



African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment**Sixteenth session**

Meeting of the expert group

Libreville, 12–14 June 2017

Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

Consideration of the report of the secretariat

Report of the secretariat for the period 15 March 2015 to 31 May 2017**

I. Introduction

1. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment was established in December 1985, with the aim of promoting regional cooperation in addressing environmental challenges facing the region. AMCEN has throughout its history, set the environmental agenda in Africa; played a strong advocacy role on environmental sustainability and matters related to environmental management; given guidance and support to key political events related to the environment, including multilateral agreements; catalysed and/or coordinated measures to enhance sustainable development in the region; among others

2. Through its strong convening power, it has brought together African Governments, institutions and their development partners to deliberate and craft common positions on important issues for regional, international and global consideration. AMCEN, through its varied initiatives and activities, continues to have a positive impact on efforts to strengthen environmental management in Africa and globally. The Conference holds its ordinary sessions once every two or three years and represents a platform for African Ministers to make a set of decisions and resolutions in order to move forward the environmental agenda in the region. The Regional Office for Africa of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) serves as the secretariat for the Conference.

3. The objective of the present report is to provide information to participants at the sixteenth session of the Conference on the status of implementation of decisions taken by the Conference at its fifteenth session and its sixth special session and of other activities during the reporting period. The report provides a summary of some key activities related to the Conference and the related outcomes and is in no way exhaustive in terms of the activities that may have been undertaken since the fifteenth session. The report also provides information on key documents produced by the secretariat during the inter-sessional period. Finally the report highlights some considerations for the Conference at its sixteenth session.

II. Status of implementation of the decisions adopted by the Conference at its fifteenth session

4. The following nine decisions were adopted by the Conference at its fifteenth session:

- (a) Decision 15/1: Sustainably harnessing Africa's natural capital in the context of Agenda 2063;
- (b) Decision 15/2: African Common Strategy on Combating Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora;

* AMCEN/16/EGM/1

** The present document is being issued without formal editing.

- (c) Decision 15/3: African Union Guidelines for the Coordinated Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing;
- (d) Decision 15/4: Strengthening African leadership in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification process;
- (e) Decision 15/5: African strategy on climate change;
- (f) Decision 15/6: Report on the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme and activities of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment;
- (g) Decision 15/7: Africa Environment Outlook and Africa Environmental Information Network;
- (h) Decision 15/8: Intended nationally determined contributions;
- (i) Decision 15/9: Climate change and Africa's preparations for the 2015 agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

A. Decision 15/1: Sustainably harnessing Africa's natural capital in the context of Agenda 2063

5. This decision highlighted the need to take measures at the national, regional and international levels to combat the illicit trade in Africa's natural resources and reverse illicit flows. It proposed to put in place appropriate policies and institutional measures in order to harness the full potential of Africa's rich natural resource endowments, ensure that the use of natural resources benefits the countries that possess them in an inclusive manner, and create value addition in sustainably managing natural resources.

6. Innovative financing strategies are being established through country-driven approaches under the Ecosystem based Adaptation for food security in Africa Assembly (EBAFOSA) to unlock direct and indirect finances to upscale Ecosystems Based Adaptation (EBA) and clean energy tagged to agro-value addition. Among these:

(a) Ecosystems Based Adaptation risk sharing facility to catalyse private sector lending to agricultural enterprises that integrate Ecosystems Based Adaptation, hence secure private financing to upscale Ecosystems Based Adaptation is being piloted in Kenya. For example, through EBAFOSA stakeholders in Kenya are working with the county government of Makueni (the first in Africa to legislate creation of a climate change fund to domestically finance resilience building efforts) to leverage the climate change fund for additional private sector resources. In this arrangement, 50% of the portfolio will be dedicated to securitize up to 10times this amount in private banks. These securitized monies will be loaned to entrepreneurs engaged in actions that optimize the agro-value chain using EBA and clean energy. Hence indirectly finance up scaling EBA-Driven Agriculture and clean energy powered agro-value addition. This is crucial to create multiple low carbon, higher order income & job opportunities. A similar collaboration is starting off in Nigeria where the Nigeria Incentive Based Risk Sharing Facility for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL) is set to use EBAFOSA as a platform to extend low risk financing of EBA-driven agriculture & clean energy for agro-value addition. Lessons will be shared continentally to catalyse establishment of these facilities across Africa;

(b) Complementary partnerships to finance profitable agro-enterprises based on Ecosystems Based Adaptation agriculture and clean energy powered agro-value addition are being fomented across Africa; For example, in Kenya, mutual partnerships between financiers, extension service providers, suppliers of clean energy interventions among other key interveners are leveraging ICT to enhance reach of financial instruments to finance enterprises based on EBA driven agriculture & clean energy value addition. Through EdenSys, an end-to-end agri-business management Enterprise Resource Planning System that has mapped all these intervening actors, entrepreneurs identify a given product or service needed to establish or enhance their agro-productivity using EBA and clean energy. They then identify a financial partner and post their financial records & based on their balance sheet, the financier offers financial intermediation towards acquisition of the given clean energy / EBA product or service. The EdenSys app was developed by a company that is among EBAFOSA Kenya stakeholders;

(c) Policy harmonization to ensure Ecosystems Based Adaptation is integrated into implementation actions in all sectors dependent on ecosystems ensuring Ecosystems Based Adaptation can leverage indirect resources for upscaling;

(d) Pooling or convergence of human capital from complementary sectors resulting in upscaling Ecosystems Based Adaptation and clean energy powered agro-value addition represents indirect financing for climate action. For example, the EdenSys mobile app developed through EBAFOSA is enhancing reach of financial instruments to upscale EBA & clean energy as expounded in point 7(2) earlier has convened experts in ICT, finance/loans underwriting, clean energy, EBA agriculture among key ones who are applying their respective expertise and in the process contributing to upscale of Ecosystems Based Adaptation and clean energy for agro-value addition.

7. ***Industrialize and add value by harnessing natural capital:*** Amalgamation of Ecosystems Based Adaptation-driven agriculture for on-farm production with clean energy for processing and agro-value addition, ICT for efficient and real time linkages to market and supply chain information and market standardization to enhance marketability of produce to establish clean energy powered agro-industrialization is ongoing across Africa. Among specific achievements:

(a) Solar powered micro-irrigation for on-farm value addition being catalysed in Kenya with continental wide lessons;

(b) Solar-powered drying and processing of cassava being catalysed in Cameroon with continental wide lessons;

(c) Establishment of policy task forces for policy harmonization to complement clean energy powered agro-industrialization. Through the Ecosystem based Adaptation for food security in Africa Assembly, policy-action framework, policy makers from Ministries of transport, agriculture, environment, lands, energy, industrialization among others are convening to bridge inter-ministerial silos and harmonize their respective policies to ensure they are complementary towards the establishment of agro-industrial zones powered by clean energy. Already this is ongoing in Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Tanzania, and Cameroon and will grow to cover at least 40 countries in Africa.

8. Through the Ecosystem based Adaptation for food security in Africa Assembly, Ecosystem based Adaptation based agriculture clean energy powered agro-industrial zones are to be established in 40 countries across Africa with a great potential to create millions of jobs along the entire agro-value chain and in complementing value chains especially clean energy and ICT which the Ecosystem based Adaptation for food security in Africa Assembly is using for efficient, real time linkage of producers to market and supply chain information.

B. Decision 15/2: African Common Strategy on Combating Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora

9. The Decision highlighted that the process of developing the draft African Common Strategy on Combating Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora was to continue at the International Conference on Illegal Trade and Exploitation of Wild Flora and Fauna in Africa, to be held in Brazzaville from 27 to 30 April 2015. It encouraged stakeholders, in particular from Africa, to contribute to the development of the strategy and countries to strengthen national legislation on illegal trade in wildlife. It further agreed to strengthen cooperation in legal and sustainable trade in African wildlife and urged member States to attend and actively participate in the Conference to be held in Brazzaville

10. In this regard, the International Conference on the Illegal Trade and Exploitation of Wild Fauna and Flora was held in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, from 27 to 30 April 2015. The conference concluded with the Brazzaville declaration in which the Governments adopted the draft "African Common Strategy on Combatting Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora". The strategy is to provide an improved understanding of the drivers of demand and supply and the development of the tools required to strengthen action to reduce demand and supply.

11. At its twenty-seventh ordinary session, in June 2015 in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Executive Council of the African Union, by decision EX.CL/Dec.879 (XXVII), endorsed the African common strategy and the Brazzaville Declaration and called on member States and African Union partners to support the common strategy and facilitate implementation of the action plan.

12. In addition, a consultative meeting convened by the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa on 22 and 23 March 2016 developed a coordination mechanism and plan for the implementation of the strategy during the period 2016–2017 through multilateral stakeholder engagement. In the next steps, member States were expected to 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.

13. It is to be noted that a global resolution sponsored by Kenya, Botswana and Zimbabwe on illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products was adopted at the second United Nations Environment Assembly in May 2016, recognizing the important role that the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife can play in the achievement of the 2030 agenda and in addressing illegal trade and trafficking in wildlife.

14. A technical advisory committee meeting held in April 2017 provided an opportunity to highlight key CoP17 CITES decisions and resolutions as well deliberations on how the strategy could further support existing mechanisms at country level as well as tools and services available through the International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) that could assist countries to implement their strategies. A representative of the African Union Commission will introduce this sub-item with a view to having discussions on how to move forward with the implementation of the strategy.

C. Decision 15/3: African Union Guidelines for the Coordinated Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing

15. UN Environment is executing a Regional project for the members of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) to support the ratification and implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The project, which is funded by the Global Environment Facility, has ten participating countries i.e. Burundi; Cameroon; Chad; Central African Republic; Democratic Republic of Congo; Equatorial Guinea; Gabon; Republic of Congo; Rwanda; and Sao Tome & Principe. Four countries (Burundi, DR Congo, Gabon, and Rwanda) have already ratified the Protocol and need support for its implementation.

16. The inception workshop for this project was organized in Kigali on 16-17 March 2015, in collaboration with the COMIFAC Secretariat, and Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) which hosted it. The objectives of the workshop were to: facilitate exchange of experiences and lessons learned from the ratification process; promote awareness and advocacy on the obligations of countries under the Nagoya Protocol; and develop national roadmaps towards ratification and implementation of the Nagoya Protocol

D. Decision 15/4: Strengthening African leadership in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification process

17. The decision supports the hosting of the UNCCD Regional Coordination Unit for Africa which was relocated to the secretariat of UNCCD in Bonn at an institution within the geographical boundaries of Africa. It also highlights the importance of outcomes and analysis of the sessions of UNCCD which should be considered as a stand-alone agenda item at future sessions of AMCEN. The decision finally supports, inter alia, the exchange of experiences in the implementation of sub-regional action programmes, and the strengthening of inter-institutional cooperation, with a view to achieving greater synergies in the implementation process of the three Rio conventions

E. Decision 15/5: African strategy on climate change

18. The decision took note of the draft comprehensive African strategy on climate change prepared by the African Union Commission which needed to be circulated to member States for comments and further input and mandated the Bureau to consider the draft strategy for approval and onward transmission to AMCEN at its next session for possible endorsement.

F. Decision 15/6: Report on the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme and activities of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

19. The decision highlighted the need for the African Diplomatic Corps, in the context of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP to undertake the necessary consultations on the calendar of UNEA and propose appropriate action at the second session of the Assembly. The decision also reaffirmed the need to develop a gender strategy and policy for AMCEN and the need to accelerate the implementation of the AMCEN flagship programmes.

20. With the support of the African Diplomatic Corps and other delegates from Africa, a resolution was adopted at the second United Nations Environment Assembly agreeing to review the cycle of the Assembly in which it was decided that the Assembly will hold its regular sessions in odd numbered years commencing with its third session in 2017; and that this cycle shall also apply to the Open Ended Committee of the Permanent Representatives.

21. A draft AMCEN policy and strategy for mainstreaming gender in the environment in Africa has been developed and is being finalized. The main purpose of the AMCEN gender and environment policy is, in the context of relevant international and regional commitments, to integrate gender and environment perspectives within AMCEN's structure, programmes and activities as well as in all Africa's development planning, sector programming and budgeting in order to achieve truly sustainable development.
22. The policy provides a framework for AMCEN, AU member states, sub-national agencies, local communities and other stakeholders to mainstream gender and environment considerations in sector policies, legislation, programmes, budgeting and activities. The policy commitments will guide methodologies and actions to incorporate the distinct needs, roles and interactions of men and women with the environment and natural resources in Africa. It is envisaged that this will incrementally balance the power relations between women and men and lead to more equitable use and management of environmental and natural resources as well as equitable sharing of accruing benefits with positive tangible outcomes for the region's environment. All these will set the region firmly on the path to sustainable development.
23. With regard to the flagship programmes, the steering committee met on 24 May 2015 and agreed that a detailed assessment of existing programmes should be undertaken at national and regional levels with a view to ensuring that the flagship programmes build upon existing programmes. The operationalization of working groups of flagship programmes was deemed a priority and the NEPAD agency was to engage with the facilitating institutions and take the necessary measures to operationalize the working groups. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) were to be included as observers to the Steering Committee of the flagship programmes.
24. During the 6th special session of the Conference, the NEPAD Agency reported that it had conducted an assessment of activities at the national level, working with ministries of the environment and AMCEN focal points. In addition, at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the NEPAD Agency and AMCEN had held a side event to raise awareness of the regional flagship programmes and possible linkages with other activities in the region, including the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative. The steering committee was also working on a resource mobilization strategy in order to identify appropriate financing mechanisms for the regional flagship programmes at the regional and national levels, and a consultant had been engaged to assist in its finalization.
25. A reconsideration of the architecture for the implementation of the regional flagship programmes was proposed, 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. The sixteenth session may wish to review the relevance of these flagship programmes in view of the recent landmark global frameworks such as the adoption of the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

G. Decision 15/7: Africa Environment Outlook and Africa Environmental Information Network

26. Funds mobilization is on-going in collaboration with the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) and the activity has been included in the UN Environment programme of work for the year 2017 -2018. Ten countries (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia) are being supported through the Shared Environment Information System (SEIS) project which is a key element of the Africa Environment Information Network. The support is helping countries to improve data flows within the national networks to support integrated environmental assessment processes at the country level.
27. Support has also been extended to the governments of Sudan and South Sudan to prepare their nation state of environment reports through training and capacity building for the national experts to undertake the exercise. Through the Global Environment Facility, support is being extended to Botswana to strengthen national capacity for environmental information and knowledge management for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements and relevant Sustainable Development Goals .
28. Support was extended to Uganda to prepare the National Wetland Atlas which has been instrumental in guiding the wetland restoration programme in the country.
29. The UN Environment in collaboration with the African Development Bank has published the Africa Energy Resources Atlas to guide investment strategies for the energy sector in Africa. The

Atlas was launched during the World Economic Forum for Africa in Durban, South Africa on 4 May 2017.

30. Joint proposals have been prepared with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Economic Community of West African States for the preparation of the Regional Environment Outlook reports for those two regions.

H. Decision 15/8: Intended nationally determined contributions

31. A workshop on intended nationally determined contributions for Africa as part of the implementation of AMCEN decision 15/8 was held from 17 to 19 May 2015 in Cairo aimed at building a common understanding among African countries on the various issues involved in the preparation and communication of the intended nationally determined contributions and to develop African capacities regarding intended nationally determined contributions. The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to discuss the technical and legal aspects relating to the scope, the information required and the communication of intended nationally determined contributions. It also helped to identify areas of support needed to assist African countries in their preparation of INDCs, including information and capacity needs, and means and ways to address the underlying technical issues required to prepare robust, realistic, and achievable contributions.

I. Decision 15/9: Climate change and Africa's preparations for the 2015 agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

32. A key aspect of AMCEN decision 15/9 was the call on the Green Climate Fund and all partners to support the full operationalization of African group's renewable energy initiative. In this regard, the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative was launched in Paris during COP21 as an effort to accelerate and scale up the harnessing of the continent's huge renewable energy potential. The initiative is an African-owned and African-led, oriented towards sustainable development and concerned with adaptation and mitigation. The goal of the Initiative is enhanced access to energy, which would be conducive to human development, prosperous economic development and job creation.

33. The Initiative could result in 10 gigawatts of new and additional renewable energy generation capacity by 2020 and mobilize the African potential to generate at least 300 gigawatts by 2030. The guiding principles include: to contribute to sustainable development in Africa; to benefit all African countries; to boost intra-regional and international cooperation; and to promote renewable energy technologies of all kinds, in addition to the full range of renewable electricity applications.

34. The activities to be conducted as part of the Initiative include stocktaking and coordinating; the strengthening of existing policies by means of a regulatory framework; capacity-building and mobilization; securing of investment, on the one hand, and funds to cover operational costs, on the other; and project development and support. The first part of the implementation phase covers the period from 2016 to 2020, while the second part would run from 2020 to 2030.

35. The report on climate change and Africa's economic growth to showcase the economic impacts and opportunities of climate change is under preparation in a joint collaboration of UN Environment, Economic Commission for Africa and Africa Development Bank for publication by end of 2017 or early 2018.

III. Implementation of Conference-related activities for the period from 15 March 2015 to 31 May 2017

36. A number of Conference-related activities were undertaken during the reporting period.

A. Health and environment

37. In 2008, at the first Inter-ministerial Conference on Health and Environment, held in Libreville, ministers of health and the environment adopted the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa. Since the adoption of the Libreville Declaration, countries have embarked on its implementation, which represents the umbrella framework upon which African countries and their development partners can address in a coherent manner the environmental determinants of human health and the integrity of ecosystems.

38. The United Nations Environment Programme and World Health Organization Joint Task Team on Health and Environment held a working session focusing on the scope and content, technical and logistical administrative arrangements for the organization of the third inter-ministerial conference on

health and environment in Africa. The task team took stock of past achievements and momentum generated and expectations raised by the Libreville Declaration process in view of the need to accelerate its implementation and align it with the recent global agreements.

39. Furthermore, the task team considered the new opportunities provided by the recent global outcomes such as the Rio+20 Outcome document, the 2030 agenda on sustainable development, the African Union Agenda 2063, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, to ensure that the event would fully integrate and contribute to these important and current global and regional policy and political frameworks, including on global security related issues. Within this context, the task team agreed that the Libreville Declaration could be a catalyst for the implementation of the sustainable development goals and therefore recognized that there is a need for a renewed commitment at the highest political level. The third inter-ministerial conference on health and environment in Africa was scheduled to be held from 19 to 22 June 2017 in Abidjan but had to be postponed to a later date that will be confirmed.

40. The United Nations Environment Programme, the World Health Organization and the Africa Development Bank organized a side event in the margins of the climate change meeting in Marrakech in November 2016 focusing on global health and environmental security: addressing emerging issues and threats in the context of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The aim of the event was to raise awareness about the link between health security, environmental security and emerging public issues and threats; and to catalyze action and stimulate policies and investments on the joint contribution of the health and environment sectors to sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Africa.

Integrated Health and Environment Observatories and Legal and Institutional Strengthening for the Sound Management of Chemicals in Africa

41. This project was initiated with the aim of improving health and environment through strengthening national and regional institutions, and implementing priority chemicals and waste related assessments and interventions. It contributes to the implementation of the 2008 Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa implementation process, and to the African programme to reduce chemicals risks on health and environment which was endorsed by AMCEN in 2012.

42. A workshop was jointly organized by United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization in Nairobi, Kenya, to come up with a detailed proposal which will contribute to improved health and environment through strengthening national and regional institutions, and implementing priority chemicals and waste related interventions. Participants were mainly representatives from the ministries of Health and Environment drawn from nine countries: Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Senegal, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The workshop was also attended by representatives from WHO Africa Regional Office, UNEP Global Environment Facility (GEF) as well as scientific and technical experts, NGOs and academics.

43. The project focuses on the collection of data on chemicals from all sectors of society including government departments, chemical producers, retailers and users exposed to the negative impacts of improper use of chemicals. It is likely to stimulate investment in prioritized areas for management and pollution remediation interventions by justifying the multiple benefits and advantages resulting from the joint coordinated health and environment interventions and their contribution to the broader economic development framework.

B. Conventions

1. Bamako convention

44. Representatives of Parties to the Bamako Convention held an informal consultative meeting on May 28, 2016 at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi at the conclusion of UNEA-2 to review the status of the implementation of the Bamako Convention. The meeting was chaired by the President of the Conference of Parties to the Bamako Convention, His Excellency Mr. Ousmane Kone, Minister of Environment and Sanitation of the Republic of Mali and was attended by Ministers and representatives from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Senegal, Uganda, Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Libya, Mozambique, Niger, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. Delegates reaffirmed their commitment to implement the Agenda of the Convention in their respective countries. The next meeting of the Conference of Parties is expected to be held in Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan in 2017

2. Kigali Amendment

45. National Ozone Officers from Africa gathered in Abidjan on 20-24 March 2017 to review and address challenges related to the phase-out of HCFCs and their national Montreal Protocol activities as

well as to discuss strategic frameworks and plans of action for HFC phase-down. The meeting was organized by UN Environment in collaboration with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire.

46. Under the Kigali Amendment, most developing countries, including Africa are expected to freeze HFCs consumption in 2024 based on 2020-22 levels and achieve a ten per cent reduction in 2029. The Kigali Amendment will enter into force on 1 January 2019, provided that it is ratified by at least 20 parties to the Montreal Protocol. The immediate obligation for African countries under the Kigali Amendment is to ratify the Agreement and establish HFC consumption baselines by 2024. The Republic of Mali has set the pace for other African countries by ratifying the amendment, five months after it was agreed upon in Kigali.

IV. Outcomes and outputs of Conference-related meetings

A. Africa Regional Joint Preparatory Meeting for seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES COP 17) and the thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 13)

47. The Africa regional joint preparatory meeting was held from 8 to 12 August 2016 in Addis Ababa. The meeting was convened to assist African Parties to prepare for meetings of the Conference of the Parties for the two conventions held in Johannesburg, 24 September to 5 October 2016 and in Cancun, Mexico, 4 - 17 December 2016 respectively. Among the key outcomes were a joint meeting report and a call for a stronger common Africa understanding and positions that will enhance the continent's voice in the global sustainable development agenda. The meeting also deliberated on Africa's common approaches for engagement to review and prepare the Africa region for the agenda items of the Conference of the Parties for the two conventions.

48. Regarding the Conference of the Parties for the Convention on Biological Diversity, there was general common understanding on most issues relevant to Africa, especially regarding resource mobilization and financial mechanisms as well as enhanced capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation. There was agreement on common areas of the two Conventions that were to be advanced during the two Conferences of the Parties focusing on capacity building; synergies to avoid duplication and ensure efficient use of limited resources; synthetic biology; sustainable use of biodiversity resources and use of existing financial mechanisms such as Global Environment Facility for both Conventions.

49. Regarding the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the joint meeting increased the level of preparedness of Africa with the understanding to continue to develop common positions during the Conference of the Parties meetings in Johannesburg. Divergent positions persisted on issues of the African elephants pitting the Africa Elephant Coalition group against the Southern African countries.

50. It was also agreed that a small technical working group be convened by the United Nations Environment Programme as the AMCEN Secretariat to consolidate consensus points and develop a process on addressing the divergent views to avoid undesirable outcomes at the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Johannesburg and post- Conference of the Parties engagement.

B. Informal Meeting on African Elephants

51. An informal meeting to further discuss Africa's preparation on key issues for the Seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora was held in Johannesburg on 20 and 21 September 2016 as a follow up to the Africa Regional Joint Preparatory Meeting that was held in Addis Ababa. The informal meeting, organized by UNEP serving in its capacity as the AMCEN Secretariat, was intended to continue discussing the outcomes of the Addis Ababa meeting focusing on African Elephants.

52. The substantive issues related to the African Elephants highlighted the need for further consultations with the view to consolidating areas of consensus and developing a process of addressing areas of divergent views. The meeting also contributed to the development of a framework for post- conference of the parties discussions on the implementation of the outcomes of the conference of the parties through the revival of the Africa Elephant range states dialogue with the support of UN Environment and AMCEN.

C. Plenary meeting of the Africa Group of Negotiators on climate change

53. In order to effectively prepare for the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP21), a plenary meeting of the Africa Group of Negotiators on climate change supported by UNEP as AMCEN Secretariat and the NEPAD Agency was held from 30 September to 2 October 2015 in Khartoum, Sudan. The objective of the meeting was to elaborate and strengthen the AGN internal coordination, positions and negotiating strategies and to prepare for COP21/CMP11 and the sessions of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP 2.11) taking place in Bonn from 19 to 23 October 2015.

54. The outcomes of the AGN meeting were used as a basis to brief both the AMCEN Ministers and Committee of African Heads of State on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) prior to COP 21 in Paris. A number of strategy meetings of the Africa Group of Negotiators were also organized during this reporting period.

D. Sixth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

55. The sixth special session of the Conference was held from 16 to 19 April 2016 in Cairo, Egypt. The meeting was held under the theme: "Agenda 2030 and Paris Agreement: From policy to implementation in Africa". 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 session adopted six decisions

1. Decision SS.VI/1: Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063: the contribution of natural capital;

56. This decision is linked to decision 15/1 on sustainably harnessing Africa's natural capital in the context of Agenda 2063. Discussions on the issue of Africa's natural capital continued at the second United Nations Environment Assembly and a resolution sponsored by Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Zimbabwe on sustainable management of natural capital for sustainable development and poverty eradication was adopted.

57. On innovative financing to unlock direct and indirect finances to upscale Ecosystems Based Adaptation (EBA) approaches that protect ecosystems and reverse degradation. On private and public partnerships to establish centres for sustainable harnessing of natural capital:

(a) Establishment of Policy task forces for policy harmonization to complement clean energy powered agro-industrialization. Through the EBAFOSA policy-action framework, policy makers from Ministries of transport, agriculture, environment, lands, energy, industrialization among others are convening to bridge inter-ministerial silos and harmonize their respective policies to ensure they are complementary towards the establishment of agro-industrial zones powered by clean energy. These actors are volunteering their professional knowledge, experience and skills. Volunteering government networks, influence, and time, to bridge silos and harmonize their respective policies so they align with actualizing this shared priority. Already this is ongoing in Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Tanzania, and Cameroon and growing to cover at least 40 countries in Africa.

(b) In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a group of graduate youthful "agripreneurs" who are EBAFOSA DRC members are using clean energy to process cassava, an indigenous, climate resilient crop, into flour, packaging and standardizing it for sell to higher value markets. The youth generate up to \$4,000 as weekly income, translating to \$16,000 monthly and \$196,000 annual income. And in turn incentivize production of climate resilient cassava (Article 7; SDG13), clean energy value addition (Article 4; SDG 13) while creating incomes and jobs and enhancing food security (SDGs 1, 2). Through EBAFOSA, these youth group which offers training services is set to train other youth groups across the continent on its successful business model. Hence build capacity of youth throughout Africa on SDGs and the Paris Agreement implementation.

2. Decision SS.VI/2: Africa's engagement in the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

58. Africa's effective participation in the Assembly was coordinated by Egypt as the AMCEN President represented at the technical level by Dr. Hussein Mohamed Abaza, the Advisor to the AMCEN President. At the Ministerial level, Africa's participation was led by H.E. Ephraim Kamuntu, Minister of Water and Environment of Uganda as AMCEN Vice-President in the absence of

H.E. Khaled Fahmy, President of AMCEN. Nigeria and Gabon was elected as a UNEA Bureau members representing Africa.

59. Africa sponsored a number of resolutions that were adopted by the Assembly including: Sustainable management of natural capital for sustainable development and poverty eradication; Illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products; Combating desertification, pastoralism, degradation and sustainable management of rangelands; and Chemicals and waste.

60. In addition, a number of round-tables and panel discussions also featured delegates from Africa who shared their views, experiences and expertise on topics under discussion within the agenda of the conference. The Regional Office for Africa facilitated a high level ministerial panel discussion on Illegal Trade in Wildlife, a media round table on Natural Capital and a luncheon on prioritizing gender into the sustainable development agenda.

3. Decision SS.VI/3: Matters relating to biodiversity: the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

61. The Africa regional joint preparatory meeting was held from 8 to 12 August 2016 in Addis Ababa. The meeting was convened to assist African Parties to prepare for meetings of the Conference of the Parties for the two conventions held in Johannesburg, 24 September to 5 October 2016 and in Cancun, Mexico, 4 - 17 December 2016 respectively.

62. The decision also requested for the strong support of Egypt's offer to host, in 2018, the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The offer of Egypt was accepted.

4. Decision SS.VI/4: Action to combat desertification, drought and floods and restore degraded land in order to achieve a land-degradation-neutral world

63. One aspect of this decision was a request that Namibia and Sudan submit the decision to the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. The resolution on combating desertification, land degradation and sustainable management of rangelands was adopted by the Assembly.

64. The Great Green Wall for the Sahel and Sahara Initiative (GGWI) is a pan-African programme launched in 2007 by the African Union. Its goal is to reverse land degradation and desertification in the Sahel and Sahara, boost food security and support local communities to adapt to climate change. The eleven member states governed by the GGWI Convention are: Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sudan. The member states commissioned a study on the establishment of a Carbon Bank as a financing mechanism for development activities to combat land degradation. An initial report of the study was received by the Extra Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers of the Great Green Wall Initiative in Khartoum on 7th February 2017.

5. Decision SS.VI/5: Climate change and Africa's preparations for the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

65. Through the great efforts of the African Group of Negotiators on climate change and AMCEN, Africa's commitment to implement the Paris Agreement on climate change was emphasized and the African common position on climate change reaffirmed. Key messages were defined highlighting outstanding major areas of concern and priorities for the continent which were used as a basis for the continent's negotiations at UNFCCC COP 22 in Marrakech, Morocco.

66. The opportunities the Paris Agreement provides for a transition to low-emissions and climate-resilient development in Africa were recognized and mechanisms for the operationalization and implementation of the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI), including the establishment of an Independent Delivery Unit (IDU) housed by African Development Bank, were put in place. AREI seeks to accelerate the uptake of the region's huge potential in renewable energy that will catalyse a major scaling up of renewable energy deployment on the African continent. The framework for the Africa Adaptation Initiative (AAI) which aims to deliver concrete, timely and coordinated adaptation action across the continent was also finalized.

67. UN Environment is implementing the Africa Low Emissions Development Strategies project (Africa LEDS) which is establishing in target countries, enabling analytical framework that combines relevant policies coupled with modelling technical, technological and tactical capacity to ensure country socio-economic development efforts simultaneously offset measurable carbon levels towards

meeting respective countries' climate objectives under the Paris Agreement (Nationally Determined Contributions - NDCs).

68. This will inform optimal investment pathways that maximize both carbon offsetting and socio-economic returns of NDC implementation actions to actualize multiple sustainable development goals. For example, in Cameroon, the project is delivering technical and policy capacities to develop green agro-value chains utilizing clean energy for processing and transportation.

69. At the strategic level, the project is establishing a policy structure that harmonizes all relevant policies needed to complement achievement of the above strategic thrust and implementing a ground pilot to validate effectiveness of this policy harmonization. This strategic framework is then complemented by an analytical framework comprising relevant modelling technologies that extrapolate over time and area, the jobs created and percentage of GDP contributed vis-à-vis carbon offset by various levels of investment in the above strategic paradigm.

70. This holistic paradigm of measurably balancing carbon offset and socio-economic opportunities created by NDCs implementation is followed in all 8 project countries- Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, DRC, Kenya, Ghana, Zambia, Mozambique, Morocco. This paradigm of balancing carbon offsetting & socio-economic priorities will then be catalysed across the continent by being integrated into academic curriculum & applied research developments in Africa through a regional peer learning and knowledge sharing forum. More on Africa LEDS project: <http://www.africaleads.org>

6. Decision SS.VI/6: The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the African Union's Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment.

71. The sixth special session of AMCEN adopted the above decision on the relationship between AMCEN and the African Union Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Agriculture, rural development, water and environment which requested the AU, at its next session, to review its decision to abolish ministerial conferences, especially AMCEN. It mandated the President of AMCEN 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 as well as negotiations of climate change, AMCEN continues to operate as an independent body

72. However, matters related to the Conference were not included on the agenda of the twenty seventh summit of the African Union that took place from 10 to 18 July 2016 in Kigali, Rwanda. This item will have to be re-visited at the sixteenth session of the Conference with the view to coming up with elements of the decision to be submitted to the Summit.

C. Consultative meetings of African ministers of the environment

73. Consultative meetings of African ministers of the environment were held at the African Pavilion in Paris on 6 December 2015 and at the African Pavilion in Marrakech on 13 November 2016, prior to the opening of the high-level segments of the twenty-first and twenty-second sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, respectively.

74. The main objective of these meetings, organized by the Conference and supported by the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission, the NEPAD planning and Coordinating Agency and other partners, was to brief ministers on the status of the climate negotiations, including issues at stake, in order to enable them to refine their strategies for negotiation and engagement with other important parties and groups. The meetings were facilitated by the Africa group of negotiators

D. Meetings of the Bureau of the Conference

75. Two formal meetings of the Bureau of the Conference were held during the reporting period. The twenty-seventh meeting of the Bureau of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment was convened from 25 to 26 May 2015 in Cairo to discuss the implementation of decisions adopted by the Conference at its fifteenth session as well as the strategic engagement of the Conference towards the preparation of the twenty-first sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, among others.

76. The Bureau considered the proposal on the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative as good and timely as it will contribute to boosting energy production in the continent. The Bureau further stressed the relevance of other energy programmes in the region, and called for a consultative and inclusive approach to avoid duplication.

77. The bureau supported the development of the strategy on Illegal Wildlife Trade as a strong foundation that would help to take adequate action on illegal wildlife trade and called on African

countries to continue to work together to address the challenge of Illegal Wildlife Trade. The Bureau endorsed the outcomes of the meeting of the steering committee on the regional flagship programmes and emphasized the need to accelerate the implementation of the regional flagship programmes.

78. Stressing Africa's vulnerability to the effects of climate change, in particular the adverse effects on ecosystems, food production, and social and economic development, the Bureau agreed that Africa should support an agreement in 2015 that provides parity between mitigation and adaptation, noting the increased burden for adaptation in African countries. They indicated the agreement needs to ensure that the mitigation ambition keeps global temperatures well below 1.5°C from pre-industrial levels, by the end of the century.

79. The twenty-eighth meeting of the Bureau of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment was held on 24 July 2016 in Cairo, Egypt. The Bureau noted that the sixth special session of the Conference through its declaration and decisions had affirmed the centrality of the Conference in Africa's deliberations to address the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change as well as Africa's Agenda 2063. The Bureau members emphasized the need for Africa to remain united noting that the region had played an important role in recent major global processes which was well recognized.

80. The Bureau highlighted that what had been achieved during the sixth special session of the Conference had helped with Africa's preparations and contributed to the active engagement and effective contribution of the region at the second United Nations Environment Assembly. The critical role of the Conference as demonstrated at the Assembly needs to be consolidated and the engagement of the representatives of member states in Nairobi with their capitals further enhanced to also include the participation of other relevant sectoral ministries. It is also critical for the Conference to take the lead in bringing on board other ministerial forums such as Africa Minister's Conference on Water and the Conference of Energy Ministers of Africa, among others.

81. The Bureau observed that the functioning of the Conference was a priority and African countries need to take ownership and not rely on contributions from partners as that would not be sustainable in the long-run. The Bureau underlined the importance of all member states making their contributions as a way of demonstrating regional ownership and commitment. The Bureau requested the Secretariat to communicate with member states that have not paid up and encourage those countries that can contribute more to do so. It was decided that the Secretariat should continue its effort in reminding members and soliciting ways of securing external support, and include this item on the agenda of the next session so that it would be discussed at the highest level and have member states to reaffirm their commitment.

82. An ad hoc meeting of the Bureau of the Conference was held on 6 December 2015 in Paris as part of the preparations for Africa's engagement at the twenty-first sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change. At the meeting, participants highlighted the need for the Africa group to be updated on a regular basis with regard to the then on-going climate negotiations at the Conference of the Parties as part of their strategy. The Bureau considered other issues related to the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative and Africa Adaptation Initiative; the European Union-Africa lunch roundtable meeting on 8 December 2015; the status of the Conference vis-a-vis the Specialized Technical Committees of the African Union; the African Strategy on Illegal Wildlife Trade; and the venue, dates and agenda of sixth special session of the Conference.

V. Key documents produced by the secretariat during the inter-sessional period

A. Uganda Wetlands Atlases

83. The Uganda Wetlands Atlas Volume I is an essential tool for policy makers, planners and legislators that resolve some longstanding questions on accurate facts, figures and statistics on the status of wetlands in the country.

84. Production of the Uganda Wetland Atlas, Volume II was also completed. The Uganda Wetlands Atlas, Volume II provides visual evidence of the extent and severity of the changes taking place in the country's wetlands spanning a period of about thirty years. The atlas is among recent major publications depicting the dynamics in Uganda's wetlands using satellite imagery. The site-specific, side-by-side display of the "before and after" satellite images show different kinds of changes in wetlands ecosystems all over the country including agricultural encroachments, urban growth into wetlands, altered hydrology (river diversions, and drained wetlands), and the impacts of climate change.

B. GEO-6 Africa Regional Assessment

85. The GEO-6 Africa Regional Assessment was launched prior to the second United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) held May 23-27, 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya. The French version of the GEO-6 sponsored by the Institute of “la Francophonie” for Sustainable Development will be launched at the sixteenth session. The GEO-6 Africa Regional Assessment recognizes the continent’s rich natural capital - the diversity of soil, geology, biodiversity, water, landscapes and habitats- which if wisely managed, hold the promise to lead the region to a future where ecosystem integrity, as well as human health and well-being are continuously enhanced. It also observes that the economic growth of Africa hinges on the sustainable management of its natural capital that involves reconciling wise stewardship with human development for today’s population and for future generations. The report notes that this requires both the protection and valuation of natural assets, as well as effectively communicating their importance. Africa’s natural capital is challenged by competing uses, illegal off-take, weak resource management practices, climate change and pollution.

86. The analytical framework and approaches that were used in the regional report continue to inform countries in Africa as they develop their respective national State of Environment and Outlook Reports.

C. Africa Energy Resources Atlas

87. The Africa Energy Resources Atlas, produced by UN Environment in partnership with Infrastructure Consortium for Africa, Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa and the African Development Bank provides evidence based assessment on the environmental dimensions of energy developments in the region.

88. One of the key findings is the very high cost of energy. The poorest African households spend 20 times more per unit of energy than wealthy households when connected to the grid. The high costs are largely driven by poor infrastructure. This means with current trends, and if the strategies being pursued by the bank through the new deal are not embraced, it will take Africa until 2080 to achieve full access to electricity. This means biomass will continue to supply energy to the majority of African households. The Africa Energy Resources Atlas will also be launched at the sixteenth session of the Conference.

VI. Considerations for the Conference at its sixteenth session

89. The African continent urgently needs to explore and deliberate on some key policy options that could practically unlock domestic and international innovative financing solutions for the environment and catalytic sectors to ensure the environment innovatively contributes to financing the implementation of the sustainable development goals and Agenda 2063.

90. It is proposed that the outcomes of the sixteenth session of the Conference should be action-oriented with the view to moving the continent to the next level in its development efforts.

91. The present report is submitted for consideration by the Conference at its sixteenth session.