

Introduction:

This paper provides initial contributions from the African Group in Nairobi to the Zero Draft Ministerial Declaration of the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7). It reflects the priorities of the Group regarding different aspects that will constitute the components of the Ministerial Declaration.

The African Group Members States are looking forward to engaging in a very constructive manner in the consultations with the Presidency of UNEA7 who is the penholder of the Ministerial Declaration, as well as with other regional groups to narrow possible gaps and divergences on issues that might emerge in the course of the consultations.

The Ministerial Declaration should focus on advancing and scaling up transformative environmental solutions for economic and social resilience, and in this regard include relevant issues for the continent such as just transition, which is related to sustainability.

Preambular part:

The Group **reaffirms** the importance of maintaining all the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CNDR-RC), the three Rio Conventions principles, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and recalls the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development document "The future we want".

The Group emphasizes the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to sustainable development that takes into account the environmental, economic and social dimensions, as well as addressing the widened financial gap for the implementation of the sustainable development goals in the global South, hence striking up balance between the development and the rights-based approaches.

It welcomes the outcomes of the sixth session of the United Nations Assembly for Environment, as well as the outcomes of the sixteenth conference of the Parties to the UNCCD, including the commitment of \$70 million to advance the Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS), the twenty-ninth Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC mainly the decision on the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG) to triple finance to developing countries, from the previous goal of USD 100 billion annually to USD 300 billion annually by 2035, as well as the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity including the establishment of a Subsidiary Body on the role of indigenous peoples, local communities, and people of African descent in biodiversity conservation.

The Group welcomes also the outcomes of the global and regional summits and high-level environmental conferences, including the Pact for the Future adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 22, 2024, during the Summit of the Future, and the outcomes of the 10th special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN).

The Group notes with concern the findings of the Adaptation Gap Report, published by the UNEP, in November 2024, mainly those dealing with the enlargement of the adaptation finance gap that remains extremely wide with a timid reduction of the gap by 5% in 2022.

The Group recalls the findings of the 2024 Africa Sustainable Development Report, concerning SDG13, attesting that despite the continent's relatively low contribution to global cumulative greenhouse gas emissions, Africa is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. With the Continent accounting for 17% of the global population and less than 4% of global emissions, it is the most disproportionately impacted region by the adverse impacts of climate change, while having a very low adaptive capacity.

It is alarming that, by 2050, the Continent will experience a 30% revenue loss from the agricultural sector, resulting in a rise in poverty between 20 and 30%. Escalating climate threats are hindering Africa's agricultural productivity and food security. The exacerbation of extreme weather events in the Continent, including desertification, droughts, floods, and heatwaves, contribute to farming activities distribution, aggravate land degradation, and escalate food insecurity, particularly in vulnerable regions.

The Group recognizes the necessity to undergo efforts to achieve a treaty to ban plastic pollution, while respecting and accommodating different regional and national contexts. We stress the need for adopting a gradual, just, integrated and science-based transition approach to address plastic pollution, with the aim of attaining environmentally sustainable production and consumption, taking into account the related social and economic impacts. The Group also underscores the need to facilitate developing countries accessibility to plastic alternatives through low-cost and sustainable technology transfer that enables a just transition path, as well as to provide additional/stand-alone, adequate, predictable and sustainable finance.

The Africa Group recalls the urgency of tackling all acute environmental challenges that threaten disproportionately the different regions, including the pressing challenges of desertification, land degradation, and drought, that are impending African growth, hindering human development, and threatening peace and security, as well as livelihoods.

- The African Group calls for expanding the vision and the scope of UNEP work to include desertification, land degradation, droughts, water scarcity and food security, which

are matters of concern to African countries and should be reflected as priority areas in UNEP programmes.

The Group calls for the ministerial declaration of UNEA-7 to include the following messages, identified as critical, regarding the importance of the achievement of sustainable development in the African continent:

Cross-cutting issues:

- 1- Supporting developing countries, especially those in Africa, in achieving sustainable development, by tackling urgent and major environmental threats identified while taking into account their needs and priorities, with respect to their national and regional contexts and circumstances.
- 2- Reducing poverty, particularly in the African continent, by building institutional capacities, and providing financial and technical support to help the reduction of inequalities and induced peace and security risks.
- 3- Reduce food insecurity through enhanced land restoration actions to combat desertification, land degradation, and drought, restore and conserve biodiversity, and reverse climate change impact, which is crucial to support international efforts to reduce poverty and attain sustainable development.
- 4- Provide adequate means of implementation to enhance health services and reduce health risks, particularly in areas affected by conflicts and extreme poverty that lack basic health services and institutions.
- 5- Enhance gender equality and women empowerment, through access to land, basic services, and knowledge in the environmental field, especially in Africa, along with children and youth empowerment and indigenous people participation and implication, to improve adaptation and resilience to climate change and environmental challenges. Institutional and policy planning capacity building to achieve gender equality, youth and children empowerment, and Indigenous people participation is a major need for African countries in this regard.
- 6- Act urgently to reverse climate-induced migration and displacement that threatens peace and security, mainly in Africa, and exacerbates inequalities, women and girls' discrimination and oppression and food insecurity, hindering sustainable development and human rights.
- 7- Provide adequate means of implementation to developing countries, including access to technologies, best available science and reliable data sources and analysis for well informed and sound policies, respond to global, regional, and national needs in the context of environment protection.

Specific areas:

- 1- Undertake global climate action based on the principles set out by the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement, including by considering national contexts, needs, and circumstances, and providing adequate and predictable means of implementation to developing countries, to help them enhance resilience to climate change, and better adapt to its impacts. The operationalization of the new NCQG engagement to mobilize at least \$300 billion annually by 2035 to support developing nations in addressing climate change, and the Baku to Belém Roadmap to \$1.3 Trillion per year by 2035, are at the core of the SDG13 on climate change achievement.
- 2- Enhance global cooperation to help combat biodiversity loss through the improvement and the enhancement of financial commitments and the establishment of comprehensive monitoring frameworks. It is crucial to continue the work on the role of Indigenous peoples, local communities, and people of African descent in biodiversity conservation, and their involvement in reversing climate change impacts, restoring degraded lands, and preserving natural ecosystems.
- 3- Incorporate desertification, drought, and land degradation challenges in the set of the planetary crisis. These challenges are facing several regions, mainly the African continent, with over 45% of the world's degraded land located in it. The work of the UNCCD shall continue and be enhanced through international cooperation and multilateralism to achieve a legally binding agreement on drought and financial mechanisms for land restoration.
- 4- Develop a comprehensive framework dealing with plastic pollution, including in marine environments. This framework must take into account national and regional contexts and provide space for the identification of concrete solutions that address marine litter, land degradation, as well as human, animal, and vegetation health challenges. The framework has also to address socio-economic aspects in a manner to help developing countries, especially those in Africa, for transitioning equitably to less-plastic and sustainable production and consumption modes. The framework should also enable a just transition path for developing countries through facilitating their accessibility to plastic alternatives through low-cost and sustainable technology transfer as well as providing adequate and sustainable finance.
- 5- Promote the adoption of circular economy approaches as a contribution to sustainable consumption and production in national and regional strategies, considering national circumstances and capacities.

- 6- Help developing countries, especially those in Africa, to develop sustainable modes of exploitation and management of mines, in a manner to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, as well as poverty eradication. This includes such areas as reduction of environmental impact of mining activities, socio-economic challenges, as well as governance and legal frameworks.
- 7- Provide developing countries, especially those in Africa, with predictable, sufficient, and adequate means of implementation and support to address the environmental impact of chemicals, like Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), mercury use, and obsolete pesticides. There is a need of developing countries, especially the African ones, to develop adequate legal and institutional frameworks to address human health risks in relation to chemicals. This includes well-framed capacity-building programs and activities with the aim of enhancing chemical management capacity and waste reduction efforts.
- 8- Develop programs to help developing countries, especially those in the African continent, to comply with the Global Framework on ozone, especially the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, adopted in October 2016.
- 9- Create adequate policy space, at the regional and global levels, helping just and equitable transition of developing countries, especially those in the African continent, to sustainable modes of production and consumption. This must include securing adequate financial and technical support, access to technologies, including those that are AI-based, addressing the technological gap, policy and governance development, poverty and inequality eradication, and job creation.
- 10- Help developing countries, especially those in Africa, to address environmental challenges that exacerbate conflicts and threats to peace and security. Establishing cooperation frameworks and programs with regional organizations must be envisaged.
- 11- Assist developing countries, especially those in Africa, to address challenges linking all forms of environmental degradation and migration, people displacement, and modes of life threats.
- 12- Develop programs to enhance the scientific capacities of experts from developing countries, especially those from the African continent, to take an active part in processes and deliberation under scientific entities, panels, and bodies dealing with environmental issues, such as IPCC, GEO, IPBES, etc.
- 13- Highlighting the necessity of transitioning to sustainable agricultural practices that are resilient to climate change while ensuring food security. This includes

- promoting agroecological practices, access to markets, and support for smallholder farmers to enhance productivity and resilience.
- 14-Emphasizing the necessity of enhancing drought resilience and water security through an integrated drought and water management strategies, in affected countries especially in Africa, and the need to promoting sustainable land management to achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030.
 - 15-Strongly advocating for increased commitments to support climate adaptation measures tailored to Africa's specific vulnerabilities. This involves mobilizing significant financial resources to facilitate technology transfer, capacity building, and the establishment of climate-smart agricultural practices that enhance resilience against climate impacts, such as droughts and floods.
 - 16-Urging the integration of clean, renewable energy solutions for cooking into the broader energy transition agendas. Addressing the dire health consequences of traditional cooking fuels, this initiative would promote the use of biogas, solar cookers, electric and other sustainable technologies to improve public health, reduce reliance on firewood, and mitigate deforestation
 - 17-Emphasizing the potential of the blue economy as a pathway for sustainable development in Africa. This entails fostering responsible management of ocean resources to promote sustainable fisheries, marine conservation, and the economic empowerment of coastal communities, while also addressing issues of marine litter and pollution that threaten marine ecosystems.
 - 18-Calling for enhanced recognition and support for the critical role of ecosystems in providing essential services to communities across Africa. This includes supporting policies that facilitate the integration of ecosystem services into national development plans, as well as promoting public awareness and community involvement in conservation efforts.
 - 19-Emphasizing the need for gender-streaming environmental policies that recognize the contributions and needs of women and youth in sustainable development. Ensuring equitable access to national resources, decision-making processes, and opportunities for capacity building is vital for fostering inclusive growth and resilience.