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Cairo Declaration

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Cairo Declaration on Managing Africa's Natural Capital for Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication

We, African ministers of the environment,

Having met in Cairo from 4 to 6 March 2015 at the fifteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment,

Recognizing the commendable role that the Conference has played in the 30 years since its establishment in Cairo in 1985, especially in facilitating consensus-building and enhancing Africa's effective participation in global and regional dialogue and action for the achievement of the continent's environmental and sustainable development interests,

Recalling the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), entitled "The future we want",

Recognizing that the Rio+20 Conference reaffirmed the Rio principles on sustainable development as contained in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992,

Welcoming the special declaration of the Assembly¹ of the African Union at its twenty-fourth ordinary session, held in Addis Ababa on 30 and 31 January 2015, on illicit financial flows,

Welcoming also the decision of the Assembly² at its twenty-third ordinary session, held in Malabo on 26 and 27 June 2013, on the post-2015 development agenda,

Welcoming further the decision of the Assembly³ at its twenty-fourth ordinary session on the report of the High-level Committee on the Post-2015 Development Agenda,

Welcoming the decision of the Assembly⁴ at its twenty-third ordinary session in which it decided that the African Peer Review Mechanism should be an autonomous entity within the African Union system,

Recalling the decision of the Assembly⁵ at its twenty-second ordinary session, held in Addis Ababa on 30 and 31 January 2014, approving the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy ,

Recognizing that disaster risk reduction is a pillar for the integration of ecosystems and climate change requiring a multisectoral approach in order to be effective and that disasters are increasingly causing ecosystem degradation leading to loss of lives and investment,

Recalling the establishment in Johannesburg, South Africa, in June 2008 of the African chapter of the African Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment to promote gender responsive sustainable environmental management within Africa and enhance representation and involvement of women in decision-making in the areas of environment and sustainable development at all levels,

Recognizing that hydrofluorocarbons are not ozone-depleting substances and that the implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer is leading to an increase in the production and consumption of these substances and that the phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons has environmental benefits,

Noting, however, that for Africa, the limited availability of alternatives to hydrofluorocarbons and the need for effective mechanisms for technology transfer and adequate funding from the Multilateral Fund for the implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer require in-depth consideration,

Recalling resolution 1/5, on chemicals and waste, of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme,

Noting the outcomes of the African Sustainable Transport Forum Action Framework, adopted by ministers of the environment and transport at the first ministerial meeting of the Framework, held in Nairobi from 28 to 30 October 2014,

¹ Assembly/AU/Decl.5.(XXIV).

² Assembly/AU/Dec.518(XXIII).

³ Assembly/AU/Dec.560(XXIV).

⁴ Assembly/AU/Dec.527(XXIII).

⁵ Assembly/AU/Dec.496(XXII).

Welcoming the Arusha Outcomes, the main findings and recommendations of the First African Regional Mountains Forum, organized by the Albertine Rift Conservation Society, the Africa Mountain Partnership Champions Committee, the East African Community, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Austrian Development Cooperation and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Arusha from 22 to 24 October 2014,

Recognizing that air pollution contributes to more than 7 million premature deaths worldwide every year, with an estimated 776,000 deaths occurring in Africa from both indoor and outdoor air pollution, and that poor air quality is a cross-cutting issue and negatively impedes sustainable development in all economic sectors, people's productivity and health,

Acknowledging that green economy can be a vehicle to achieve all 17 draft sustainable development goals and that increasing investments will help in achieving the economic, social and environmental goals outlined by the global community,

Recognizing the nexus between land productivity, food security and poverty eradication in Africa,

Recalling the Rio+20 outcomes to monitor land degradation and restore degraded lands in accordance with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification,

Welcoming the decision⁶ of the Assembly of the African Union at its twenty-third ordinary session, by which it adopted the Protocol on Amendments to the Protocol on the Statute of the African Court of Justice and Human Rights,

Welcoming also the decision⁷ of the Assembly at its twenty-fourth ordinary session on Africa's engagement at the United Nations Climate Summit, held in New York in September 2014, and at the twentieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Lima in December 2014,

Recognizing that Africa's natural capital is crucial to supporting human, animal and plant life, in addition to its considerable capacity for wealth creation,

Hereby declare our resolve:

1. Natural capital of Africa

1. To acknowledge the important contribution of the Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa in pursuing sustainable development and implementing the African Green Economy Partnership Regional Flagship Programme of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment;

2. To request the African Union Assembly to mandate the High-level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa to make recommendations on how to (a) reverse the illicit flow of financial resources arising from natural resources and (b) industrialize and add value in harnessing natural capital and to propose actions and measures to member States and regional institutions in that regard;

3. To agree to increase productivity in the use of natural resources in enhancing economic and social benefits for poverty reduction, job creation and sustainable development;

4. To recommend that the status of natural capital in national planning and financing be elevated to that of strategic national resources and be managed and used in that context in order to secure its sustainability and contribution to economic development and environmental stability;

5. To agree to support activities on marine ecosystems, the development of marine spatial planning and area-based planning, marine protected areas and valuation and natural capital accounting tools in collaboration with regional seas programmes, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and regional fisheries management organizations;

6. To agree to support the preparation of periodic reports by regional seas programmes on the status of the oceans, including land-based sources and activities and governance, biennially for the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment;

⁶ Assembly/AU/Dec.529(XXIII).

⁷ Assembly/AU/Dec.556(XXIV).

7. To call on United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, development partners, regional organizations, stakeholders and civil society to promote social and environmental entrepreneurship and to provide financial and technical support by fostering cooperation, knowledge-sharing and technology development on good practices in building inclusive green economies, aligning such efforts under the Africa Green Economy Programme and associated delivery platforms, such as the Partnership for Action on Green Economy, Africa Mining Vision and the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable production and consumption patterns;

8. To reiterate our support for the regional seas programmes in Africa as regional platforms for the implementation of the Africa Integrated Marine Strategy 2050 and Agenda 2063 on Ecosystem-Based Management Approaches for marine resources in the exclusive economic zones and adjacent waters;

9. To urge member States to integrate green economy into development planning, use green economy to mobilize additional resources, create jobs, targeting in particular small and medium-sized enterprises and the informal sector, promote entrepreneurship and skills development and to call upon United Nations agencies, international financial institutions and development partners, regional organizations, stakeholders and civil society to promote social and environmental entrepreneurship and to provide financial and technical support by fostering cooperation and knowledge-sharing on good practices;

10. To note progress made in the preparation of the draft African Common Strategy on Combating Illegal Trade in Wild Flora and Fauna, and to call upon member States to attend the International Conference on Illegal Trade and Exploitation of Wild Flora and Fauna in Africa, to be held in Brazzaville in April 2015;

11. To call upon member States to develop and implement a shared mountain agenda and strategy for Africa involving all relevant stakeholders;

12. To agree to use the African Mountain Atlas to take national and regional action to strengthen sustainable mountain development, including the development of appropriate institutions, policies, laws and programmes, as well as strengthen existing transboundary and regional frameworks on sustainable management of African mountain ecosystems;

13. To agree to establish and strengthen institutional arrangements for sustainable mountain development, including centres of excellence, and to strengthen the Africa Regional Mountains Forum as a forum of knowledge, information exchange and policy dialogue;

14. To agree to develop a governance strategy, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and regional seas conventions, on oceans and seas in Africa for the effective management of the region's shared maritime resources and call for a regional conference to address the matter by 2016;

15. To agree to develop and implement a regional strategy and partnership programme on environmental law and institutions so as to strengthen their effectiveness in supporting the harnessing of the natural capital of Africa in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication;

16. To agree to strengthen the effectiveness of environmental law in Africa by:

(a) Developing and implementing a regional implementation strategy and partnership programme on environmental law and institutions;

(b) Harnessing the opportunities resulting from the post-2015 development agenda processes to promote the use of environmental law and institutions for sustainable development;

(c) Strengthening or creating partnerships between civil society, Governments and development partners to mobilize resources for the implementation of environmental law;

(d) Strengthening the role of existing regional and subregional integration institutions, including the African Union structures and regional economic communities;

(e) Fully implementing key multilateral environmental agreements, including the Rio Conventions, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants;

17. To welcome the expansion of the mandate of the African Court of Justice and Human and Rights to have jurisdiction over issues related to the illicit exploitation of natural resources ;⁸

18. To agree to support activities for the protection and restoration of wetlands in Africa;

2. Post -2015 development agenda

19. To reaffirm that poverty eradication is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development;

20. To stress that all countries should focus on the Rio Principles, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities;

21. To underscore that the emphasis on concessional development assistance, attributable to a donor-centric worldview, has dominated the development discourse so far, and that while the international community needs to do better at this unfinished business, far more needs to be done, as access to markets in trade and access to technology for development are also priorities for developing countries;

22. To stress that redressing the unfair rules of the contemporary world economy that encroach upon the limited policy space available for developing countries is a necessity in order to secure needed policy space for developing countries to ensure country ownership of national development pathways;

23. To also stress the need to set a framework that should alter the parameters of the international economic system in support of development by creating an enabling international environment to allow each and every country to pursue developmental objectives according to their own priorities with policies of their own choice, and to reaffirm that this should be the strategic objective of the post-2015 development agenda and that this should be the transformational change we are aiming at achieving: to create an international enabling environment for development, by addressing the questions of trade, reform of the international financial system, global governance, debt, repatriation of illicit funds and cooperation in the fields of finance and technology, in order to support the efforts of developing countries to achieve sustainable development;

24. To underscore that international action for systemic reforms should be formulated as explicit commitments with appropriate time frames, going well beyond the generalities of goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals;

25. To reiterate that the success of the post-2015 development agenda will largely hinge on the provision of adequate, predictable, sustainable, new and additional means of implementation and continued development assistance to the developing countries, and that delivery on the means of implementation will require broad and deep cooperation through the revitalization and strengthening of the global partnership for sustainable development to renew and scale up official development assistance commitments made by developed countries and examine best ways to augment previous commitments with clear time frames;

26. To stress the importance of additionality by way of increased and predictable financial resources, large-scale technology transfer on concessional and preferential terms and the provision of capacity-building support to developing countries;

27. To reaffirm that technology is a key means of implementation, that it is the single most important or even the only lever of change for achieving sustainable development, and that without a breakthrough in international cooperation in the field of technology, shifting to a more sustainable path will be very difficult and burdensome for developing countries;

28. To endorse the African Environmental Education and Training Action Plan 2015–2024, supported and funded as a living document, and to propose that the Action Plan prioritize youth participation in sustainable development learning and action, higher education, teacher education and technology-enhanced learning innovation in the context of the regional flagship programmes of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, the Action Plan of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development and the Africa Union Agenda 2063;

29. To call for the establishment of a global United Nations facilitation mechanism to promote the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies;

⁸ Article 28 L.

30. To reaffirm that the right to development is the overarching right and that, together with equity and common but differentiated responsibilities, provides the guiding principles as part of the Rio Principles that should govern the global approach to sustainable development;

31. To stress that all measures, even the unilateral measures, taken to address environmental challenges, including climate change, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or disguised restriction on international trade and should aim at enhancing the accessibility of developing countries exports and services to international markets and not negatively affect them;

32. To underline that the various actions taken with regard to formulating environment-related guidelines and specifications, including those related to carbon and water footprints, and the impact of such guidelines on developing countries, should be assessed through consultations with African countries, and that adequate support should be given to African countries before implementing those guidelines to avoid any negative impact on African countries;

33. To stress that the provision of means of implementation represents a cornerstone of all the development-related discussions on the global agenda in 2015, starting with the new global framework for disaster risk reduction up to the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals;

34. To also stress that ensuring the adequacy, predictability and sustainability of the means of implementation is as important as ensuring their continuity, and in this regard to highlight the importance of accurate and periodic assessments of the needs of African countries and to ensure the linkages between the provision of support and national and global needs assessments in a way to enhance national actions, policies and capacities to achieve the development goals, including those set forth in the various global agendas;

35. To underscore the importance of increasing voluntary commitments within official development assistance to reflect the commitment of development countries to support national efforts in the new ambitious development agendas, and to reiterate the importance of securing a fair and equitable share of the global means of implementation to Africa in line with the complexity of challenges that the continent faces, from poverty eradication and the diversification of economies to climate change and disaster risk reduction;

36. To mandate the secretariat of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, with the support of United Nation Convention to Combat Desertification and other agencies in close consultation with member States, to develop appropriate indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the sustainable development goals and targets on land degradation neutrality;

37. To call for the establishment of accelerated frameworks for the implementation of the regional flagship programmes through collective and coordinated resources mobilization efforts and foster strategic partnerships;

3. Disaster risk reduction

38. To call upon member States to support the common Africa position and attend, as well as effectively contribute to, the third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in Sendai, Japan, from 14 to 18 March 2015;

39. To agree to apply disaster risk reduction principles and measures in development to prevent future disasters and achieve the goals of sustainable development and resilience, including through ecosystem-based approaches and risk-sensitive environmental management;

40. To highlight the specific challenges faced by developing countries, in particular African countries, and the limited capacity to respond to disasters, developing resilience of infrastructure, health services, drought, desertification and livelihoods, and in this regard to stress the crucial role of enhanced international cooperation through the provision of adequate, additional, predictable and sustainable means of implementation that include finance, technology transfer and capacity-building, to enhance our national efforts in the implementation of the new framework of disaster risk reduction;

4. Combating desertification

41. To welcome the African drought conference being organized by Namibia and to be held in Namibia from 11 to 15 May 2015, and to commend Namibia for that initiative and urge member States to actively participate;

42. To express appreciation for the ongoing collaboration with development partners under the 10-year-old TerrAfrica partnership of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, created under the United Nations Conference to Combat Desertification process to further scale up investment, knowledge-sharing and coalition-building for sustainable land and water management;

43. To welcome the TerrAfrica business plan for 2015–2020, including the Africa landscapes action plan, which was developed in 2014 by TerrAfrica partners, including the New Partnership for Africa's Development, member States, eco-agriculture partners, the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme and others;

44. To welcome the possibility of building together a global alliance that would promote a shared vision of resilient landscapes for resilient people by leveraging existing initiatives;

45. To agree to strengthen existing institutional arrangements for the regional coordination of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and to enhance the effectiveness of the Convention work programme on the continent;

46. To call upon development partners and other stakeholders to support the implementation for the Great Green Wall initiative;

5. Air pollution and hazardous wastes

47. To urge member States to use the experience, expertise and institutions of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer to phase down the production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons while continuing to use other existing mechanisms for accounting and reporting of emissions of these substances;

48. To request the parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer to work towards establishing an open-ended contact group during its meetings in 2015 onwards to consider, among other things, financial and technological support to Africa to manage hydrofluorocarbons that might result in phasing down the production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons, taking into account the cost-effectiveness and safety of substitutes and environmental benefits;

49. To agree to implement the priority transport areas outlined in the Africa Sustainable Transport Forum Action Framework to address road safety, reduce vehicle emissions and improve energy efficiency and enhance sustainable urban transport as a means of effectively implementing the sustainable development agenda;

50. To agree to enhance data collection and monitoring in the areas of road accidents, health impacts and infrastructure development, adequate financing, capacity-building and advocacy for sustainable transport programmes to facilitate the achievement of the sustainable development goals;

51. To enhance air quality monitoring and modelling and to develop an Africa-wide air quality framework agreement on air quality management;

52. To agree to enhance air quality management in Africa in the areas of policies, legislation, institutional framework, management systems, public awareness, capacity-building and networking;

53. To request the Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme to accelerate resource mobilization for the implementation of the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa;

6. Africa's preparations for the agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

54. To welcome with appreciation the decision of the African Union Assembly⁹ on the high-level work programme on climate change action in Africa;

55. To note with appreciation the work of Committee of African Heads of State on Climate Change and the guidance that the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment receives from that body, and to affirm our commitment to implementing the directives given by the Committee to address climate change the continent, in particular the key political messages of the Committee as adopted in September 2014;

⁹ Assembly/AU/Dec.536(XXIII).

56. To welcome with appreciation the work of the African Group of Negotiators on the preparation of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to held in Paris from 30 November to 12 December 2015;

57. To request member States to implement the Committee of African Heads of State on Climate Change high-level work programme on climate change action in Africa at national level, and as appropriate, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders and partners;

58. To request the United Nations Environment Programme, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank to prepare a report on climate change and Africa's economic growth and submit the report and its findings to the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment at its sixteenth session ;

59. To encourage all member States to communicate their intended national determined contributions to the secretariat of the Convention;

60. To take note of the initiative of Egypt to hold a workshop and the offer of Morocco and Ghana to use their centres of excellence to deliver the level of support needed to help build the national capacities of member States in all relevant areas of climate change, and to encourage other member States to do the same;

We, African ministers of the environment, also declare our resolve:

61. To request member States to consider enhancing the role of the Africa Peer Review mechanism in addressing its accountability processes on sustainable development matters with the aim of achieving greater integration of its three dimensions;

62. To take note of the initiative by Ghana to convene a meeting of the chief executive officers of national environmental management authorities and agencies to discuss how to implement decisions of the Conference and flagship programmes at the country level and to call on member States to attend the meeting, to be held in August 2015;

63. To support the work of member State missions led by the African Diplomatic Corps in Nairobi, the Permanent Representative Committee in Addis Ababa and the Africa Group in New York in their efforts to develop and implement a coordination mechanism for collaboration among the missions aimed at strengthening the role and effective engagement of all African diplomatic mission in African Union and United Nations processes through effective interaction, collaboration and exchange of information;

64. To agree to continue supporting the work of member States' diplomatic missions in Addis Ababa, New York, Brussels, Nairobi, Geneva, Paris and Washington, D.C., and to request them to incorporate in their strategic diplomatic issues Africa's environment and climate change agenda so as to enhance the continent's transformation processes;

65. To urge member States, in collaboration with the African Diplomatic Corps in Nairobi, to identify Africa regional environmental priorities that require support by the United Nations Environment Programme for its medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and beyond, while taking into account the proposed sustainable development goals, existing regional frameworks and plans such as Vision 2063, programmes of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and regional flagship programmes, among others;

66. To launch African Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment, and to agree to develop and implement a policy and strategy for the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment aimed at mainstreaming gender in the environment in Africa for the effective participation of women in development policies, programmes and decision-making at all levels so as to unlock their full potential as drivers of sustainable development;

67. To urge member States to continue clearing their outstanding mandatory contributions to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment;

68. To express our appreciation to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and other organizations for their continued support to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment;

69. To mandate the President of the Conference to convey the priorities and position of Africa contained in the report of the fifteenth session to all parties, including external partners and organizations, with a view to enlisting their support, and to report to the Conference at its next session;

70. To mandate the President to represent Africa and to present this declaration, decisions, key messages and other matters relating to the environmental dimension of sustainable development in Africa of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment to:

- (a) The meeting of African Ministers of finance and planning, to be held in Addis Ababa from 26 to 31 March 2015, with the aim of increasing the political visibility of the importance of Africa's natural capital, and to examine the possibility of convening a joint meeting for African ministers of the environment, finance and industry for that purpose;
- (b) The High-level Committee on the Post-2015 Development Agenda;
- (c) The Africa Group Negotiators on the Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda;
- (d) The Africa Group in the third International Conference on Financing for Development;
- (e) The Committee of Heads of State on Climate Change;

and to report to the next session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment;

71. To mandate the President of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment to submit the report of the fifteenth session of the Conference, including the recommendations of the Cairo Declaration and the annexes thereto, to the Commission of the African Union for further action by the African Union policy organs;

72. To pay tribute to the President of Egypt, His Excellency Abdel Fatah El Sisi, and the Government and people of Egypt for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to participants and the excellent facilities made available to them and for their generous support to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment at its fifteenth session, which contributed greatly to its success.