

African Group Statement

Delivered by the Delegation of the Arab Republic of Egypt

**as President of the African Ministerial Conference on the
Environment (AMCEN)**

**at the Second Session of the United Nations Environment
Assembly (UNEA-2)**

Nairobi, 23rd May 2016

**Mr. President,
Executive Director,
Deputy Executive Director,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf the African Group.

First, allow me to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Edgar Gutierrez, Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica for your election as the President of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its Second Session (UNEA-2), as well as all the newly elected members of the Bureau. The African Group remains readily available to offer support to the new Bureau in performing its duties throughout the coming period.

Allow me also Mr. President, to pay tribute to Her Excellency Oyuun Sanjaasürengiin and to all the members of the outgoing Bureau for their outstanding work during the past two years.

Mr. President,

UNEA-2 convenes at a time of great relevance, especially in terms of the ongoing international efforts of achieving sustainable development. In this regard, Africa welcomes the overarching theme of UNEA-2, namely, “*Delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development*”. Last year, the international community adopted three important milestone agreements that will set the path for national and international efforts to attain sustainable development in the coming years.

The 2030 Agenda lays out an ambitious framework for achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions; economic, social and environmental. On the other hand, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda aims at addressing the challenges of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development, in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity; while the Paris agreement was adopted in recognition of the urgent and potentially irreversible threat that climate change presents to human societies and the planet. Finally yet importantly, The Third International Conference for Housing and Sustainable Development (HABITAT III) is set to convene later this year to adopt an equally important and complementing new human settlements agenda.

Mr. President,

The African continent was, and remains, an integral part of these international efforts since achieving sustainable development and alleviating poverty remains a top priority for Africa. In support of these efforts, the African Union, at its 24th Assembly in January 2015, adopted “Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want” and its first 10 year implementation plan, a shared strategic framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development for Africa.

In furtherance of this, Africa has agreed to take measures to invest in strengthening and developing institutional and governance mechanisms, processes and interventions of sustainable harnessing of its environmental assets and reversing natural capital losses, as part of the contribution to implement the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and Agenda 2063. To this end the 6th special session of AMCEN, observed with concern that Africa’s natural capital loss, estimated at approximately **\$195 billion** annually, continues to undermine Africa’s potential for achieving sustainable development and eradicating poverty.

For this reason, in decision 1 of the special session on *“Implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals and African Union’s Agenda 2063: A Contribution of Natural Capital”* African ministers of environment, agreed to, among others, create and strengthen partnerships in order to promote and inject investments that promote value addition to the continent’s natural capital.

Mr. President,

Africa welcomes the adoption of the Paris Agreement on climate change, as demonstrated by the number of African high-level officials attending the signing ceremony in New York last month. We reiterate our commitment to implement the Agreement, and call on the developed countries to provide timely, adequate, accessible, sustainable, and predictable means of implementation to developing countries.

Africa recognizes Ecosystem Based Adaptation (EBA) as an important approach to climate change adaptation and is critical for attaining the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. We thank UNEP and other partners for setting the stage in the establishment of the EBA for Food Security Assembly (EBAFOSA) in Africa and look forward to the forum contributing towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, Agenda 2063 and the Paris agreement"

We also reaffirm the support of African countries to the incoming COP-22 Presidency, Morocco, in their efforts to advance the implementation of the Paris outcome in a balanced, fair and rules-based manner.

Mr. President,

We are also concerned that some African countries continue to face challenges, including the everlasting armed conflicts and instability in many areas affected by illegal activities of criminal groups, that systematically exploit and trade in natural resources in areas affected by armed conflicts. The Africa Group requests UNEA's further commitment, within its mandate, to provide support to African states affected by the negative consequences of armed conflicts, environment loss, desertification and land degradation in order to achieve the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda.

We commend UNEP's role in the UN system wide response to illegal trade in wildlife and believe that this will help in raising awareness of the problems and risks associated with the supply of, transit in and demand for illegal trade in wildlife. It is worth noting that the 17th Conference of Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES COP17) will be held in Johannesburg, from 24 September to 5 October 2016 and we look forward to the full participation by Member States in this Conference.

Mr. President,

We are convinced that regional ministerial fora, such as AMCEN and others should have a clear mandate and role in the work of UNEA in view of the evolving and complex nature of environmental issues. We believe that the mandate of the strengthened regional environment ministerial fora should focus on, among others, promoting linkages between global environmental agenda with those at regional and national level, as well as enhancing inter-regional cooperation to address environmental challenges of the world.

We emphasize the need for strengthening UNEP's strategic regional presence in Africa to support member states and ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in an integrated manner. Furthermore, we call for the capacity of UNEP to be enhanced to support the implementation of programmes and projects at national and sub-regional level that address key environmental challenges.

Mr. President,

At its 6th special session in Cairo last month, AMCEN emphasized on the importance of the timely implementation of all previous UNEA and Governing Council decisions in an inclusive and comprehensive manner, and to enable the region to benefit from the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities of nations, a principle enshrined in a number of important international agreements, and which Africa deems of utmost importance.

To this effect, Mr. President, we have closely followed the reports presented by UNEP's Executive Director Mr. Achim Steiner, especially on the status of implementation of previous UNEA and Governing Council decisions. We will be making substantive inputs at the appropriate time during this session.

Mr. President,

Africa reaffirms the importance of concluding the work of UNEA-2 High Level Segment with an outcome document in the form of a negotiated political declaration based on consensus. This outcome document should be concise, based on principles of sustainable development, including the common but differentiated responsibilities, and acknowledging the importance of providing the means of implementation, capacity building, technology transfer and financial support to developing and least developed countries. Negotiations on this document should be transparent, inclusive and taking into consideration the priorities and varying degrees of development amongst Member States.

I thank you Mr. President.