

**PRESS RELEASE N°084 / 2012****AMCEN experts' session opens in Arusha with a focus on Rio +20 outcomes**

Arusha, Tanzania, September 10, 2012- The fourteenth session of African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) experts' session, opened with a focus on, **"Africa's post Rio+20 Strategy for Sustainable Development."**

The meeting is expected to provide guidance to Africa on the implementation of key outcomes of Rio+20, which was held in June 2012, as well as to tackle other emerging issues and initiatives related to the environment and sustainable development in Africa.

The September 10-11 meeting is being held ahead of the Ministers session from September 13-14, 2012.

Officially opening the meeting, Deputy Minister in the Vice-President's office, Hon. Charles Kitwanga, said Africa was faced with a number of environmental challenges which were worsened by the impact of climate change.

He encouraged the experts to provide proficient advice to the ministers so they could make guided decisions.

“The focus of your deliberations at the expert level on the implications of the outcomes of Rio+20 on Africa and as agreed, should cover analysis of Rio+20 outcomes; implications for Africa and follow- up, including the operationalization of the green economy at the regional and national levels; and the action framework and preparations for the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly,” Hon. Kitwanga said.

During the opening session, African Union Commission, Head of Environment Division, Dr.Khalil Timamy, representing AUC Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, Dr. Haile Gabriel Abebe, said the AMCEN meeting was timely as it followed the decision by the AU African Heads of State at their July 2012 Summit, to call on the AUC and other partners to intensify efforts to facilitate and coordinate effectively the implementation of the Rio +20 outcomes to support Africa's sustainable development agenda.

He said the AUC noted the importance of the draft decisions before the AMCEN 14 Conference, which would ensure Africa presented its position as one, at the forthcoming UNFCCC COP 18 in order to advance a common position in the global climate change negotiations.

Dr. Abebe informed the meeting that as part of its AMCEN activities, the AU/NEPAD Environment Action Plan was reviewed and the report would be presented to the session for deliberations.

He further informed the meeting that a regional implementation strategy for the Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative had been developed and validated in April 2012, as part of the AU/NEPAD Action Plan.

“The AUC has with its partners, also prepared a comprehensive climate change strategy, which is being finalised in addition to working towards, integrating climate finance, disaster risk reduction and meteorological components into the strategy,” Dr. Abebe said.

He noted that the AUC took issues of climate change seriously and as a result, created, the Climate Change and Desertification Unit, with some staff already recruited.

The AMCEN meetings provide guidance with respect to key regional policies and initiatives related to the environment.

The Africa Consensus Statement to Rio+20 was approved by African Heads of State and Government at the 18th Summit of the African Union in January 2012, in Addis Ababa. The Assembly's decision on the African Consensus Statement to Rio+20 further urged African Negotiators and Ministers to continue to speak with one voice in the negotiations leading up to Rio+20.

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