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Expert segment

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda\*

**Consideration of the report of the secretariat****Report of the secretariat for the period from July 2017 to October 2019****I. Introduction**

1. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was established in December 1985, with the aim of promoting regional cooperation in addressing the environmental challenges facing the region. Throughout its history, AMCEN has set the environmental agenda in Africa; played a strong advocacy role in environmental sustainability and matters related to environmental management; given guidance and support to key political events related to the environment, including multilateral agreements; and catalysed and coordinated measures to enhance sustainable development in the region.
2. Through its convening power, AMCEN has brought together African Governments, institutions and their development partners to deliberate upon and craft common positions on important issues for regional, international and global consideration. Through its varied initiatives and activities, it 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 provides a platform for African ministers to develop decisions and resolutions to help to move forward the environmental agenda in the region. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Africa serves as the secretariat for the Conference.
3. The aim of the present report is to provide information to participants at the seventeenth session of the Conference on the status of implementation of decisions adopted by the Conference at its sixteenth session, held in Libreville from 12 to 16 June 2017, and its seventh special session, held in Nairobi from 17 to 19 September 2018, and of other activities during the reporting period. The report provides a summary of a number of key activities related to the Conference and their associated outcomes and should in no way be considered exhaustive in terms of the activities that may have been undertaken since the sixteenth session. The report also provides information on key documents produced by the secretariat during the intersessional period. Finally, the report highlights a number of considerations for the Conference at its seventeenth session.

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\* AMCEN/17/EGM/1.

## **II. Status of implementation of the decisions adopted by the Conference at its sixteenth session**

4. The following four decisions were adopted by the Conference at its sixteenth session:
  - (a) Decision 16/1 on investing in innovative environmental solutions for accelerating implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 in Africa;
  - (b) Decision 16/2 on environment in Africa;
  - (c) Decision 16/3 on Africa's engagement in the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme;
  - (d) Decision 16/4 on climate change.

### **A. Decision 16/1 on investing in innovative environmental solutions for accelerating implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 in Africa**

5. The decision called for appropriate measures to promote and invest in innovative policy interventions, including replication, to sustain and improve the productivity of our natural capital to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union. It highlighted the need to promote development and strengthen partnerships between governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, the international community and other relevant parties to promote and enhance investments in innovative environmental solutions.
6. By that decision, African ministers for the environment established high-level policy levers for a new paradigm of environmental actions, in which such actions are premised not as the regulatory obligations as they are classically pitched, but as accelerators of socioeconomic transformation. That logic was carried forward to the global policy level at the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, held in Nairobi from 4 to 6 December 2017, where Africa, working with the global community, sponsored resolution 3/5 on investing in innovative environmental solutions for accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The underlying logic for the resolution was that the environment should be treated as a sector providing new solutions rather than an object of human manipulation.
7. That positioning was further strengthened at the seventh special session of the Conference, held in Nairobi from 17 to 19 September 2018, where the Nairobi Declaration on Turning Environmental Policies into Action through Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges in Africa was adopted. The Declaration called for the "intrinsic implementation of innovative solutions" and strengthened the trajectory of those solutions by emphasizing the urgent need for environmental and climate action to unlock inclusive wealth creation to safeguard the socioeconomic well-being of all segments of the population.
8. In keeping with the strategic thrust of innovative environmental solutions, notable progress continues to be made. As an example of resource efficiency and pollution control, in Uganda, a biowaste compost facility has not only recorded financial benefits, saving up to US\$8,880 annually that was previously spent purchasing fertilizer, but has also reaped the ecological and mitigation benefits of biofertilizer. Elsewhere in Uganda, green investment in solid waste management through the concept of industrial symbiosis has resulted in annual savings of US\$1,080,800 and a payback period of 0.58 years. That investment has created "green jobs" for 250 young people (100 men and 150 women), who are directly involved in adding value to solid waste and preventing over 21,600 tons of solid waste annually that would otherwise end up in dumping sites.
9. In Cameroon, in an example of the amalgamation of Africa's catalytic sectors, a women's cooperative have invested in solar driers to dry their cassava and have linked to a microhydro plant to power their milling operations. Over 500 women thus have, for the first time, access to value addition. They are now drying their cassava to increase its shelf life and minimize post-harvest losses. They are processing the dry cassava into flour that fetches up to five times more in the markets, enhancing their incomes by 150 per cent and contributing to combating household poverty. Through this drying and milling, cassava spoilage has been reduced by up to 30 per cent, thus enhancing resource efficiency.
10. In the southern agricultural growth corridor of the United Republic of Tanzania, small-scale farmers have demonstrated increased productivity and income generation through water-use efficient technology by introducing a drip irrigation system. A case study found that over a three-month period,

farmers were able to produce over 8,000 kilograms of French beans on 2-acre plots, providing an average revenue of US\$2,000 per acre within the three-month study period.

11. In Côte d'Ivoire, State and non-State actors have been supported to install a waste-to-biofertilizer system, and a biodigester has been installed in the largest slaughterhouse in Abidjan. It is enhancing sanitation and waste management for the city, while providing organic fertilizer to over 2,000 farmers, driving ecosystem protection through the use of organic fertilizer that rejuvenates soils and reverses degradation of agroecosystems, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 15.

12. In 2018, Rwanda earned US\$19.2 million from the sale of 15,132 mountain-gorilla permits, costing at least US\$1,500 per tourist visiting the mountain gorillas in Volcanoes National Park. Five per cent of the revenues were ploughed back into projects in the local communities around the park. Such pockets of success have demonstrated the practicality, at the operational level, of the environment as a solution towards the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals and the unlocking of prosperity.

13. The Africa Geothermal Centre of Excellence, being hosted in Kenya with technical and financial support from UNEP (in collaboration with the African Union, African countries and other development partners), is creating a critical mass of young geothermal scientists, engineers, drillers, technicians and financiers, among others, to ensure secured and sustainable geothermal development in Africa. Through this centre of excellence, more than 400 home-grown experts (women and young people) have been empowered to tap into Africa's potential gigawatts of geothermal energy. The experts, who were from 13 African countries (Burundi, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia), were able to develop their capacities and skills in the full geothermal development value chain, from exploration to development and use as geoscientists, engineers and managers. Most of them are currently working on geothermal projects in their home countries to maintain the impetus and momentum of geothermal resource exploration and development in the region.

14. The UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Action for Sustainable Development Goals programme is supporting the adoption and implementation of objectives to promote the sustainable use of natural capital in five African countries – Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania – based on economic analysis which demonstrates the development benefits of increasing the sustainability of environmental and natural resource management. The programme has also supported the development and application of innovative methodologies to measure and track the ways in which investments in environmental and natural resource sustainability can reduce multidimensional poverty. It is also supporting increased budgetary and donor allocations to implement environmental and natural resource sustainability objectives in those countries.

## **B. Decision 16/2 on environment in Africa**

15. This omnibus decision, on environment in Africa, comprises six sections: (i) governance mechanisms for ocean- and ecosystem-based management in Africa; (ii) managing pollution in Africa; (iii) desertification, land degradation and drought; (iv) wildlife: management and illegal trade; (v) hosting of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Egypt; and (vi) sustainable renewable energy.

### **Governance mechanisms for ocean- and ecosystem-based management in Africa**

16. In section I of decision 16/2, ministers agreed to strengthen national and regional institutions to enhance governance and management approaches and to put in place appropriate ocean policies and legislation to guide the use of area-based planning tools, such as marine spatial planning and marine-protected areas, in the management of marine and coastal resources within their exclusive economic zones and adjacent waters.

17. Pursuant to that mandate, a gap analysis was conducted. A report entitled "African Ocean Governance Strategy: Scoping study and gap analysis" was finalized in 2018, and a scoping workshop organized in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, from 23 to 25 July 2018. The findings of the report indicated that ocean governance in the region was siloed, there was a lack of cross-sectoral coordination and capacity-building was needed.

18. A consultative meeting on the development of an African strategy for ocean governance was held in Nairobi on 29 and 30 November 2018 to discuss further development of the strategy, including its scope, institutional and capacity-strengthening, cross-sectoral cooperation, the science-policy interface and stakeholder engagement. The meeting was attended by 45 participants from African countries, international organizations, regional seas programmes, regional economic bodies and

research institutes. A template for collecting good practices from African countries has since been circulated and there are plans to compile case studies on African ocean governance practices.

19. A second consultative meeting is planned for early 2020. An issues paper is being prepared, in which the main points for discussion are scope, linkage with regional and international structures, implementation, ecosystem-based approaches, the blue economy, coordination and cooperation, science for ocean governance and stakeholder engagement. The nexus with ocean strategies developed in the region under various instruments, such as the Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Western Indian Ocean (Nairobi Convention) and its protocols, will be further examined.

### **Managing pollution in Africa**

UNEP has been collaborating with the secretariat of the East African Community in revising harmonized fuel standards (approved in 2019) and developing harmonized vehicle emission standards.<sup>1</sup> UNEP has also supported the development of a regional framework for the harmonization of low-sulfur fuels and vehicle emission standards in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, following an SADC ministerial decision in 2018 to adopt low-sulfur fuels.<sup>2</sup>

20. The second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa, organized by UNEP under the theme “The Bamako Convention: a platform for a pollution-free Africa”, was held in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, from 30 January to 1 February 2018.

21. The reporting period also saw the Amendment to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal obtain the required number of ratifications to enter into force on 5 December 2019. There was also a significant increase in the number of African countries that ratified the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

### **Desertification, land degradation and drought**

22. Most member States of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative are receiving support from international development partners. Under the leadership of the African Union and the Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall, the Initiative has had more attention and greater support, in particular from the African Development Bank, the European Union, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNEP, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (UNCCD) and the World Bank.

23. The African Union and the Pan-African Agency have jointly developed a new five-year plan for the Great Green Wall and projects for its implementation. Following a large-scale assessment of the Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative zone, UNEP and the Global Environment Facility have developed new projects for the region. However, there remains a need for coordination to be enhanced and for greater synergies in the implementation of the Initiative. Partners and projects should support the African Union in its various roles of coordination, advocacy and reporting to Heads of State and Government. The African Union and the secretariat of the SADC are also engaged in a process to extend the project into the dry lands of Southern Africa.

24. It was reported to the AMCEN Bureau by the representative of Morocco to the Conference that following consultations with the UNCCD secretariat, the UNCCD Regional Coordination Unit for Africa would be relocated to Morocco.

25. With regard to matters related to afforestation and reforestation for the restoration of degraded areas and the enhancement of carbon sinks, and in the context of the sustainable production and consumption of biomass (firewood and charcoal) as a transition to modern energy services, UNEP, in collaboration with the African Union, has published a review of woodfuel biomass energy production and utilization in Africa.<sup>3</sup> The report sets out the sustainable use of biomass energy at the regional level in Africa in ways that can be customized at the country level.

<sup>1</sup> UNEP, “East Africa Community to harmonize vehicle emission standards”, workshop overview. Available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/events/workshop/east-africa-community-harmonize-vehicle-emission-standards>.

<sup>2</sup> Available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/events/workshop/sadc-regional-framework-harmonisation-low-sulphur-fuels-and-vehicle-emission>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28515/WoodfuelRpt.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

26. An African regional preparatory meeting for the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to UNCCD was organized in Pretoria, South Africa, from 7 to 9 August 2019, at which key messages for Africa on the policy issues to be discussed at that session were developed and used as a basis for Africa's engagement at the session.

#### **Wildlife: management and illegal trade**

27. The decision recommended the implementation of the African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa at the national, subregional and regional levels and endorsed the creation of an expert group to facilitate the implementation of the Strategy, as recommended by the Technical Advisory Committee on the Implementation of the African Strategy.

28. The African Union has convened the meetings of the expert group on wildlife. The group is responsible for the implementation of actions at the country level. In 2018, the expert group met and deliberated on and validated a monitoring framework to track the implementation of the Strategy, as well as a resource mobilization plan for the implementation of the Strategy. In 2019 the expert group met and had a senior officials/permanent secretaries-level segment at which Africa's engagement at the eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was discussed. Technical support for the meeting was provided by the CITES Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants Coordinator.

29. During 2019, the African Union partnered with the Lusaka Agreement Task Force and Enhancing Africa's Response to Transnational Organized Crime to conduct a meeting of the region's directors of wildlife and forest authorities and agencies on the implementation of the Strategy and capacity-building workshops for wildlife law enforcement officers. The workshops were conducted for SADC, the Economic Community of Central African States and a number of countries in East Africa.

#### **Hosting of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Egypt**

30. In section V of decision 16/2, ministers endorsed the proposal by Egypt to host a high-level event on African biodiversity in association with the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to provide policy and strategic guidance on African biodiversity priorities. It also urged States members of the African Union to actively participate in the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and its protocols.

31. The African Biodiversity Summit, hosted by the Government of Egypt in collaboration with the African Union, was held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on 13 November 2018 under the theme "Land and ecosystem degradation and restoration: priorities for increased investments in biodiversity and resilience in Africa".

32. The ministers and other heads of delegation endorsed the Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience as a basis for future work on land and ecosystem restoration in the region.

33. The Summit invited all member States of the African Union to support and implement the Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience and to mobilize resources locally and through bilateral, regional and global funding sources, such as the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund and the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund, to support its implementation.

34. The Summit further invited the African Union Commission and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), in close collaboration with regional economic communities and with the support of relevant financial and technical partners, to provide support to African countries in implementing the Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience in a coherent and coordinated manner.

35. The fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, from 17 to 29 November 2018 under the theme "Investing in biodiversity for people and planet". It was attended by approximately 3,800 participants, representing parties to the Convention, Governments, international and non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities, academia and the private sector.

36. The high-level segment of the Conference was held on 14 and 15 November and included panel discussions on the importance of investing in biodiversity, the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity; and round-table discussions on mainstreaming

biodiversity into the infrastructure, manufacturing and processing, energy and mining, and health sectors. Participants adopted the Sharm el-Sheikh Declaration: “Investing in Biodiversity for People and Planet”.

#### **Sustainable renewable energy**

37. In section VI of decision 16/2, ministers agreed to scale up the development and use of clean renewable energy that will drive sustainable harnessing and value addition of Africa’s natural capital. It decided to hold joint meetings of African ministers for the environment and energy to provide policy and strategic guidance on innovative environmental and investment solutions to accelerate the development of clean energies.

38. The African Women Energy Entrepreneurs Framework concept has been developed as a follow-up to the Women Entrepreneurs and Sustainable Energy workshop, held on the margins of the sixteenth session of AMCEN. The Framework is a vehicle for the coordination and implementation of innovative sustainable energy-related environmental solution action plans.

39. In the context of the implementation of the Libreville Outcome Statement on Women Entrepreneurs and Sustainable Energy in Africa, the African Women Energy Entrepreneurs Framework was launched in Nairobi on 3 December 2017. The primary objective of the Framework is to coordinate and implement the call by AMCEN to empower women to engage in sustainable, affordable and clean energy development, access and utilization, to enhance their entrepreneurial skills and to access finance and markets across the value chain in the energy sector, while at the same time creating synergy and building upon existing similar and alternative mechanisms, systems and networks. The solution action plans include (i) ensuring environmentally sustainable and gender-responsive policies in the energy sector; (ii) creating access to finance and markets for women energy entrepreneurs across the energy value chains; and (iii) developing technical and business skills to empower women entrepreneurs. The Framework serves as a vehicle and a platform to enable African women to play a pivotal role as both agents of change and decision makers in the sustainable energy sector.

40. In its short life to date, the Framework has already achieved a number of milestones, including the following:

- (a) It has created a database of African women entrepreneurs and undertaken a membership drive, resulting in a current membership of 250;
- (b) It has trained 200 women entrepreneurs and young people drawn from various African countries in microgrid applications, with a view to enhancing access to energy in rural communities and local enterprises, and for job creation and income generation;
- (c) It has stimulated the interest of private sector developers to offer opportunities for women in business and entrepreneurship in the energy sector;
- (d) It has started implementation of two pilot projects in the United Republic of Tanzania and Mozambique with the objective of contributing to climate action through the empowerment of women entrepreneurs in the energy sector.

41. Activities under the project will reduce the use of kerosene, charcoal and firewood, and will enable a transition to clean energy in women-led fish-processing enterprises in Mwanza, United Republic of Tanzania, and Moamba, Mozambique. The results of those pilot projects will create social, economic and environmental benefits, geared towards achieving continental and global development agendas, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the 2015 Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

42. The following renewable energy programmes and projects have been implemented towards the achievement of continental and global development agendas and to support countries in energy transition towards achieving the objective of developing low-carbon, climate-resilient and resource-efficient energy systems.

43. Clean captive installations for industrial clients in four sub-Saharan African countries, namely Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. This project is being implemented with a view to bringing innovative environmental solutions for industries through the generation of their own power from clean energy (such as solar power), so that they are no longer reliant on an interruptible power supply from electricity utility companies, with the use of diesel generators as a backup. The results of the project will have a social, economic and environmental impact by reducing the current high cost of energy supply by utility companies, providing an uninterrupted power supply and reducing greenhouse

gas emissions through the replacement of diesel generators by solar photovoltaic and other clean energy technologies.

44. The African Rift Geothermal Development Facility project. Further to the technical assistance which this project provided to the six participating countries for power generation from geothermal energy resources, the project mainstreamed the direct utilization of geothermal resources in those countries. The project started by providing technical assistance for direct utilization of geothermal resources in the six programme countries (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania,) through the Climate Technology Centre and Network in 2019. Direct utilization of geothermal resources is one way in which countries can meet their greenhouse gas reduction quotas by displacing the use of biomass and fossil fuels.

45. A energy sector partnership has been created with the Sustainable Development Goals Centre for Africa, with a view to developing an optimal energy mix planning model in African countries to enable them to generate power from their renewable energy resources, such as hydro, solar, wind, geothermal and biomass. The model is expected to minimize various costs, including the importation of fuel, construction, operation and management of renewable energy resources, and to reduce carbon emission costs while still satisfying minimum demand requirements and maximizing annual installation and renewable energy portfolio standards.

### **C. Decision 16/3 on Africa's engagement in the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme**

46. Decision 16/3 urged member States to commence, at the earliest possible time, discussions and deliberations on environmental issues of priority to Africa with a view to formulating them into draft resolutions for presentation during the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. It reaffirmed the importance of concluding the work of the high-level segment of the third session of the Environment Assembly with an outcome document in the form of a political declaration negotiated by member States and adopted by consensus.

47. The ministers present also agreed that the President of AMCEN and its Bureau, in collaboration with the permanent representatives based in Addis Ababa, Geneva, Nairobi and New York should continue to coordinate the work of the African Group so as to ensure an effective and coordinated front during the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. In addition, the African Group of Negotiators used the outcomes of the sixteenth session of AMCEN as the common position for Africa at the third session of the Environment Assembly.

48. At the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, parties adopted 11 resolutions submitted by member States, calling for accelerated action and strengthened partnerships on, among other things, marine litter and microplastics; eliminating exposure to lead paint and promoting environmentally sound management of waste lead-acid batteries; environment and health; preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally; pollution mitigation by mainstreaming biodiversity into key sectors; addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems; managing soil pollution to achieve sustainable development; and pollution mitigation and control in areas affected by armed conflict or terrorism. The Assembly also adopted three decisions related to organizational matters, including on the date and venue of the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly; an extension of the delivery date for the sixth report in the Global Environment Outlook series; and the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions.

49. Of the 11 resolutions, the following were proposed and/or co-sponsored by African countries:
- Implementation of paragraph 88 (a)–(h) of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), entitled “The future we want”;
  - Investing in innovative environmental solutions for accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;
  - Eliminating exposure to lead paint and promoting environmentally sound management of waste lead-acid batteries;
  - Pollution mitigation by mainstreaming biodiversity into key sectors;
  - Preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally;
  - Managing soil pollution to achieve sustainable development.

## D. Decision 16/4 on climate change

50. The Libreville Declaration on Investing in Innovative Environmental Solutions reaffirmed the commitment of African countries to the Paris Agreement and to its implementation, ensuring parity between mitigation and adaptation. It urged the parties to the Paris Agreement to recognize the special circumstances and needs of African countries, in line with relevant previous decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Decision 16/4 urged the African Group of Negotiators to enhance its efforts in updating the African Common Position on Climate Change as a platform to articulate the interests of African countries at the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

51. The key messages endorsed at the sixteenth session of AMCEN were used as a basis for Africa's common negotiating position during the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which took place in Bonn, Germany. A one-day AMCEN consultative meeting was organized in Bonn prior to the start of the high-level segment, which provided an opportunity for the African Group of Negotiators to brief ministers on the status of negotiations.

52. As part of the implementation of the Africa Adaptation Initiative, the President of Gabon, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change, contributed US\$500,000 in December 2017 towards the cost of implementing the Initiative. Consequently, the President of AMCEN convened a two-day strategic meeting in Libreville on 27 and 28 March 2018 with partner organizations and institutions to work on adaptation in Africa. The objectives of the meeting were to share progress on the implementation of the Africa Adaptation Initiative with partners; contribute to a strategic discussion about the Initiative, its role and its value; agree on the collective efforts for accelerating adaptation action in Africa, building on existing initiatives and programmes; and agree on concrete steps to take the Initiative forward, through partnerships on the state of adaptation report and a donor round-table meeting in the margins of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, convened in New York on 24 September 2018.

53. The African Union, the Government of Gabon and the United Nations Development Programme subsequently jointly hosted a high-level round-table meeting on the margins of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, as part of the efforts to mobilize resources for the full implementation of the Africa Adaptation Initiative. Its aim was to raise awareness about climate adaptation in Africa; present the flagship programmes of the Initiative; and mobilize partners for the implementation of flagship adaptation programmes.

54. To identify gaps in the energy sector that should be addressed by the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative, UNEP, which is both a donor and an implementing agency, conducted an exercise to map the energy initiatives and programmes in Africa. The mapping exercise was conducted as an input to the Africa-European Union Energy Partnership that had started to undertake a similar exercise. The final report, entitled "Mapping of energy initiatives and programs in Africa", was submitted to the African Union Department of Infrastructure and Energy for reference and follow-up action.

55. UNEP is implementing the Africa Low Emissions Development Strategies project (Africa-LEDS),<sup>4</sup> which has established in the seven countries taking part in the project an enabling analytical framework that combines policies with the modelling of technical, technological and tactical capacity to ensure that the countries' socioeconomic development efforts simultaneously offset measurable carbon levels towards meeting their climate objectives under the Paris Agreement.

56. This will inform optimal investment pathways that maximize both carbon offsetting and the socioeconomic returns of nationally determined contributions to achieve multiple Sustainable Development Goals. This holistic paradigm of measurably balancing carbon offsetting and socioeconomic opportunities created by nationally determined contributions has been followed in all seven project countries: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique and Zambia. Looking ahead, this paradigm will be catalysed across the continent by being integrated into academic curricula and applied research developments in Africa through a regional peer learning and knowledge-sharing forum.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.africaleds.org>.



## **E. Libreville Declaration on Investing in Innovative Environmental Solutions**

57. By the Libreville Declaration on Investing in Innovative Environmental Solutions, African ministers for the environment requested UNEP, in collaboration with other partners, to prepare an environment outlook for youth in Africa to guide the strategic development of youth-responsive actions for sustainable development.

58. The sixth Global Environment Outlook for Youth: Africa (not yet issued) is a derivative of the sixth Global Environment Outlook: Regional Assessment for Africa. Prepared by young people for young people, and laid out by UNEP and the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe, the report presents solutions proposed by young people in Africa to tackle unemployment through the green economy. The authors set out their concerns about the state of the environment in Africa and about their career prospects, but more importantly, they provide insight into steps that can be taken to conserve the environment and create employment. The report will be launched at the seventeenth session of AMCEN.

59. Similarly, in response to the Libreville Declaration on Investing in Innovative Environmental Solutions, and in the context of achieving the goals of Agenda 2063 of the African Union in the energy sector and implementing the aide-memoire signed between the African Union and UNEP, recognizing the International Network on Genetics in Aquaculture (INGA) Dam project as one of the flagship projects of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, a training workshop on strategic environmental assessment, focusing on the INGA Dam, was conducted for senior directors from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, regional economic communities, African regional power pools and African energy specialized institutions. The optimal development of the INGA Dam is expected to generate 43,200 megawatts of power, to support current regional power pools and their combined service to transform Africa from traditional to modern sources of energy, and ensure access for the whole region to clean and affordable electricity. Those present were trained on a systematic process for evaluating the environmental, social and other consequences of proposed policies, plans and programmes at the earliest stages of decision-making in hydro-dam development.

60. As part of its response to the Libreville Declaration on Investing in Innovative Environmental Solutions, UNEP has supported 27 countries across Africa in analysing the fuel economy of their vehicle fleet. An analysis of that nature is necessary to guide policy development on automotive fuel economy to achieve better air quality and climate change mitigation. Seven of those countries are being further supported to develop and adopt fuel economy policies and UNEP is also engaging three countries (Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda) to pilot electric motorcycles.

61. Furthermore, UNEP and the Economic Community of West African States are planning a joint interministerial meeting in January 2020. The meeting will bring together ministers for the environment and energy to discuss and approve regionally harmonized clean fuels and vehicle emission standards.

## **III. Implementation of Conference-related activities for the period from July 2017 to October 2019**

62. Several Conference-related activities were undertaken during the reporting period. These are set out below.

### **A. Health and environment**

63. The World Health Organization, UNEP and the Government of Gabon jointly hosted the third Interministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Africa in Libreville from 6 to 9 November 2018. The overarching objective of the Conference was to catalyse action by stimulating policies on and investment in the joint contribution of the health and environment sectors towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa and Agenda 2063 of the African Union. Over 600 delegates, including 41 ministers and deputy ministers for health and for the environment, as well as 29 heads of delegations, took stock of the progress made in implementing the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa since its adoption at the first Interministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Africa, held in Libreville in August 2008.

64. The implementation of the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa has helped to demonstrate how investing in ecosystems can assist in achieving health and environmental aims and the transformational change which is required to attain the Sustainable Development Goals, but which will only occur when environment, health and economic development policies are designed in concert rather than in parallel.

65. Since its adoption, the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa has evolved as a successful country-driven initiative and tangible outcomes of the process can already be identified. It has spawned strategic alliances between numerous ministries for health and for the environment across the continent, which in turn are stimulating the institutional, policy and investment reforms that are needed while also prompting the development of policies on ecosystem conservation.

66. At the third Interministerial Conference, member States adopted the Strategic Action Plan 2019–2029 to Scale Up Health and Environment Interventions in Africa. The 10-year Strategic Action Plan aims to increase investment and accelerate joint health and environment priorities. The ministers present at the Conference agreed to strengthen policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms for better integrated interventions and to develop innovative platforms for funding, including more domestic resources being allocated to joint actions on health and the environment. The Strategic Action Plan identifies clear priorities to strengthen joint critical health and environment services to improve the likelihood of countries achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

67. The Strategic Action Plan called on UNEP, the World Health Organization and other partners, among other things, to facilitate capacity-building and technical assistance for the development and implementation of national plans of joint action. Member States requested both institutions to facilitate the mobilization of domestic and external resources, and support development of national business cases for investment in priority health and environment interventions. The Plan also called on development partners and other stakeholders to recognize the sustainable development value of health and environment interventions and requested support through several actions.

68. UNEP and the World Health Organization are in the process of mapping out existing initiatives and ongoing projects; funding opportunities in the areas of health and the environment; developing a business case for investment in health and the environment for the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan; and developing a comprehensive health and environment communications strategy in support of the implementation of the Plan.

#### **Integrated health and environment observatories and legal and institutional strengthening for the sound management of chemicals in Africa**

69. The project entitled “Integrated health and environment observatories and legal and institutional strengthening for the sound management of chemicals in Africa” (Africa ChemObs) was initiated with the aim of improving health and the environment through the strengthening of national and regional institutions, and implementing priority chemicals and waste-related assessments and interventions. It contributes to the health and environment-related implementation processes in Africa and to the African programme to reduce the risk of chemicals to health and the environment in Africa, which was endorsed by ministers at the fourteenth session of AMCEN, held in Arusha, Tanzania, from 12 to 14 September 2012.

70. The Global Environment Facility ChemObs second Scientific and Technical Committee Meeting on Integrated Guidance for Decision-making Tools for the Sound Management of Chemicals in Africa, jointly organized by UNEP and the World Health Organization, was held in Nairobi on 15 and 16 October 2019.

## **B. Conventions**

### **Bamako Convention**

71. Participants at the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa agreed to guarantee and secure a total ban on imports of hazardous wastes into Africa and the control of transboundary movement of hazardous wastes and urged those countries that were not yet parties to the Convention to recognize its merits and to ratify or accede thereto.

72. Participants agreed to promote coherence and synergies between the Convention and other conventions relating to chemicals and hazardous waste, in collaboration with relevant secretariats, and to conduct joint capacity-development and capacity-building activities, including training, research programmes and awareness-raising activities.

73. Participants also agreed to engage fully with global initiatives for the sound management of chemicals and waste and to intensify efforts to achieve, by 2020, the goal of environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste throughout their life cycle, with the Bamako Convention serving as an implementation tool for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the protection of human health and the environment in Africa, as emphasized in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.

74. The third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Bamako Convention is scheduled to be held from 12 to 14 February 2020 in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, under the theme “From decisions to action: working for Africa with a safe chemicals and waste future”.

## **IV. Outcomes and outputs of Conference-related meetings**

### **A. Plenary meeting of the African Group of Negotiators on climate change**

75. To effectively prepare for the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a plenary meeting of the African Group of Negotiators, supported by UNEP in its role as secretariat to AMCEN, is due to be held from 30 October to 2 November 2019 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. The objective of the meeting is to elaborate and strengthen the African Group of Negotiators’ internal coordination, positions and negotiating strategies and to prepare for the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties, which is due to be held from 2 to 13 December 2019 at a venue to be confirmed, owing to the withdrawal of Chile.

76. The outcomes of the meeting of the African Group of Negotiators will be used as a basis to brief AMCEN ministers during the seventeenth session of the Conference and at the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change prior to the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

77. Several strategy meetings of the African Group of Negotiators were also organized during the reporting period from July 2017 to October 2019.

78. In its decision 4/CP.24, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change requested the Standing Committee on Finance to prepare, every four years, a report on the determination of the needs of developing country parties related to implementing the Convention and the Paris Agreement thereto, for consideration by the Conference of Parties, starting at its twenty-sixth session (to be held in November 2020), and by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the parties to the Paris Agreement, starting at its third session (to be held in November 2020).

79. The African Group of Negotiators will convene a workshop on 30 October 2019 in the margins of its plenary meeting, which will focus on exploring and identifying the resource needs of African countries in implementing the Convention and the Paris Agreement thereto. It will be an important workshop for laying the foundations for ongoing engagement and work within the African Group of Negotiators to ensure that African views, perspectives and, most importantly, needs are accurately captured and reflected in the seminal report of the Framework Convention on Climate Change Standing Committee on Finance.

### **B. Seventh special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment**

80. The seventh special session of AMCEN was held in Nairobi from 17 to 19 September 2018 and was attended by representatives of 43 member States. At the end of the session, ministers for the environment and representatives from African countries adopted three decisions, a declaration and key messages on climate change negotiations with a view to boosting sustainable development across the continent, agreeing to fully engage with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

#### **Decision SS.VII/1 on biological diversity**

81. Decision SS.VII/1 urged member States of the Conference to identify and submit to the African Union the biodiversity issues of priority to Africa over the next decade, with a view to formulating them into draft resolutions. The decision also reaffirmed the request to the African Union to coordinate the African Group of Negotiators to develop a common understanding and common positions on various priority issues and speak with one voice during United Nations biodiversity conferences and, in particular, at the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity.

82. Priorities were also identified at the African Biodiversity Summit and forwarded to the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity for its consideration.

83. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which on 29 July 2019 became the African Union Agency for Development) and UNEP have facilitated the

development of the Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience, which recognizes that biodiversity loss is underpinned by land degradation and loss of habitats through ecosystem degradation). Several non-governmental organizations are also involved in supporting the Action Agenda, including the African Wildlife Foundation, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and the World Wide Fund for Nature.

84. Member States are also benefiting from UNEP-supported projects to assist them in the preparation of their sixth national reports on their national biodiversity strategies and action plans. In addition, several countries are being supported by the Global Environment Facility to achieve their national targets towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

85. The note by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, entitled “Egyptian initiative for a coherent approach for addressing biodiversity loss, climate change, and land and ecosystem degradation” was launched during the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, with the support of African parties to the Convention. Workshops were subsequently held in Nairobi during the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. The initiative was acknowledged in General Assembly resolution 73/284 of 1 March 2019 on the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

#### **Decision SS.VII/2 on climate change**

86. Decision SS.VII/2 urged parties to the Paris Agreement to recognize the special circumstances and needs of African countries, in line with decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties. It called upon all parties to work constructively to deliver the mandate of the programme of work of the Paris Agreement, including the mandated work of its subsidiary bodies, the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement and the constituted bodies, to provide operational guidance on all provisions of the Paris Agreement to ensure its effective implementation from 2020.

87. Through the efforts of the African Group of Negotiators and AMCEN, Africa’s commitment to implementing the Paris Agreement was underscored and the African Common Position on Climate Change reaffirmed. Ministers requested the African Group of Negotiators to regularly update the African Common Position on Climate Change as a platform for articulating the interests of African countries.

88. The key messages on climate change negotiations were defined and endorsed by ministers, highlighting outstanding major areas of concern and priority for the continent, which were subsequently used as a basis for Africa’s negotiations at the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Katowice, Poland, from 2 to 14 December 2018.

#### **Decision SS.VII/3 on Africa’s engagement in the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme**

89. The fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly was held in Nairobi from 11 to 15 March 2019, under the theme “Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production”. The Assembly was attended by a record number of participants, including five Heads of State and Government, 157 ministers and deputy ministers, and almost 5,000 participants from 179 countries, who attended its plenary sessions, leadership dialogues and a multi-stakeholder dialogue. It took place concurrently with other events, including the One Planet Summit which was convened jointly by the presidents of France and Kenya.

90. Africa’s participation in the Assembly was led by Gabon, in its role as the President of AMCEN and its Bureau, in collaboration with the permanent representatives based in Addis Ababa, Geneva, Nairobi and New York, and with the support of the AMCEN secretariat, who coordinated the work of the African Group of Negotiators to ensure an effective and coordinated approach during the Assembly. Burkina Faso and South Africa were elected as the Assembly Bureau members representing Africa.

91. At its seventh plenary meeting, the Assembly adopted a ministerial declaration, 23 resolutions and three decisions, addressing shared and emerging global environmental issues. The Assembly, which is the world’s highest-level decision-making body on the environment, also adopted the UNEP programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020–2021 and launched the sixth report in the Global Environment Outlook series.

92. Africa sponsored several resolutions which were adopted by the Assembly, including on addressing environmental challenges through sustainable business practices; innovations in rangelands and pastoralism; innovations on biodiversity and land degradation; the poverty-environment nexus; and implementation and follow-up of United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions.

### **C. First meeting of the Africa Environment Partnership Platform**

93. The first meeting of the Africa Environment Partnership Platform of the former NEPAD planning and coordinating agency was held in Nairobi on 20 and 21 September 2018, immediately following the seventh special session of AMCEN.

94. The establishment of the Platform stems from decision 14/3 of the fourteenth session of AMCEN, which was held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, from 12 to 14 September 2012, where ministers discussed the rationale for creating a mechanism to coordinate, mobilize resources, foster knowledge and align support for the implementation of the environmental action plan of NEPAD.

95. The theme of the first meeting of the Platform was “50 years of environmental governance and sustainability in Africa”. The rationale for the theme was based on a review of environmental management in Africa since the time when most African countries gained their independence and second on the adoption of the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in 1968. The theme also looked forward to matters related to environmental sustainability, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

96. The meeting took the form of high-level panel discussions, interactive moderated plenary discussions and parallel sessions that focused on issues pertinent to the environment in Africa. The meeting also provided a unique and innovative opportunity for countries and stakeholders in the environmental sector to report on progress in the implementation of regional flagship programmes and make further recommendations on strategies to support them, and to assess the efficacy of Africa’s implementation of key multilateral environmental agreements.

97. At the end of the meeting, the Platform adopted by acclamation the official communiqué in which ministers agreed, among other things, to support the Platform as a vehicle for promoting the sharing of innovative solutions to environmental challenges in Africa and for empowering member States, regional economic communities, innovators, the private sector, micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and civil society to invest in and use innovative approaches to address environmental challenges. It was envisaged that the communiqué would also be used to inform policymakers, civil society and the public about the recommended approach to environmental management on the African continent.

### **D. Consultative meetings of African ministers for the environment**

98. Consultative meetings of African ministers for the environment were held on 14 November 2017, in Bonn, Germany, prior to the high-level segment of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and again on 9 December 2018, in Katowice, Poland, prior to the second part of the high-level segment of the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

99. The primary objective of those meetings, organized by the AMCEN secretariat and supported by the African Development Bank, the African Union, NEPAD and other partners, was to brief ministers on the status of the climate negotiations to enable them to refine their strategies for negotiation and engagement with other parties and groups. The meetings, which were facilitated by the African Group of Negotiators, also served to update ministers on the implementation of the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative and the Africa Adaptation Initiative.

### **E. Meetings of the Bureau of the Conference**

100. One formal meeting and one extraordinary meeting of the Bureau of the Conference were held during the reporting period. The twenty-ninth meeting of the Bureau was held in Rabat, Morocco, on 17 and 18 April 2018. The Bureau considered progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the sixteenth session of AMCEN and of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and noted the need to work in conjunction with partners to ensure that those outcomes were optimally and effectively implemented.

101. The Bureau discussed Africa’s preparations for the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the African Biodiversity Summit which was held in association therewith. The Bureau emphasized the need for Africa to have a common approach and to speak with one voice. As the Conference of the Parties was to be held in Africa (in Egypt), it was agreed that there was a need to support the host country in organizing both the Conference of the Parties and the associated Summit to ensure the greatest possible success for both events.

102. In addition, the Bureau emphasized the need for Africa to prepare thoroughly for the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and requested the secretariat to coordinate efforts between AMCEN, the African Group of Negotiators, the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change and all other relevant stakeholders in the run-up to the Conference of the Parties. The Bureau noted the importance of the negotiating mechanism in Africa, comprising the African Group of Negotiators, AMCEN and the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change.

103. The Bureau emphasized the need to ensure that all Environment Assembly resolutions, in particular those affecting Africa, were fully implemented, and highlighted the need for a proper reporting mechanism with regard to the implementation of resolutions. The Bureau noted with appreciation that the outcomes of the sixteenth session of AMCEN had assisted with Africa's preparations for the third session of the Environment Assembly and had contributed to the region's active engagement therein and effective contribution thereto.

104. Members of the Bureau recalled that at the sixteenth session of AMCEN, ministers had agreed to promote strategies relating to the circular economy, green economy, blue economy and industrial symbiosis in African countries, given that such models provided opportunities to enhance economic and social prosperity while reducing waste and pollution. In that regard, the Bureau requested concrete proposals on the circular economy and were in agreement on the need to prepare a strategy on how best to move the African circular economy agenda forward and contribute towards providing practical innovative solutions for Africa.

105. Members of the Bureau also underlined the importance of all member States paying their contributions as a means of demonstrating regional ownership and commitment. They therefore requested the secretariat to communicate with all member States that were in arrears, requesting them to bring their payments up to date without delay, and furthermore requested the President of AMCEN to write to all member States, reminding them of the need to pay their contributions.

106. The extraordinary meeting of the Bureau was held in Nairobi on 13 March 2019 in the margins of the fourth session of the Environment Assembly. The Chair of the African Diplomatic Corps technical group, based in Nairobi, updated the Bureau members on the preparations for the fourth session of the Environment Assembly, highlighting the fact that Africa's priority areas were the poverty-environment nexus, land degradation, environment displacement and migration, food security, green business development, waste management and biodiversity. In response to those priorities, the technical group, in close collaboration with the AMCEN secretariat, had developed six draft resolutions for submission to the Environment Assembly.

107. The draft resolutions were on the poverty-environment nexus; innovations on biodiversity and land degradation; addressing environmental challenges through sustainable business practices; innovations in sustainable rangelands and pastoralism; implementation and follow-up of United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions; and sustainable blue economy. The draft resolution on the sound management of chemicals and waste was of particular interest to the African Group of Negotiators, and the ideas of the African Diplomatic Corps technical group were merged with those of the European Union. Of the six draft resolutions sponsored by a group of African countries, five had been agreed upon during the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and had been expected to be adopted by ministers during the high-level segment of the Assembly. The draft resolution on the blue economy had been withdrawn to allow for further consultations aimed at reaching a common understanding.

108. The Bureau received a briefing from the host Government on the preparations for the convening of the seventeenth regular session of AMCEN. The representative of South Africa provided an update on the preparations and confirmed that the seventeenth session would be held from 2 to 6 September 2019. However, the dates subsequently had to be changed, owing to a conflict of dates with other global meetings. The proposed theme of the session was "Taking action for environmental sustainability and prosperity in Africa", which focused on climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, sustainable consumption and production, the green economy and the environmental contribution to the blue or ocean economy, particularly marine pollution.

109. The Bureau noted that the environment was one of the pillars of sustainable development and a fundamental aspect of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the nationally determined contributions under climate change. The environment should not be perceived as a stand-alone sector, but should be considered and dealt with in association with other sectors. It was important that ministers of the environment and ministers of finance, planning and development should participate in each other's conferences and be involved in dialogue on interministerial synergies. That would enhance the

linkage between the sectors and give ministers of finance a greater appreciation of the value of the environment in the context of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

110. The Bureau was advised that the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources had come into force in 2016. A first Conference of the Parties to the Convention should therefore be convened and the matter should be scheduled for discussion by AMCEN at its seventeenth session.

111. It was suggested by members of the Bureau that member States with significant arrears in their annual contributions to the AMCEN trust fund should be requested to formally communicate to the secretariat their considered plans for clearing their arrears and then maintaining their contributions up to date. The members agreed that it was time to identify innovative solutions for financing activities under AMCEN, while reminding member States of the need for them to pay their contributions. The Bureau also proposed that, at some point, if there was no improvement in the payment of contributions, only those member States that were up to date with their contributions should be allowed to vote in decision-making processes or serve in the AMCEN Bureau.

## **V. Flagship report produced by the secretariat during the intersessional period**

### **Global Environment Outlook for Youth, Africa: A Wealth of Green Opportunities**

112. Although centred on the voices of the young, this publication is anchored substantively in the sixth report in the Global Environment Outlook: Regional Assessment for Africa series by UNEP, and articulates solutions provided by Africa's youth to tackle unemployment through the green economy.

113. The publication highlights the fact that Africa has the largest concentration of young people in the world. There are approximately 420 million young men and women aged between 15 and 35 years old in Africa today and that number is set to double to 830 million by 2050. That transition in demography, if properly utilized, could generate a "demographic dividend", capable of stimulating economic growth.

114. The publication also explores the wealth of livelihood opportunities that can be found not only in tackling climate change, but also in land, water, biodiversity and environmental policies. It provides ample evidence of sustainable youth action that capitalizes on their energy, innovation, ideas and solutions and demonstrates how young people can secure their livelihoods through "green jobs".

## **VI. Considerations for the Conference at its seventeenth session**

115. The Conference needs to ensure that its future decisions bridge specific gaps and leverage specific opportunities emanating from implementation experience. While pockets of success exist across the continent, there is an urgent need to account for progress made through a system of coherent feedback and accountability. That calls for an effective feedback loop from actions on the ground in implementing decisions back to policymakers to inform the next stage of policy positions, which will in turn feed into the next phase of decision implementation.

116. The urgency of accelerating progress, in turning good decisions into action, cannot be overstated if Africa is to achieve environmental sustainability and prosperity. It is proposed that the outcomes of the seventeenth session of the Conference should inspire and mobilize actions that will refine specific gaps and unlock specific opportunities for enhanced implementation, and enhance the traceability of actions emanating from decisions of the Conference.

117. Innovative financing should become the primary financing mechanism for environmental and sustainable development across the continent. Member States should formally communicate their detailed plans of how they intend to clear their arrears and sustain their contributions to the AMCEN trust fund, which is one of the central financing mechanisms available for the implementation of decisions of the Conference.

118. The present report is submitted for consideration by the Conference at its seventeenth session.