PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Background

The ministerial segment of the sixth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was held in Cairo from 18 to 19 April 2016. The ministerial segment was preceded by an expert group meeting from 16-17 April 2016. The 6th special session was held under the theme "Agenda 2030 and Paris Agreement: From policy to implementation in Africa".

2. Objective of the 6th special session of AMCEN

The main objective of the special session was to provide an opportunity for ministers to deliberate on how Africa can position itself to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially the environmental dimension and in the context of Africa Union’s Agenda 2063. The AMCEN session also focused on assessing the implications for Africa of the Paris Agreement on climate change, and especially the way forward for the implementation of the two African initiatives, the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI) and the Africa Adaptation Initiative (AAI). The session further offered an opportunity for the Ministers to prepare with regard to Africa’s common approach for engagement in the 2nd United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) of UNEP from 23-27 May 2016 in Nairobi.

In addition, the Ministers deliberated on other priority issues related to the environment and sustainable development, in particular, on the implementation of the African common strategy on Illegal Wildlife Trade and its action plan; the implementation of the regional flagship programmes; as well as the relationship between AMCEN and the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, rural development, water and environment of the African Union Commission. Other issues were on the action for combating desertification, drought, floods and restoring degraded land to achieve a land-degradation-neutral world, and the 17th Conference of Parties of CITES that will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 24 September to 5 October 2016.

3. Participation

Representatives of African regional and sub-regional organizations, United Nations agencies, international organizations, secretariats of various environmental conventions, the African Development Bank (AfDB), research institutions, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and the youth also attended.

4. Opening ceremony

The ministerial segment of the meeting was officially opened by Mr. Sherif Ismail, Prime Minister of Egypt on Monday, 18 April 2016.

Other statements were made by H.E. Khaled Fahmy, Minister of Environment of Egypt and President of AMCEN; Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP; Ms. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture of the AUC; Mr. Anthony Nyong, AfDB; Mr. Roberto Ridolfi, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development of the EU; Mr. Stephane Gompertz, French Climate Ambassador for Africa and the Middle East, on behalf of Ms. Ségolène Royal, President of UNFCCC COP-21 and Minister of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy of France; and Dr. Naoko Ishii, CEO and Chairperson of GEF.

5. Organizational matters

The President of AMCEN presided over the ministerial segment.

PART II: DELIBERATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. The ministerial segment deliberated on the following issues:

   (a) Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa
   (b) Outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its implications for Africa
   (c) Latest developments and the way forward for the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative and the Africa Adaptation Initiative
   (d) Africa’s engagement in the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly
   (e) Other matters related to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment:
      • Implementation of the African common strategy on combating illegal trade in wild fauna and flora;
      • Implementation of the regional flagship programmes;

(a) Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa

The representatives said that there was a new imperative to shift focus towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the 2063 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Several representatives noted that the
Sustainable Development Goals had been integrated into the 2063 Agenda and said that they must be likewise integrated into national development plans and strategies, with one saying that care must be taken to avoid over-emphasis of certain goals at the expense of others, bearing in mind the overriding objective of poverty eradication. Another said that the key to achieving the objective lay in optimum management of the continent’s vast natural capital.

One representative said it was paradoxical that a continent so richly endowed with natural resources as Africa could be so poor; echoed by others, he said that training and capacity-building, including in the areas of access to funding, data generation and good governance, were vital tools for unlocking the continent’s human potential and mobilizing its natural capital and resources for the benefit of its populations.

Two representatives called attention to the implications of such problems as land degradation, desertification and drought for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, saying that community resilience-building and early-warning activities were vital to the protection of livelihoods in that context. Other issues identified during the discussion as vitally important included the use of natural capital accounting; access to the latest technologies; sharing of information and good practices; cooperation to combat illegal activities affecting natural capital; and investment in agriculture to enhance food security.

(b) Outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its implications for Africa

The representatives expressed general appreciation for the role of the African negotiators in achieving most of the priorities for Africa and for the leadership and continuing guidance of AMCEN, CAHOSCC, under Egypt’s presidency and coordination, and the African Union. A number of representatives praised the progress achieved in Paris in comparison with previous rounds of climate negotiations leading up to those in Copenhagen. There were calls for Africa to continue to be a driving force in the process.

Many representatives raised the issue of financing, both for implementation of the agreement and for adaptation, with a number saying that it was necessary to mobilize funding from both international and domestic sources. One representative cautioned that although the Paris Agreement was universal and binding, the provisions for increased climate financing were unclear, and it remained to be seen whether developed countries honoured their commitments. Several representatives drew attention to the importance of various aspects of capacity-building and the need to mobilize the human resources of African countries to achieve implementation of the Paris Agreement.

A number of representatives spoke of their countries’ efforts and steps already taken towards implementation of the Paris Agreement, including the fulfilment of obligations under the Convention such as the timely submission of intended nationally determined contributions and the finalization of national policies and measures. They urged rapid implementation, with one saying that countries should be proactive to benefit from mechanisms and processes established by the Paris Agreement and that AMCEN and other partners should facilitate collaboration and the sharing of lessons.
(c) Latest developments and the way forward for the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative and the Africa Adaptation Initiative

The Africa Renewable Energy Initiative was highlighted as African-owned and African-led, oriented towards sustainable development and concerned with adaptation and mitigation. The goal of the Initiative was enhanced access to energy, which would be conducive to human development, prosperous economic development and job creation. The Initiative was in the process of being fully established. The first part of the implementation phase would cover the period from 2016 to 2020, while the second part would run from 2020 to 2030. Representatives urged for the early finalization of the draft governance framework for the Initiative, thanking the African Development Bank for its financial support towards measures for fast-tracking operationalization of the initiative.

The Africa Adaptation Initiative was African-led and designed to scale up adaptation activities on the continent. The main pillars of the Initiative are based on four thematic areas aimed at enhancing climate information services; strengthening relevant institutional and policy frameworks; facilitating the implementation of concrete action on adaptation and approaches to addressing loss and damage on the ground; and increasing investment and financial flows to meet Africa’s needs for adaptation and for addressing loss and damage. Moving forward, the technical work will be finalized, a delivery model will be considered, the pillars of the Initiative will be translated into fundable projects and both a resource mobilization strategy and a communication outreach strategy will be developed.

(d) Africa’s engagement in the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

The second session of the Environment Assembly would be a platform for demonstrating commitment to the environmental agenda and was uniquely positioned to promote sustainable development, and AMCEN would help ensure that Africa played a coordinated, active role at the second session of the Environment Assembly.

Representatives recommended a concise, negotiated outcome for the session’s high-level segment that would provide clear political guidance on the implementation of the 2030 agenda that stressed the importance of integrated, balanced treatment of the three dimensions of sustainable development, the significance of the Rio principles, particularly the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and the need for adequate means of implementation.

(e) Other matters related to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment:

- **Implementation of the African common strategy on combating illegal trade in wild fauna and flora**

Several representatives stressed the importance of combating illegal trade in wildlife through international collaboration and cooperation involving national authorities, the African Union, United Nations organizations and other entities. They said that, given the international nature of illegal trade in wildlife, particular efforts should be made to involve neighbouring countries and demand countries in mitigation efforts.

The African common strategy on combating illegal trade in wild fauna and flora, which has already been adopted, is aimed to prevent, reduce and eventually eliminate illegal trade in wild flora and fauna through a coordinated response by all countries. In the next steps, member States would
identify focal points and submit their names to the experts group to be established under the mechanism; an implementation matrix and plan of action would be circulated to member States for their review; and regional workshops on the strategy would be convened.

- **Implementation of the regional flagship programmes**
  Representatives expressed concern at the slow rate of implementation of the regional flagship programmes. Representatives proposed reconsideration of the architecture for the implementation of the regional flagship programmes, both at the overall coordination level and at the national level, to assess whether the arrangements proposed at the Arusha meeting in 2012 were functioning as envisaged.

  Representatives stressed that in the current phase of implementation of the Paris Climate Change Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly its environmental dimension, and other important international commitments, AMCEN continues to have a critical role to play in promoting and protecting Africa’s interests and that the continued existence of AMCEN is at no additional cost to the African Union Commission.

2. **Declaration, decisions and key messages of the 6th special session of AMCEN**

The ministers adopted the 2016 AMCEN 6th special session Declaration, six decisions and key messages.

**The 2016 AMCEN 6th special session Cairo declaration**

The declaration called for the sustainable and optimal management of Africa’s natural capital as a gateway to contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the sustainable development goals and African Union’s Agenda 2063 and its first ten year implementation plan. It affirmed the centrality of AMCEN in Africa’s deliberations to address the environmental dimension of Agenda 2063, the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, UNEA, major groups and civil society as well as its effectiveness in providing guidance to African countries. It also stressed that conservation and protection of wild flora and fauna can lead to accelerated economic growth, enhance security and ensure sustainable development which will lead to attainment of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

**Decisions**

Six (6) decisions on key environmental issues were adopted at the meeting:

(a) **Implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals and African Union’s Agenda 2063: A Contribution of the Natural Capital**

The decision calls for strengthening of national capacities for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and the integration of natural capital in the natural capital accounting systems as a gateway for contributing to the implementation of the
2030 Agenda, the SDGs and Agenda 2063. It calls upon regional and international institutions to support sustainable harnessing of natural capital and reversing of environmental losses and the creation and strengthening of partnerships between governments, private sector, non-governmental organizations, international community and other relevant parties to promote and enhance investments in natural capital value addition. The decision includes key messages which highlights that Africa’s natural capital underpins the continent’s economy and represents a significant development opportunity.

(b) Africa’s engagement in the 2nd session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (UNEA-2)

The decision emphasized the importance of the timely and effective implementation of all previous UNEA decisions and resolutions as well as previous Governing Council decisions and especially the commitment to address the special needs of Africa, and the need for UNEA-2 to take this matter into account in its deliberations. It mandated the President of AMKEN and the Bureau and in collaboration with ADCs in Nairobi and the permanent representatives in Addis Ababa to coordinate the work of the African group so as to ensure an effective and coordinated front during UNEA-2 deliberations.

(c) Matters relating to biodiversity: Convention on Biological Diversity and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

The decision has four parts. Part 1 on Africa’s coordinated approach on the implementation of CBD, calls upon the popularization of AU’s strategic framework guidelines on access and benefit sharing of genetic resources. Part 2 supports Egypt’s request to host the COP14 of CBD. Part 3 calls on the need for Africa to support and collaborate with South Africa to ensure the successful hosting, and an African common position on key issues of COP17 of CITES in order to deliver outcomes favourable to Africa. Part 4 highlights the need for Africa to develop a common approach on the management and disposal of elephant ivory and rhino horn stockpiles in line with the provisions of CITES.

(d) Action for combating desertification, drought, floods and restoring degraded land to achieve a land-degradation-neutral world

The decision calls for support to the ongoing programme on land degradation neutrality target setting already initiated by the UNCCD Secretariat in the context of achieving land degradation neutrality. It calls for the integration of sustainable land management, desertification, land degradation and drought into national development policies, strategies and programmes and calls upon the international community and other stakeholders to support the implementation of regional initiatives towards combating desertification and land degradation, such as the Great Green Wall Initiative in Africa.

(e) Climate Change and Africa’s preparations for COP22 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

It recognizes the opportunities the Paris Agreement provides for a transition to low-emissions and climate-resilient development in Africa in line with the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals, and Africa’s Agenda 2063 and encourages African Member States to sign and ratify the Paris Agreement. It emphasizes Africa’s commitment to implement the Paris Agreement in line with the principles and provisions of UNFCCC of ensuring parity in the content and legal status of mitigation, adaptation, and the means
of implementation. It takes note of the further work required under UNFCCC to give effect to the Paris Agreement and to operationalize many of its provisions. This decision reaffirmed the African common position on climate change and defined key messages highlighting outstanding major areas of concern and priorities for the continent to be considered during the negotiations of COP 22.

The decision stresses the indispensable role played by AMacen in shaping and formulating African common positions on matters related to environment and sustainable development and requests the AU, at its next session, to review its decision to abolish ministerial conferences, especially AMacen. It mandates the President of AMacen to submit this decision to AUC for consideration by the next AU Summit, that given the increasing importance of the environmental dimension in sustainable development in Africa and the world, AMacen continues to operate as an independent body.

3. Closure of the session
Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the President of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment declared the ministerial segment and the sixth special session of the Conference closed at 6.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 19 April 2016.