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African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

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Tenth special session

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 3–6 September 2024

Abidjan Declaration on raising Africa's ambition to reduce desertification, land degradation and drought

We, African ministers for the environment,

Having met in Abidjan on 5 and 6 September 2024 at the tenth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment,

Welcoming and appreciating the participation of ministers responsible for agriculture and their representatives in the tenth special session,

Recalling the outcomes of the nineteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, held in Addis Ababa on 17 and 18 August 2023,

Concerned about the alarming rate of land degradation and drought which affect an estimated 65 per cent of Africa's land, with resulting impacts on more than 400 million people,¹ including millions being displaced and many lives lost, and economic losses of more than 70 billion United States dollars,² and noting the severe consequences for livelihoods, biodiversity, water resources and economic stability,

Acknowledging that drought is a global challenge necessitating global solutions and concerted attention, and emphasizing the urgent need to build drought-resilient systems to safeguard our communities and economies,

Concerned that, around the world and especially in Africa, prolonged droughts are increasingly common and severe due to rising global temperatures and land degradation, resulting in adverse impacts, including loss of livelihoods, water and food scarcity, energy insecurity, conflicts and instability, and internal displacement and migration,

Acknowledging that drought, land degradation and desertification on the African continent have caused serious challenges, severely impacting economies, livelihoods, food security and ecosystems, reversing the gains made towards poverty eradication and undermining the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 of the Africa Union,

Alarmed by the high socioeconomic costs of inaction, which undermine the social and ecosystem resilience of African countries, while aggravating their economic and debt situations, as resources meant for development activities are diverted to address humanitarian emergencies,

Recognizing ongoing efforts at the national, regional and global levels to promote sustainable land management practices and also recognizing the urgent need for increased financial resources, strong partnerships and integrated policies to address the challenges of land degradation, desertification and drought,

¹ N. Berrahmouni and S. Mansourian, *Review of Forest and Landscape Restoration in Africa 2021* (Accra, FAO and AUDA-NEPAD, 2021).

² World Meteorological Organization, 2022.

Recalling decision 16/1 of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, on innovative financing to maximize Africa's catalytic sectors, which mentions Africa's need for up to 1.2 trillion United States dollars to implement the Sustainable Development Goals,³ and the consequent need to engage in innovative approaches that will unlock direct and indirect financing,

Also recalling the Windhoek Declaration for Enhancing Resilience to Drought in Africa, adopted at the high-level meeting of the first African Drought Conference, held in Windhoek from 15 to 19 August 2016, and decision 16/2 of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, both of which call for the establishment of a binding protocol on drought management and enhancing resilience in Africa within the framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,

Recognizing the Harare resolution on medium- and long-term solutions to address the increasing intensity and frequency of climate-induced disasters, including droughts, adopted by Southern African Development Community member States on 5 June 2024,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 70/206 of 22 December 2015 on implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification,

Also recalling the commitments made under the Convention to Combat Desertification and other relevant international frameworks, and stressing the urgent need for ambitious and collaborative actions to achieve land degradation neutrality targets,

Noting with deep concern the funding challenges affecting the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification and the urgency of scaling up efforts to address the challenges posed by drought, land degradation and desertification,

Recognizing decision 3/COP.15 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification on integration of Sustainable Development Goal 15 and related target 15.3 into the implementation of the Convention and land degradation neutrality, which invites developed-country parties, and others in a position to do so, to provide financial and technical support for the implementation of the Convention and the achievement of land degradation neutrality,

Welcoming the outcomes of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Conference on the Implementation of the Outcomes of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Nineteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, held in Addis Ababa from 30 May to 2 June 2023, and also welcoming the development of the African Union Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2030 to guide implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in Africa,

Reiterating the political commitment initiated at the Summit for Sustainability in Africa held on 24 and 25 May 2012 in Gaborone and reiterated in September 2023 through the African Leaders' Nairobi Declaration on Climate Change and Call to Action, which calls for revaluation of the gross domestic product of Africa through proper valuation of its abundant natural capital and ecosystem services, including but not limited to its vast carbon-sequestering forests, to unlock new sources of wealth for the continent, entailing the use of natural resource accounting and the development of national accounting standards,

Recognizing and appreciating the leadership and guidance provided by the committee of heads of state on valuing Africa's natural capital, co-chaired by the President of Kenya and the President of the Congo,

Also recognizing the innovative work of the African Development Bank on Measuring the Green Wealth of Africa to redefine economies in the continent,

Acknowledging the need for achieving a more comprehensive valuation of Africa's green wealth by including natural capital,

Welcoming the natural capital atlas produced by the United Nations Environment Programme and the African Development Bank as an important tool for accounting for the value of nature in Africa,

Noting that the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will take place in Cali, Colombia, from 21 October to 1 November 2024, and that

³ AMCEN/16/8.

the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will take place in Baku from 11 to 22 November 2024,

Welcoming the African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022–2032), which provides a comprehensive framework for coordinated climate action across the continent,

Also welcoming regional initiatives, including the Africa Adaptation Initiative, the Africa Adaptation Acceleration Programme, the Africa Climate Resilient Investment Facility, Climate Research for Development for Africa, the Climate Action Window of the African Development Fund and the Africa Carbon Markets Initiative, in addition to the initiative for a coherent approach for addressing biodiversity loss, climate change and land and ecosystems degradation launched at the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity,

Noting that the fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, will take place in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 25 November to 1 December 2024,

Also noting that the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification will take place in Riyadh from 2 to 13 December 2024,

Recognizing the continued support of the Global Environment Facility to eligible countries in Africa in the areas of land degradation, drought, desertification, biodiversity, climate change and pollution,

Also recognizing the collaborative efforts of the African groups of negotiators on climate change, combating desertification, biodiversity and plastic pollution and the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment in addressing the urgent need to combat desertification and land degradation, to mitigate drought and climate change, and to reduce biodiversity loss and plastic pollution for a resilient Africa,

Reiterating the call made by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment in decision 18/1, on a coherent approach for addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and land and ecosystem degradation, regarding the need to enhance synergies at the international level and between the three Rio conventions, on climate change, biodiversity and combating desertification, and the need to support and promote that initiative, as appropriate, and to take into account national and organizational circumstances,

Recalling the decisions adopted and the commitments made under the Convention to Combat Desertification, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, which recognize land as a common denominator that underpins the objectives of all three conventions,

Emphasizing that coordinated efforts among the secretariats of the Rio conventions can increase the cost-effectiveness of activities at national and regional levels, unlock potential for sectoral and interministerial coordination and catalyse resource mobilization,

Recognizing the African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022–2032), the Great Green Wall Initiative Strategy and Ten-Year Implementation Framework (2024–2034), the African Union Circular Economy Action Plan, the African Union Green Recovery Action Plan 2021–2027, the Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience and the Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 in Africa,

Determined to raise Africa's ambition on combating desertification, land degradation and drought, enhance the resilience of our people and ecosystems, and promote water, food and energy security, as well as other related issues, to advance socioeconomic development and poverty eradication through collaborative actions,

Hereby declare our resolve:

1. To reiterate our call for the establishment of a legally binding protocol on drought management and enhancing resilience within the framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa;
2. To call for the building or strengthening of global and regional partnerships, including governments, international organizations, civil society, academia, local communities and the private

sector, through financial and technical support to Africa, to tackle desertification, land degradation and drought;

3. To encourage member States to improve allocation of domestic resources to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, while enhancing the resilience of people and ecosystems through sustainable land management;

4. To urge member States to work towards achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030 and to encourage member States to integrate this objective into national development plans and policies;

5. To encourage member States, regional economic communities, the African Union and development partners to address the socioeconomic drivers of desertification, land degradation and drought, including poverty, gender, population pressure and inadequate land tenure systems, through integrated and inclusive development approaches;

6. To encourage regional cooperation and the sharing of information, knowledge, technologies, innovations and best practices among member States to improve the effectiveness of sustainable land management strategies and the achievement of land degradation neutrality;

7. To continue strengthening private and public partnerships and innovative financing mechanisms and to establish centres for the sustainable harnessing of natural capital, value addition and reversing environmental losses;

8. To encourage member States to actively engage and involve all relevant stakeholders, including women, young people, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, in decision-making, designing, planning, implementation and evaluation processes related to desertification, land degradation and drought and ecosystem restoration;

9. To request the secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification to mobilize new, additional and adequate financial resources to support member States;

10. To also request the secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification to strengthen the capacities of member States to access global financial mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund, the Climate Investment Funds, the Adaptation Fund and the Global Environment Facility, to address the adverse impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, desertification, land degradation and drought to achieve land degradation neutrality targets;

11. To request the Global Mechanism of the Convention to Combat Desertification and its financing partners, including the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund and others, to simplify the procedures and conditions under which parties may access quality funding for the implementation of the Convention;

12. To request financial institutions, including multilateral development banks, to provide new, additional and innovative financial resources to enable member States to meet their ecosystem restoration and drought resilience needs;

13. To request the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Development Programme, and other development partners, to support member States in strengthening advocacy on “Measuring the Green Wealth of Nations” as an African Agenda;

14. To call on the African Development Bank to establish a finance facility that provides technical assistance and project development funds to assist member States enhance their participation in the carbon market;

15. To request the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Development Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other development partners and private sector and other relevant organizations to provide technical, capacity-building and financial support to member States to combat drought and enhance the resilience of people and ecosystems and promote sustainable land management;

16. To request the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa’s Development, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, to support the work of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, especially in the areas of climate change, biodiversity, pollution, drought, land degradation, desertification and environmental governance;

17. To request member States to enhance support to ongoing African initiatives on carbon markets, such as the Africa Carbon Markets Initiative, launched at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in 2022, the African Union Strategy on Carbon Markets, the Africa Carbon Support Facility of the African Development Bank, and to request the United Nations Environment Programme and other relevant United Nations agencies to provide technical assistance and capacity-building support as a means of enhancing carbon reduction strategies, which play a critical role in advocating for Africa's position on and increased access to carbon markets;

18. To request the secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification and regional and global organizations to continue providing support to regional initiatives, such as the Great Green Wall Initiative Strategy, the Sub-Regional Action Programme to Combat Desertification in West Africa, the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative and the Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, and other such initiatives, which aim to restore degraded lands and enhance ecosystem resilience and carbon sequestration through afforestation, reforestation, soil conservation, and to contribute to combating climate change;

19. To reiterate the commitment made in the Durban Declaration on taking action for environmental sustainability and prosperity in Africa, adopted by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment at its seventeenth ordinary session, to raise awareness on the circular economy, and to encourage member States to join and support the African Circular Economy Alliance to harness the benefits of circular economy approaches to minimize resource extraction, generate green jobs and safeguard the planet, in line with Africa's ambition to reduce land degradation, desertification and drought;

20. To express appreciation for the work of the African group of negotiators on combating desertification to continue strengthening the common African position and voice in the negotiations under the Convention to Combat Desertification, in preparation for the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, including on the need to develop a protocol on enhancing drought resilience;

21. To also express appreciation for the work of the African group of negotiators on plastic pollution and to request the Group to continue strengthening the common African position, taking into consideration the interests of all African states, in preparation for the fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to negotiate an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment;

22. To further express appreciation for the work of the African group of negotiators on climate change and to request the group to continue strengthening the common African position in preparation for the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

23. To express appreciation for the work of the African group of negotiators on biodiversity and to request the group to continue strengthening the common African position in preparation for the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity;

24. To also express appreciation for the work of the African Group in Nairobi and to request the Group to continue strengthening common African positions within the framework of the Committee of Permanent Representative to the United Nations Environment Programme in liaison with all relevant bodies of the African Union;

25. To encourage all relevant ministers of African States to participate in the high-level ministerial segment at the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

26. To call on the African groups of negotiators on climate change, combating desertification, plastic pollution and biodiversity to work in synergy to develop strategies to address climate change, desertification, land degradation, drought, plastic pollution and biodiversity loss and to present a report on their progress to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment at its twentieth ordinary session;

27. To take note of the outcomes of the first International Conference on Afforestation and Reforestation, which was held successfully in Brazzaville from 2 to 5 July 2024;

28. To also take note of the outcomes of the twelfth Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 30 August to 2 September 2024 and to reaffirm our support for the Climate for Development in Africa Programme;

29. To recognize the active role and efforts of major groups and other stakeholders, civil society and the private sector in addressing land degradation, desertification and drought and protection of the environment on the continent and to request their continuing active participation;

30. To express profound appreciation to the African Union Commission, the United Nations Environment Programme, the African Development Bank, the African Union Development Agency and other development partners and institutions for their continued support for the African groups of negotiators on plastic pollution, climate change, biodiversity and combating desertification and request their continuing support by providing technical and financial resources;

31. To express appreciation for and commend the insightful deliberations of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment under the leadership and guidance of Ethiopia;

32. To thank the President and the people of Côte d'Ivoire for their warm welcome and hospitality in hosting this tenth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment;

33. To mandate the President of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment to submit the report of the tenth special session of the Conference, including the present Abidjan Declaration on raising Africa's ambition to reduce desertification, land degradation and drought, and the annexes thereto, to the African Union Commission for further action by the policy organs of the African Union, as well as to development partners and United Nations institutions.
