General
19 August 2021

Original: English
English and French only

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

Eighteenth session

Ministerial meeting

Online, 16 September 2021

Report on progress in the development and implementation of the Africa green stimulus programme

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The Africa green stimulus programme was developed and adopted by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) as an innovative, African-led initiative to support the continent's recovery from the devastating socioeconomic and environmental impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in a sustainable manner.

2. The programme will provide an overarching framework that will support the implementation of environmental and sustainable development initiatives in Africa, while identifying new areas requiring strategic intervention. It is intended to bring about a common and unifying continental response by forging and enhancing cooperation and partnerships between African governments, non-State actors, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector in support of a comprehensive green recovery for Africa.

3. The programme is intended to be dynamic and responsive in order to support the attainment by African countries of the aspirations of Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the Sustainable Development Goals and to deliver and scale up impactful interventions as the continent recovers from the pandemic. The programme seeks to contribute to the goal of enhancing action for environmental sustainability and prosperity in Africa, as called for in the Durban declaration of the seventeenth session of the Conference, held in South Africa in 2019.

4. The programme was presented to the special session on environment and natural resources of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment on 13 November 2020. Subsequently, the programme was presented to African ministers for the environment at the eighth special session of the Conference held online on 4 December 2020, at which ministers welcomed its development, provided input and expressed their support for the programme. A document incorporating the amendments proposed by member States during the special session of the Conference was finalized and adopted with effect from 31 December 2020.

II. Key elements of the Africa green stimulus programme

5. The Africa green stimulus programme has been organized to include immediate and urgent interventions, short- to medium-term interventions and long-term transformative interventions to support sustainable growth in key sectors while building resilience to future shocks in Africa. The programme provides an overarching framework that consolidates and coordinates environmental, green economy and climate change initiatives in Africa, which have been grouped into 12 key areas as follows:

(a) Improving air quality, enhancing chemicals and waste management and promoting the circular economy;

- (b) Enhancing the conservation of biodiversity and combating the illegal wildlife trade;
- (c) Revitalizing ecotourism and the biodiversity economy;
- (d) Combating land degradation, desertification and drought;
- (e) Enhancing climate action;
- (f) Investing in the blue economy;
- (g) Scaling up climate-smart agriculture and food security systems;
- (h) Supporting the sustainable management of forests;
- (i) Improving water conservation and use;
- (j) Investing in renewable energy;
- (k) Developing smart cities and promoting green urbanization;
- (l) Enhancing information, communication and technology.

III. Progress achieved

6. Since the eighth special session of the Conference, the programme document highlighting the objectives of the Africa green stimulus programme has been finalized, including the 12 key elements, institutional arrangements, governance and coordination, assumptions, risks and enabling conditions. The document has been translated into French with the support of the African Development Bank and shared with all member States.

7. A working group has been established and has been meeting regularly to provide coordination and oversight for the development and implementation of the programme. The members of the working group include representatives from the African Union Commission, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank, the African Union Development Agency, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Nationally Determined Contributions Partnership, the AMCEN secretariat and the AMCEN presidency.

A. Financing and resource mobilization

8. A financing and resource mobilization working group has been established to assist in developing a resource mobilization strategy, mapping the initiatives in the region, identifying new areas that require strategic intervention, costing programme activities and promoting North-South and South-South cooperation. The working group is co-chaired by ECA and the African Development Bank.

9. A draft financing and resource mobilization strategy has been prepared, is being refined and will be finalized after the completion of studies being undertaken to understand the nature and level of resources required for the key priority areas proposed under the programme.

10. Terms of reference have been prepared by ECA for a consultancy to develop cost estimates for the key priority areas of the stimulus programme and to deliver a prioritized resource mobilization strategy. The purpose of the consultancy is to strengthen the capacity of the working group for the stimulus programme to mobilize appropriate resources to support the implementation of green stimulus projects and activities by member States.

11. A report entitled “Building Forward for an African Green Recovery”, which examines policies and strategic directions that have the greatest impact in the context of a green recovery and is aligned with the principles of the Africa green stimulus programme, was prepared by ECA. The report aims to provide further motivation for African countries to include a green recovery in their national COVID-19 response programmes.

12. ECA has partnered with the University of Oxford and Vivid Economics to conduct case studies in South Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to model the impacts and returns of green investments in comparison with investments in traditional sectors of the economy.

13. The studies conducted in South Africa have shown that green investments in renewable energy, sustainable transport solutions and nature-based rehabilitation deliver 250 per cent more jobs and add 420 per cent more value to the economy than traditional investments. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, renewable investments focused on connecting the population to the electricity grid, nature-based solutions in the form of agroforestry, and indicated that improved urban transport

solutions provide 130 per cent more jobs and add 280 per cent more value to the economy than traditional fossil fuel investments.

14. The case studies provide evidence that achieving the objectives of the stimulus programme could yield substantial returns by ensuring that investments by African countries prioritize a green recovery from COVID-19, which will stimulate economic activity that aligns with the principles and goals of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations of Agenda 2063.

15. Funding for the consultancy will come from the internal resources of ECA and from the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The financing will also support communications in the context of the Africa green stimulus programme.

16. Seed financing of \$50,000 was mobilized from the African Development Bank to fund the development of the first phase of the online platform of the programme, which includes a website, an administration portal and a data management system. UNEP, whose secretariat serves as the secretariat for AMCEN, has committed to providing \$25,000 for the development of the first part of the second phase of the online platform, which will focus on the content management system.

17. Seed financing has also been secured from the funding provided for the African Nature-Based Tourism Collaborative Platform, which is funded by the Global Environment Facility. With assistance from the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment of South Africa, a graphic designer will develop the programme's visual identity and brand manual, and the manager for the online platform will be hired for an initial period of three months.

18. To ensure the successful mobilization of resources and the implementation of the stimulus programme, a mechanism will be established for close collaboration between AMCEN and African ministers for finance, planning and economic development.

B. Communications and advocacy

19. A communications and advocacy working group has been established, whose members are communications officials from intergovernmental agencies and regional organizations that are part of the working group for the stimulus programme. The working group is co-chaired by UNEP and the African Union Development Agency.

20. The main aim of the working group is to review the draft communication and advocacy strategy that has been prepared for the stimulus programme and develop a plan for its implementation; develop common key messages to promote the programme; review the online platform and provide guidance for its further development; lead the development of outreach and branding materials; lead initiatives to advocate for and create awareness of the programme; and mobilize media to publicize and promote the programme.

21. A well-crafted communication and advocacy strategy is essential to the successful implementation of the stimulus programme and will facilitate information-sharing and marketing, enhance collaboration, attract support and allow for feedback on the effectiveness of the programme.

22. The objectives of the strategy include informing communities, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders in member States about the stimulus programme; cultivating interest in the programme and its objectives; galvanizing participation for actions to achieve the objectives of the programme; raising awareness of environmental and sustainable development initiatives intended to contribute to Africa's green recovery; sensitizing and engaging potential partners for environmental and sustainable development initiatives that can contribute to the recovery of African economies; and encouraging partnerships among African member States, organizations and other stakeholders to contribute to a green recovery on the continent.

23. A branding concept and elements have been developed, including a visual identity, a flyer and a logo for the stimulus programme.

C. Development of the online platform for the stimulus programme

24. The first phase of the development of the online platform for the programme has been completed. The platform includes a user interface, an administrative portal and comprehensive information on the portfolio of projects within each priority area of the stimulus programme.

25. The prototype of the website has been populated with the documents that are currently available, and useful tabs have been created. The key priority areas of the programme have been hyperlinked, which will provide access to the portfolio of projects corresponding to each key priority area. The website is available in English and French.
26. A proposal for phase 2 (A) of the development of the platform has been prepared by the service provider and submitted to UNEP for funding. The phase involves the development of the database system, but does not include the data analytics component, as additional resources will need to be mobilized for that and it will therefore be done at a later stage.
27. The African Union Development Agency has offered to host the online platform. The service provider will provide support for three months after the launch and will provide training for the online platform programme manager. The online platform will be launched on 16 September 2021 during the ministerial segment of the first part of the eighteenth session of the Conference.

D. Political commitment and partnerships

28. The Africa green stimulus programme was acknowledged at the seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, which was convened online from 1 to 4 March 2021 under the theme “Building forward better: towards a resilient and green Africa to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063”.
29. A technical meeting was held online between representatives of UNEP and the European Union on 29 April 2021 to discuss synergies and complementarities between the Africa green stimulus programme and the European Union’s NextGenerationEU Recovery Plan. Engagement with the European Union will continue with a view to agreeing on concrete areas of collaboration.
30. The Bureau of the Conference, at its meeting held on 26 and 27 May 2021, welcomed the progress made towards the implementation of the Africa green stimulus programme and reiterated the importance of the programme in supporting a sustainable recovery from the socioeconomic and environmental impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
31. A presentation on the Africa green stimulus programme was delivered at the meeting of the Committee of African Heads of State on Climate Change held online on 8 June 2021. Committee members expressed support for the programme and for the proposal for the programme to be adopted by the Assembly of the African Union in due course.

IV. Next steps and way forward

32. It is envisaged that the Africa green stimulus programme will be fully operational following the launch of the programme’s online platform.
33. A coordinating committee will be established to oversee the operational aspects of the programme. It is proposed that the coordinating committee be comprised of representatives from the African Union Commission, relevant United Nations entities, the African Development Bank, the African Union Development Agency, the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Nationally Determined Contribution Partnership, the World Resources Institute Africa, regional economic communities, the AMCEN secretariat and the AMCEN presidency.
34. The draft terms of reference have been developed for the programme’s coordinating committee, setting out the technical modalities for the functioning of the committee, including its purpose, chair and membership, roles and responsibilities, meetings, administrative support and decision-making processes. The terms of reference will be finalized and adopted at the committee’s inaugural meeting.
35. In addition, draft technical guidelines and criteria documents for the programme will be finalized. Those include eligibility and criteria for partners and organizations wishing to join the programme; the application for initiatives to participate in the programme; the application for funders and investors to support programmes and initiatives that have joined the programme; and information on reporting on the activities and initiatives of the programme.
36. In conjunction with the African Union Development Agency, additional resources will be mobilized to secure long-term funding for the management of the Africa green stimulus programme.