



**REPORT OF THE SIXTEENTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE AFRICAN MINISTERIAL
CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT (AMCEN)
LIBREVILLE, GABON, 12 – 16 JUNE 2017**

1. Summary

The sixteenth regular session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) called for Africa countries to:

- a. Take measures to promote and invest in innovative interventions to sustainably improve the productivity of the natural capital of Africa, and
- b. Promote the allocation of an adequate percentage of national or sub-national revenues accruing from natural capital assets in re-investing in environmental innovative solutions.

2. Background

The ministerial segment of the sixteenth regular session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was held in Libreville from 15 to 16 June 2017. The ministerial segment was preceded by an expert group meeting from 12-14 June 2017. The session was held under the theme: *"Investing in innovative environmental solutions to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 in Africa"*.

3. Objective of the 16th regular session of AMCEN

The main objective of the sixteenth session was to provide an opportunity for ministers to deliberate on how the environment can, through practical strategies, plans and investments, contribute to the acceleration of the implementation of the sustainable development goals and Africa's Agenda 2063. In addition, the meeting considered key issues to be discussed at the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, to be held in December 2017 in Nairobi, whose theme is "Towards a Pollution Free Planet" and agreed on Africa's common approaches for engagement in the Assembly.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for ministers to prepare for the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to be held in September 2017 in China, as well as the twenty third session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in Bonn, Germany in November 2017.

The session offered an opportunity to discuss other pertinent issues and initiatives related to the environment and sustainable development in the continent including oceans governance, implementation of the action plan on illegal wildlife trade, energy, preparation for the fourteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, review of the outcomes of the meetings of the conferences of the parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, an update on the Kigali Amendment, as well as environment and youth engagement.

4. Participation

Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Representatives of UN Agencies, African Union Commission, NEPAD Agency, the African Development Bank (AfDB), Economic Commission for Africa, Ambassadors, lead African climate change negotiators, international organizations, secretariats of various environmental conventions, European Union, research institutions, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and the youth also attended.

5. Opening ceremony

The meeting was officially opened by Mr. Emmanuel Issoze-Ngondet, Prime Minister of Gabon. Other statements were made by H.E. Khaled Fahmy, Minister of Environment of Egypt and outgoing President of AMCEN; Mr. Erik Solheim, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme; Ms. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission; Ms. Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; Dr. Naoko Ishii, CEO and Chairperson of GEF; Ms. Cyriaque Sendashonga, Global Director, Programme and Policy Unit, International Union for Conservation of Nature; Mr. Anthony Nyong, Director for Climate Change and Green Growth, African Development Bank Group; Mr. Klaus Rudischhauser, Deputy Director-General for Development Cooperation, European Union; and Ms. Tracy Sonny, on behalf of civil society.

6. Organizational matters

The following countries were elected to serve on the new Bureau for the period 2017–2018:

<i>Sub-region</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Position</i>
Central Africa	Gabon	President
Eastern Africa	Ethiopia	Vice-President
North Africa	Morocco	Vice-President
Southern Africa	South Africa	Vice-President and Rapporteur
West Africa	Cote d'Ivoire	Vice-President

7. The ministerial segment deliberated on the following issues:

- Investing in innovative environmental solutions to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 in Africa;
- Towards a pollution-free planet: Africa's engagement in the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly;

- Africa's contribution to combating climate change.

The ministers also discussed the Trust Fund of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the issue of the specialized technical committees (STCs) of the African Union and status of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment.

8. Declaration, decisions and key messages of the 16th regular session of AMCEN

The ministers adopted the Libreville Declaration on Investing in Innovative Environmental Solutions, four decisions and key messages.

The Libreville Declaration on Investing in Innovative Environmental Solutions

The declaration called for the decisive commitment to take appropriate measures to promote and invest in innovative interventions to sustain and improve the productivity of the natural capital of African countries in order to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Africa's Agenda 2063; and to promote the allocation of an adequate percentage of national or sub-national revenues accruing from natural capital assets to re-invest in environmental innovative solutions.

It calls for the promotion and upscaling of circular economy, green economy, blue economy and industrial symbiosis strategies in their countries, and to upscale and replicate the circular economy and green business development policies and programmes to enable the growth of sustainable entrepreneurship as a key driver of Africa's economic transformation agenda.

The declaration mandated the President of AMCEN to implement decision SS.VI/6, on the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the African Union's Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment which requested the President of AMCEN to submit a decision to the Africa Union Commission that given the increasing importance of the environmental dimension in sustainable development in Africa and the world, AMCEN continues to operate as an independent body, and for the Assembly of the African Union, to review its decision to abolish AMCEN.

Decisions

Four (4) decisions on key environmental issues were adopted at the meeting:

(a) Decision 1: Investing in Innovative Environmental Solutions for Accelerating Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 in Africa

The decision calls for appropriate measures to promote and invest in innovative policy interventions, including replication, to sustain and improve the productivity of our natural capital to accelerate implementation of the sustainable development goals as well as Agenda 2030 and Africa's Agenda 2063. It highlights the need to promote development and strengthening partnerships between governments, private sector, non-governmental organisations, international community and other relevant parties to promote and enhance investments in innovative environmental solutions.

It calls upon all member states of the United Nations Environment Assembly to adopt, during its third session, a universally applicable resolution on environmental innovative solutions to galvanise international attention on strengthening sustainable management of natural capital.

(b) Decision 2: Omnibus Decision on Environment in Africa

The decision has six sections on (i) Governance Mechanisms for Ocean Ecosystem-based Management in Africa; (ii) Managing Pollution in Africa; (iii) Desertification, Land, Degradation and Drought; (iv) Wildlife: management and illegal trade; (v) Hosting of the 14th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Egypt; and (vi) Sustainable Renewable Energy.

Governance Mechanisms for Ocean Ecosystem-based Management in Africa

The decision agreed to strengthen national and regional institutions to enhance governance and management approaches and to put in place appropriate ocean policies and legislation to guide the use of area based planning tools. These include marine spatial planning and marine protected areas in the management of marine and coastal resources within their economic exclusive zones and adjacent waters. It agrees to continue fostering regional cooperation for the management of common, or shared marine resources including through information sharing, communication, collaboration, cooperation, capacity-building and coordination. It encourages African member states to implement the ocean call for action adopted at the ocean conference in New York in June 2017.

Managing Pollution in Africa

The decision commits African countries to improve the management of chemicals, wastes, and the control of land, air (outdoor and indoor), freshwater, marine and other forms of pollution through strengthening of knowledge management, policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks. It commits to integrate and strengthen pollution management aspects into national development agendas, internalize pollution costs and create awareness at sub-national and local levels, the business and local communities on the environmental, health and socio-economic negative impacts of pollution. It calls upon civil society, business, industry, and the private sector in Africa to commit, individually and collectively, to making Africa a pollution-free continent.

Desertification, Land, Degradation and Drought

The decision endorses the Windhoek declaration for enhancing resilience to drought in Africa, in particular the call for the establishment of a binding protocol on drought management and enhancing resilience in Africa under the framework of UNCCD. It recommends that a decision on the endorsement of the binding protocol on drought management and enhancing resilience in Africa under the framework of UNCCD be submitted by the AMCEN President for consideration and endorsement by the African Union summit in July 2017.

It agrees to develop a common understanding and speak with one voice during the 13th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification especially on regional issues including the need to develop a protocol on enhancing drought resilience, the proposed land degradation neutrality fund, among others. It recommends that the Regional Coordination Unit for UNCCD in Africa be located at the Africa Union Commission.

Wildlife: management and illegal trade

The decision recommends the implementation of the African strategy on combatting illegal exploitation and illegal trade of wild fauna and flora in Africa at national, sub-regional and regional levels and endorses the creation of an expert group to facilitate the implementation of the strategy as recommended by the Technical Advisory Committee. It agrees to continue, with the support of partners, with the African Elephant range states engagements so as to strengthen common understanding on conservation, management, trade and other issues of interest to Africa states.

Hosting of the 14th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Egypt

The decision endorses and supports the proposal of Egypt to host an African Biodiversity high level event in association with the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity to provide policy and strategic guidance on Africa biodiversity priorities. It urges African member States to actively participate in the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and its protocols that will be held in Egypt in November 2018.

Sustainable Renewable Energy

The decision agrees to upscale development and use of clean renewable energy that will drive sustainable harnessing and value addition of Africa's natural capital. It recommends holding of joint meetings of African ministers of environment and energy to provide policy and strategic guidance on innovative environment and investment solutions to accelerate development of clean energies.

(c) Decision 3: Africa's engagement in the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

The decision underlines the importance of developing solutions to pollution in Africa that are development-oriented and that contribute to poverty eradication and the creation of jobs and wealth on the continent. It stresses that the outcomes of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly should be geared towards providing technological and financial support and capacity-building in order to enhance the efforts of Africa to formulate and implement policies, legislation and programmes with a view to ensuring sound environmental management, including through preventing, reversing and overcoming the effects of pollution.

The decision urges member States to commence, at the earliest possible time, discussions and deliberations on environmental issues of priority to Africa with a view to formulating them into draft resolutions for presentation during the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. It reaffirms the importance of concluding the work of the high-level segment of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly with an outcome document in the form of a political declaration negotiated by member States and adopted by consensus.

The decision agrees that the President of AMCEN and its Bureau, in collaboration with the permanent representatives based in Addis Ababa, Geneva, Nairobi and New York, shall continue to coordinate the work of the African Group so as to ensure an effective and coordinated front during the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

(d) Decision 4: Climate Change

The decision reaffirmed the commitment of African countries to the historic Paris Agreement and to support its implementation, ensuring parity between mitigation and adaptation. It urges the Parties to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change to recognize the special circumstances and needs of African countries, in line with the relevant and previous decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

African governments found it regrettable that the United States of America, the largest emitter of greenhouse gases has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement and urged the US to reconsider its decision.

It urges the African Group of Negotiators to enhance its efforts in updating the African Common Position on Climate Change as a platform to articulate the interests of African countries at the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in Bonn in November 2017.

9. 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 sixteenth regular session of the Conference closed at 9.15 p.m. on Friday, 16 June 2017.