

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

Action for Environmental Sustainability and Prosperity in Africa: Embracing Policy Delivery and Implementation Through the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment*

Note by the secretariat**I. Summary**

1. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment is a forum for making regional environment and sustainable development policies. This mandate, however, does not include a clear accountability system for implementation and delivery of these policy decisions. As a result, implementation of decisions lags their traditional swift promulgation and adoption, resulting in a disconnect between impressive decisions and the tangible developmental impact they were meant to make. It is therefore prudent that the Conference should begin to pay closer attention to implementation of its decisions and assess their impact.
2. Decisions and proclamations of the Conference are made to inspire individual and collective actions, by the member States, stakeholders and other partners. The establishment of a system of collective accountability and assessment of progress made can inform subsequent decisions and should now become the crowning jewel of the Conference. Thus, it is imperative to shift the focus of the Conference to one where the impact of its decisions and pronouncements in driving socioeconomic transformation is prioritised. Such an approach will ensure subsequent decisions are taken to address specific gaps and opportunities, informed through real-time feedback from implementation progress, and hence bridge the divide between decisions and impactful implementation. This is critical to put Africa on track to realise the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063.
3. A most critical enabler however is the establishment of a system for coherent accountability. One which will ensure real time feedback of implementation progress of the decisions of the Conference and identify specific implementation opportunities and gaps. Such an approach will ensure that subsequent decisions of the Conference address themselves to specific areas that have not been addressed in previous decisions and in tracking the impact of existing ones. Given the importance of building on established progress, the suggestion is to consider expanding the inter-ministerial policy coherence taskforces adopted at the sixteenth regular session of the Conference and at the 3rd UNEA, to include feedback from actions on the ground that are already implementing decisions. This will ensure swift feedback of specific gaps and opportunities arising from implementation that subsequent decisions could address.
4. This note takes a "looking back to look ahead" posture. It relays the evolution and progression of the Conference over its 34 years of existence, its achievements and growth to become the high-level policy forum for Africa on environmental matters. Should a modern era Conference remain a forum for decision making only or also become a platform for both policy delivery and implementation?

* The present note is being issued without formal editing.

II. Background: Tracing the delivery of decisions of the Conference

5. Since its establishment 34 years ago, the Conference has diligently discharged its mandate, of ensuring collective environmental protection action in the region, in order to meet Africa's socio-economic development needs, in a sustainable manner. The Conference's work over time, has been characterised by four key dispensations. The first is the 1985 to 1993 formative period, whose focus was on the establishment of the Conference organs and programme of work. Another highlight of this period was the development and implementation of the Cairo Programme for African Cooperation adopted at the first session of the Conference in December 1985. It had ambitious objectives to address environmental degradation and satisfy the food and energy needs of the African people.

6. The 1993 to 2000 period marked what could be regarded as the second dispensation that refined gaps of the first period. A key aspect here was the transition from a broad, seemingly unfocused mandate to a clarity in policy orientation. This was informed by the challenges of implementing the Cairo Programme and developments of the Earth Summit in 1992, where principles of sustainable development were taking shape. With this, the operations and focus of the Conference were revisited and the new policy orientation adopted at its fifth session in 1993. The Conference shifted its focus from running operational programmes to emphasizing policy guidance towards realising sustainable development in Africa. Its mandate was revised to focus on providing continent-wide political and technical leadership on sustainable development and to come up with agreed African positions on environment and development.

7. The years 2000 to 2010 saw the revitalisation of the Conference, marked by a leaner organisational structure, and clearer focus in its positioning as the major high-level policy forum for African environment ministers that sets the continent's environment agenda. The mandate of its Secretariat was aligned to this transition, combining and providing the political, policy and technical assistance impetus to its member States. The Conference became an effective instrument which enabled governments and the international community to ensure that the environment is fully embedded in key international and regional processes. And by this, establish a basis for sustainable development with socioeconomic benefits – which underpin prosperity.

8. The modern era Conference started from the 2010 during the thirteenth session in Bamako, through to the fourteenth session in Arusha, the fifteenth session in Cairo and firmed up at the sixteenth session in Libreville in 2017 and the seventh special session in Nairobi in 2018. This era saw a transformation of Africa from a passive recipient of global environment policy agenda to a major influencer of global and regional policies. This era has seen the Conference either originating major policy initiatives or influencing the outcomes of global, regional, sub-regional and national environment and development policies. These include Africa's strong voice in Rio +20 summit; Agenda 2030; UNEP governing bodies and their outcomes; Africa Union summits; various Conference of the Parties such as climate change, biodiversity and desertification; and outcomes of regional economic communities. This period has also witnessed the strengthening of the role of the Conference in mobilising and convening member States, including on the sustainable financing mechanisms of the Conference. Further, the Conference has focused on looking inwards to solve Africa's problems and developed regional flagship programmes¹, initiated new internal regional policy direction such as on natural capital, Great Green Wall of Sahara and the Sahel initiative, innovative environmental solutions, and green economy.

9. With such a rich history, the question to answer here is: *whether the Conference is delivering enough for the continent?* Has the Conference inspired enough action? Has the inspiration been good enough? If not, are there gaps in ensuring effective delivery of its mandate? Are there gaps in the uptake and implementation of the decisions and proclamations of the Conference by the different stakeholders? Is the Conference working adequately with different stakeholders to implement its decisions and proclamations? And how can the Conference fill the delivery gaps that may be existing?

¹ Ecosystem-Based Adaptation Programme for Africa; African Programme on Sustainable Energy Development; Integrated Waste Management Programme for Africa; Africa Integrated Environmental Assessment for Sustainable Development Planning; a sustainable land management and desertification program in Africa; African Program on Biodiversity and Ecosystems; and African Partnership for Capacity Building, technology transfer and skills development.

III. Sustainable Development through the Conference: A Foundation of Environmental Sustainability and Prosperity in Africa

10. In 2012, during its fourteenth session convened in Arusha, Tanzania, the Conference adopted decision 14/1 on “Africa’s post Rio+20 strategy for sustainable development”. This decision mandated the development and implementation of regional flagship programmes towards ensuring effective implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20), in line with Africa’s priorities.

11. Some good examples inspired by the Conference were designed to meet and implement this new vision include: The Ecosystems Based Adaptation programme for Africa, the green economy initiatives, the sustainable consumption and production programme, the African programme on sustainable energy, the African programme on biodiversity and ecosystems, as well as the Africa integrated environmental assessment for sustainable development

(a) For example, on Ecosystem Based Adaptation, Ecosystems Based Adaptation for food security projects undertaken in the Zambezi basin ecosystem proved that countries can draw both environmental and socioeconomic benefits from Ecosystems Based Adaptation. In Malawi, Ecosystems Based Adaptation techniques of conservation agriculture practices, including agro-forestry resulted in restoration of over 15ha of previously degraded lands and restoration of river flow in a previously drying river to ensure sustainable supply of irrigation and portable water. The Baixo-Limpopo irrigation climate resilience project is yet another notable example. This was aimed at providing climate resilient infrastructure for increased agricultural productivity. Through this intervention, a projected 150% increase in incomes and 42% reduction in poverty in the project area was recorded.

(b) On the Green Economy and sustainable consumption and production programmes, projects for example in Burkina Faso, plastic waste recycling has not only resulted in cleaner and healthier cities, but a 400% jump in revenues for actors along the value chain. In Kenya, a company integrated resource efficient and cleaner production principle in its water, material and energy use and achieved a saving of 11% per annum.

(c) On sustainable energy, projects in developing geothermal energy technical capacity in the continent are notable. Over 400 home grown geothermal energy experts have been developed in the period. Investments to unlock Africa’s geothermal capacity of over 20 GW have also been catalysed to provide baseload, clean power to energise the region’s development through direct use of geothermal energy for industrial applications. Countries such as Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda are among those leading in these projects. The nexus between women and sustainable energy has also been explored through injecting entrepreneurship into energy related environmental actions. To this end, in just two years, over 200 women and youth have been empowered with applicable skills in “Microgrid Applications” that have enabled them to kick-start businesses in utilizing renewable energy sources for the benefit of rural communities.

(d) On Biodiversity and Ecosystems, notable work in implementing the Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora has been done. This has focused on supporting strengthening of country governance structures in combating the illegal trade in wildlife. Through the Convention’s National Legislation Project, up to 11 African countries were supported to strengthen their legal frameworks for the effective implementation of the Convention, including to combat illegal trade in wildlife.

(e) The Africa Integrated Environmental Assessment for sustainable development planning programme is providing Integrated Environmental Assessment tools, methods, case studies, guidelines and reports to Governments, practitioners and other stakeholders.

12. The Conference has also continued to prioritise data to guide for policy decision making in the environment and development space. To this end, decision 14/5 called for a strengthening of environment information for decision making in Africa. Accordingly, UNEP has regularly supported member States with “state of the environment” analytical reports that present the state of different environmental resources in the continent and how they are critical in driving the socioeconomic development agenda. UNEP has also supported countries integrate the 2030 Agenda using a strategy to support data collection, analysis and reporting, including generation of baseline data and monitoring progress against the Agenda’s goals. The initiative on Climate Information and Early Warning is notable, among others.

13. One of the highlight decisions of the fourteenth session was decision 14/12. This decision reiterated the need for Africa’s common position on climate change to be backed by the latest

scientific findings, research and analysis. To this end, UNEP spearheaded preparation of the Africa Adaptation Gap Report series that provided an objective basis for Africa's position in the global climate change regime.

14. The fifteenth session in Cairo in 2015, which took place a few months to adoption of the Paris Climate Change Agreement, endorsed the Africa Adaptation Gap Report findings. This provided a basis for the Common Africa Position on parity between adaptation and mitigation in the Paris Agreement including in allocation of resources that was adopted at the global level under Article 9(4) of the Paris Agreement. In addition, the eminent adoption of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals led Africa's environment ministers to affirm that natural capital provides a gateway to actualize inclusive sustainable development in Africa. To this end, the fifteenth session adopted the Cairo Declaration on Managing Africa's Natural Capital for Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication. This laid the basis on how the continent's environmental assets should be leveraged to drive actualisation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs as well as the realisation of the African Union's Agenda 2063 aspirations.

15. Decision 15/1 adopted at the fifteenth session in Cairo on "sustainably harnessing Africa's natural capital in the context of Agenda 2063", called for value addition in Africa's natural capital derivative sectors like agriculture, as a strategy for sustainably harnessing the continent's natural capital. This was after analysis revealed that Africa loses up to \$195 billion worth of its natural capital each year because of unsustainable management of the continent's natural capital. As an example of effectiveness of value addition, in Kenya, on-farm value addition using solar powered, efficient micro-irrigation is saving farmers over \$10,000 annually in operating costs relative to using conventional fossil fuel powered, non-efficient furrow systems. Cumulatively farmers are generating up to \$30,000 per acre annually. Using solar powered micro-irrigation in Benin among a group of women farmers has increased their socioeconomic standard of living by 80%. Yields have increased 100% and water savings 40 – 80% relative to conventional irrigation systems.

16. These are socioeconomic and climate benefits achieved simultaneously - a paradigm that was further built upon at the sixth special session of the Conference held in Cairo in 2016. Here, governments confronted with the need to implement Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement in the face of astronomical costs, encouraged environment ministers to secure a space for the environment as a solution. This was by demonstrating how natural capital can contribute financially, economically, socially and environmentally towards implementation of these agendas. All this cumulatively dovetails to actualising Africa's aspirations encapsulated in the African Union's Agenda 2063.

IV. Bridging the divide and reconciling climate and environment action with Africa's socioeconomic development priorities

17. The Conference's trajectory in positioning Africa to realise ideals of sustainable development amidst an increasingly competitive global space is notable. With adoption of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs as well as the Paris Climate Agreement, which are landmark global accomplishments in the sustainable development realm, attention and focus has continually shifted to implementation. Analysis has consistently shown that Africa stands out as the most vulnerable region. It has also shown, that Africa, a region most needing to realise the SDGs, is the one most lagging in concrete progress with a high risk of failing to achieve the SDGs.

18. This was the backdrop of the sixteenth session that was held in Libreville in 2016, which laid the case for "business unusual" approaches to accelerate Africa's implementation progress, in the face of escalating socioeconomic realities that were impinging on progress. Realities include worsening food insecurity –driven by inadequate value addition in its agro-value chain; environmental degradation costing the continent up to \$65 billion each year; and, a gaping financing gap – where Africa needs at least \$1.2 trillion annually to implement the SDGs and over \$2.5 trillion for its climate commitments – popularly referred to as Nationally Determined Contributions. Cumulatively, these amounts are equivalent to the entire continent's GDP.

19. These realities, which directly threaten Africa's progress towards realising the SDGs, called for substantial reorientation of how Africa viewed environment and climate action. It could no longer be a footnote in mainstream development. Henceforth, the environment needed to play a strategic role, providing practical, affordable innovative solutions to bridge gaps towards Africa's socioeconomic development. The end goal being to accelerate Africa's progress towards actualising the SDGs and Agenda 2063. This is what led to adoption at the sixteenth session, of the ground-breaking Libreville Declaration on Investing in Innovative Environmental Solutions and the foundational decision 16/1 on "Investing in innovative environmental solutions for accelerating implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 in Africa".

20. The logic of Innovative Environmental Solutions is a culmination of the progression of the Conference over the years. It builds from the formative sessions of the Conference, to its focus on sustainable development that was solidified at the fourteenth session with the Rio +20 decision. This Rio decision set out sustainable development as the pathway to environmental sustainability and economic prosperity. From Rio, the logic was further clarified by premising the sustainable harnessing of Africa's natural capital as a driver of the SDGs, and also solidified through a decision adopted at the fifteenth session. At the 16th session, the logic had been concretised through the decision 16/1. This decision firmly presents environment action as a provider of socioeconomic solutions – and this is especially so where it leverages on Africa's catalytic sectors as they are critical for both economic development and environmental progress.

21. With this decision, Africa established high level policy levers for a new paradigm of environmental actions where they are premised as accelerators of socioeconomic transformation as opposed to being regulatory obligations as classically pitched. This logic was carried forward to the global policy level at the third United Nations Environment Assembly held in Nairobi in 2017, where, Africa working with the global community sponsored the resolution 3/5 on “Investing in Innovative Environmental Solutions for Accelerating the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals”. The logic behind this UNEA resolution, was the fact that “environment needed to be treated as an area for new solutions rather than an object of human manipulation”.

22. This decision adopted at both the Conference and at UNEA, marked a watershed moment that crowned the Conference's engagement over the years towards a clear strategic focus to leverage the environment as a practical solutions provider to mainstream development. Through this decision, the Conference proposed a series of innovations that would unlock this paradigm – including innovations in policy, market enablers, financing, partnership, education, and technology, among key areas.

23. This positioning was further strengthened at the seventh special session held in Nairobi in 2018, where the “Nairobi Declaration on Turning Environmental Policies into Action through Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges in Africa” was adopted. This declaration called for the “intrinsic implementation of innovative solutions”. It strengthened this solutions trajectory by emphasising the urgent need for environment and climate action to unlock inclusive wealth creation that safeguards the socioeconomic well-being of all segments of populations. It emphasised the urgency to progress innovative environmental solutions from strategic level propositions that were adopted at the sixteenth session of the Conference and UNEA-3, to tangible implementation actions that unlock inclusive wealth.

V. Environment as an accelerator of socioeconomic development: from decisions to tangible implementation – notable achievements

24. In keeping with the strategic thrust of innovative environmental solutions, notable progress continues to be made at both policy and operational level. At the operational level, from resource efficiency, to amalgamation of Africa's catalytic sectors of EBA-driven agriculture and clean energy, to waste and pollution control and even reversing degradation, actions have been undertaken in countries to enhance management of Africa's natural capital. These have shown how innovative actions can unlock environment as a solution as called for at the sixteenth session.

25. For example, under resource efficiency and pollution control, in Uganda, a bio-waste compost facility has recorded financial benefits, savings up to \$8,880 annually previously spent buying fertilizer in addition to the ecological and mitigation benefits of bio-fertiliser. Furthermore, improvements to its thermo boiler system through insulation and automation, reduced wood consumption by 70%, to forestall forest degradation, while the setting up of a collection and recycling programme of damaged plastic has generated additional revenue of about \$23,209. Still in Uganda, green investment in solid waste management through the concept of industrial symbiosis has resulted into annual savings of \$1,080,800 and a payback period of 0.58 years – which is less than the maximum acceptable period that was set for the intervention. This investment has also created green jobs for 250 youth (100 male and 150 female – driving gender equality and contributing to SDG 5) directly involved in adding value to solid waste and preventing over 21,600 tons of solid waste annually that would end in dump sites.

26. Under amalgamation of Africa's catalytic sectors, in Cameroon, a women's cooperative cultivating cassava has been guided to leverage on solar driers to dry their cassava. They have also been guided to link to a micro-hydro plant to power the milling of their cassava to higher value cassava flour. Through these multi-actor linkages, over 500 women for the first time, have access to value addition. They are now drying their cassava to increase its shelf life and minimise post-harvest losses. By this, food security has been enhanced in line with SDG 2. They are processing the dry

cassava into flour that fetches up to five times more in the markets to enhance their incomes by 150% and combat household poverty as required under SDG 1. Through this drying and milling, cassava spoilage has been reduced by up to 30%, thus enhancing resource efficiency (SDG 12). On the environmental aspect, the micro-hydro generates an annual 9,000 kWh of zero emission electricity relative to the previous use of diesel generators (SDG 13). This enterprise driven demand for clean energy is driving clean energy investment (SDG 7).

27. In Kenya, one member of the African Women Energy Entrepreneurs Framework have been empowered with applicable and relevant skills of “microgrid applications” to start her own business where she has already implemented a 1KW prototype in that connects 16 consumers residing in several households and kiosks (SDG 5).

28. Demonstration of increased productivity and income generation through water use efficient technology for small scale farmers has been achieved in the southern agricultural growth corridor of Tanzania, through introducing drip irrigation system. A case study has seen farmers produce over 8,000 kilograms of French beans on 2 acres and making an average revenue of \$2000 per acre within 3 months. This translates to increased crop productivity revenues of up to \$8,000 per annum per acre of French beans (SDG 2).

29. In Cote d’Ivoire, actors have been supported to establish a waste-to-biofertilizer system, where a bio digester has been installed in the biggest slaughterhouse in Abidjan. This is enhancing sanitation and waste management for the city (SDG 6), while providing organic fertiliser to over 2,000 farmers. This drives ecosystems protection through use of organic fertiliser that rejuvenates soils and reverses degradation of agro-ecosystems (SDG 15).

30. In 2018, Rwanda earned \$19.2 million from the sale of 15,132 mountain gorillas permits costing at least \$1,500 per tourist visiting mountain gorillas in Volcanoes National park. 5% of the revenues are ploughed back to benefit projects in the local communities around the park.

31. These examples of success have demonstrated the practicality at the operational level, of environment as a solution towards realisation of multiple SDGs and unlocking prosperity.

32. At the policy level, unlocking this paradigm of environment action as an enabler of socioeconomic development requires coherent implementation of actions across various sectors. This coherence needs to be solidified at the policy level, with harmonised and joined-up implementation of policies across various complementary ministries, in a manner that that creates a government-wide enabling policy environment.

33. Promoting clean energy and agriculture – Africa’s catalytic sectors – is not enough. Finance policy will likewise need to create fiscal incentives, among key enablers. Transport policy must be equally aligned to prioritize roads investments that link agro-production areas to markets to minimize transport costs and related emissions. Land policies must be aligned to demarcate areas, as appropriate, for establishment of these sustainable agro-value addition enterprises. Trade policies must establish market opportunities for these industries.

34. Operationalizing this novel approach to policy implementation will call for a realignment of policy implementation structures in governments. It will require institutions and implementers that traditionally operate in sectorial silos to realign and harmonize their processes for coherent operation.

35. Accordingly, the structure for policy harmonisation for implementation continues to be established across the continent. In some countries, this drive for greater coherence in policy implementation is being led by inter-ministerial policy harmonisation task forces hosted centrally by state agencies.

36. For example, in Nigeria, an inter-agency policy task force is convening implementation of key ground-breaking policies in Nigeria – including the Nigeria feed-in tariff regulations, the iconic cassava bread policy, Nigeria’s NDCs – to sustainably industrialise Nigeria’s cassava value chain. This as the strategic thrust for accelerating realisation of Nigeria’s vision 2020.

37. These ongoing actions have been moving the needle towards realisation of innovative environmental solutions in Africa. While several areas of success are visible across the continent, their impact is limited in pace and scale considering pending challenges. This is because actions occur as silo projects with minimal impacts beyond the project cycle. In addition, there is minimal accountability in implementation progress monitoring to enable succeeding sessions to address themselves to specific gap areas and opportunities that will facilitate wide scale and rapid implementation that Africa urgently needs.

38. There is therefore an urgent need for upscaling of implementation of the decisions of the Conference to enhance beneficial impacts that accrue from such implementation. For this, a systematic approach is needed for monitoring progress, to ensure real time and accurate feedback of implementation progress to inform to policy. This is critical to ensure subsequent deliberations of the Conference address very specific gaps and opportunities for scaled out implementation. It is proposed that this should be the progression and focus of the Conference into the future, to enhance its role of ensuring that Africa is on track to realising the SDGs for environmental sustainability and socioeconomic prosperity.

VI. The Conference into the future: consolidating progress on environment as an accelerator of socioeconomic development in Africa

39. As earlier mentioned, the trajectory of environment as an accelerator of socioeconomic development has been a build-up.

40. The seventeenth session in Durban presents an opportunity to address these gaps. The following enablers drawn from implementation experiences to date provide an opportunity to do so.

A. Expanding Policy Coherence; Establishing a system of coherent accountability and feedback on implementation progress

41. Since its establishment, the Conference has progressively led in promulgating high-level policy positions on climate and environment that align with the continent's development priorities. While this continues, in the face of escalating global competition that threatens realisation of the SDGs in Africa, measurability and accountability of implementation of past decisions of the Conference urgently needs to be prioritised.

42. While all countries are charged with implementation of the decisions of the conference, there is no clear process for measuring implementation actions. In addition, there are limitations in implementation resulting from the silo approach to environment and climate action. While the environment sector sets the high-level policy agenda, actual implementation is in the docket of non-environment productive sectors. The first step to overcoming this disconnect is to harmonise and synchronise implementation programmes between environment and the other non-environment productive sectors.

43. Decision 16/1 on innovative solutions adopted at the sixteenth session put in place the policy harmonisation structures and these were in turn endorsed by UNEA-3 resolution 3/5. As operationalisation of these structures progresses and different productive sectors implement decisions of the Conference, there is a critical need for a systematic and coherent feedback from actions on the ground to inform refinement of policy to address specific implementation gaps and opportunities. This feedback loop will also enable further upscaling of success stories.

44. The policy taskforces adopted at the sixteenth session as well as at UNEA-3, should be expanded to include real time feedback of operational level actions to refine policy implementation. The environment enterprise actions which partners of the conference are supporting to create in countries through its various initiatives will provide this real-time feedback on gaps in implementation. This measurability should happen at national level where environment ministers who are part of these policy harmonisation taskforces. They should, among others, be able to report back to the Conference on gaps in implementation of its previous decisions based on reports received from these national task forces, and on how the latter have bridged these gaps to facilitate implementation. These country level experiences on bridging gaps at policy level will then inform deliberations and subsequent decisions that catalyse more implementation.

45. The Conference at the seventeenth session should endorse expansion of the policy taskforces to include systematic feedback on ground-level progress in environment and climate action enterprises established by non-state actors across the continent.

B. Catalysing Innovative Financing

46. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) estimates that the total investment required for implementation of ratified NDCs across Africa (conditional and unconditional) exceeds \$2.5 trillion. Actualising the SDGs, which overlap with the NDCs, especially through goal 13, requires at least \$1.2 trillion annually. Cumulatively, the direct financing needs for all the SDGs and NDCs is equivalent to the continent's entire GDP, translating to about \$60 billion per

country per year. Notwithstanding these astronomical amounts, Africa cannot rely on traditional public assistance with, official development assistance (ODA) having peaked at about \$40 billion. This is \$20 billion less than what is needed by just one country.

47. The implication is therefore that financing must divest from liquid cash alone, because what can be raised through traditional public development financing is insignificant and continues to decline. Countries must therefore be engaged in a paradigm of leapfrogging from such traditional financing approaches based on international direct public finance and supported to establish structures for innovative, market driven and blended financing approaches.

48. The basis for this has been laid in article 9.2 of the Paris Agreement and in high level decisions – primarily the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on sustainable financing. This agenda is buttressed by similar high-level studies - including the UNEP Inquiry Report on designing a Sustainable Financial System, the 2nd Africa Adaptation Gap Report that the Conference adopted at its 15th session.

49. To start off on this trajectory of market driven financing, the continent already contributes 20% of its total current annual adaptation needs estimated at \$15 billion. This means up to \$3 billion of adaptation costs are financed locally – through programmes of different ministries and sectors, including agriculture and energy. The strategy should be based on going beyond socially driven financing of environment and climate actions to investment financing and can start with building on the structure for risk sharing and diversification already existing in the continent.

50. For example, domestic adaptation financing should be invested in incentivising local, accessible and market-driven finance structures like cooperatives and micro-finance institution, to lend affordably to environment and climate action enterprises providing socioeconomic co-benefits. UNEP is already supporting countries establish innovative financing mechanisms that build on existing structures – including risk-sharing facilities and cooperatives – to capitalise climate action enterprises.

51. , The Cameroon cassava farmers alluded to earlier who were guided on cassava value addition, were in a cooperative that had already been pooling resources. Through these pooled resources, they were able to acquire clean energy systems to dry and mill their cassava, and as a result, earn 150% more. These extra revenues were then ploughed back into the cooperatives to enable a sustainable financing model. This is an example of going beyond social driven financing to investment financing targeted at enterprise actions.

52. The Conference should continue supporting this endeavour by calling on member States to reaffirm efforts by various agencies that drive innovative financing of environmental actions.

C. Injecting Enterprise Aspects in Environment Actions in Africa

53. Nothing is best sustained than when it is founded on an enterprise approach. Environmental actions must take an enterprise perspective to ensure uptake by non-state actors critical to developing practical solutions on the ground.

54. The Conference should call on member States to prioritise environmental actions from this enterprise perspective by supporting and enhancing such initiatives in their respective countries.

D. Enhanced Role of Non-State Actors in Implementation

55. Expecting government to formulate policy, legislate to support its implementation, undertake implementation actions, monitor implementation and report progress is not realistic. While government is responsible for creating an enabling environment – that includes enabling policy and non-policy incentives, it is non-state actors who are responsible for investing in operational level actions that unlock practical solutions.

56. In principle, governments across Africa, have established elaborate policy frameworks for ambitious climate and environment actions that unlock socioeconomic benefits. For example, over 90% of countries in Africa have ratified their NDCs. This makes Africa the region that has most ratified the Paris Agreement globally, a high-level endorsement of climate action. At national level, countries have also established enabling policies. For example, on clean energy, a major climate and development priority in Africa, nearly every country has elaborated clean energy policies that have, among their benefits, zero-rating of taxation on clean energy systems and spares.

57. Solar energy development in Africa provides a typical example. Thanks to favourable policies, the cost of solar energy in Africa has reduced by over 60% – and is the lowest on the globe. Africa's cost of solar energy is \$1.30 per watt compared to the global average of \$1.80 per watt. This is an

example of enabling policies that governments across Africa have put in place that non-state actors must leverage to drive practical solutions.

58. The Conference should strengthen non-state actor involvement in converting these policies to tangible enterprise actions across the continent by reaffirming and calling on member States to support environmental framework initiatives, that consolidate the role of non-state actors in implementation.

E. Structured Engagement of Youth

59. In Africa, the youth at 60% of the population and a super majority of 720 million persons represent the most significant non-state actor constituency that needs to be engaged for environment and climate action enterprises - that also simultaneously drive socioeconomic aims. But for this to happen, these youths must first be empowered with applicable and relevant skills. A skilled person, capable of turning challenges into enterprise opportunities is 4 times the value of produced capital and 15 times the value of natural capital. This then is to say, that a very important resource for driving climate action enterprises in Africa is a skilled youthful population.

60. Africa needs to urgently invest in youth skills retooling. This is where youth – regardless of disciplinary backgrounds – are structurally guided and inspired to refine, improve and adapt their skills to establish enterprises that drive climate and environmental action in a manner that unlocks incomes and benefits in multiple areas – the agriculture and clean energy value chains being at the core.

61. The Conference should continue supporting framework initiatives adopted in the past, that drive the establishment of enterprise incubation centres across Africa.

F. Reinforcing Partnerships:

62. It is increasingly apparent that environmental issues are too large to be addressed by any single entity but rather require the concerted efforts of all sectors of our increasingly interconnected. Regional and global society. Partnerships offer a mechanism to foster such joint action as well as an opportunity for non-traditional and non-state actors to become involved in environment and climate action and to contribute to building Africa's the prosperity. By encouraging alliances with civil society and other non-state actors, the conference offers an opportunity to accelerate implementation of its decisions through new and innovative approaches to addressing environment and climate challenges. By working with the private sector, the conference will encourage corporations and businesses to take greater responsibility not only for their environmental footprint and that of the partners with whom they do business, but to be part of the much-needed solutions for achievement of Agendas 2030 and 2063. The involvement of all actors enables holistic solutions to be found for the environmental challenges that the region faces today. Section 5 of the Paris Agreement as well as SDG 17 underscore the need for such inclusive partnerships involving both state and non-state actors to combine efforts in environment and climate action – with state actors leading in creating an enabling policy and regulatory environment to incentivise non-state actors to invest in operational level solutions that also feedback to further refine policy.

63. The Conference should emphasise this approach by calling in member States to support partnerships to bridge implementation gaps across Africa.

VII. Conclusion

64. Despite significant decisions taken over the years by the Conference, Africa lags in realising the promise of the SDGs, and under prevailing trends, all the SDGs might not be achieved. The SDGs underpin both environmental sustainability and socioeconomic prosperity that are the core of the agenda of the Conference as well as the continental vision, Agenda 2063.

65. Therefore, the urgency to accelerate progress in turning excellent decisions to action cannot be overstated. This is the reason non-state actor engagement should be urgently activated. It is why the youth, Africa's most significant non-state actor constituency by numbers, should be engaged. It is why innovative financing should become the primary financing mechanism for environment and sustainable development in the continent. It is why, environment and climate action should be premised as an enterprise opportunity, capable of profitability to guarantee longevity. It is why inclusive partnerships for implementation, should be continually reinforced.

66. Most importantly, while several examples of success exist across the continent, there is an urgent need to account for progress made. There is also a need to that ensure strategic level decisions are informed by prevailing gaps and opportunities in the context of implementation progress being made. This then calls for an effective feedback loop from ground-level actions in implementing

decisions, back to inform policy positions; a system of coherent feedback and accountability. This will ensure that future decisions being promulgated by the Conference come in to bridge specific gaps and leverage specific opportunities emanating from implementation experiences and emerging issues.

67. Considering the importance of building on established progress, the policy coherence taskforces adopted at the sixteenth session and at UNEA-3, need to be expanded to include feedback from ground level actions that are already implementing decisions of the Conference. Through this, they will inspire and mobilise actions that will define specific gaps and unlock precise and innovative opportunities for enhanced implementation as well as strengthen traceability of actions emanating from the decisions. Through the above, tangible implementation of the decisions of the Conference will be actualised to unlock over \$195 billion per year worth of SDGs implementation opportunities.

VIII. Questions

68. The following questions are intended to elicit discussions.

(a) How can a system of coherent accountability for implementation of the decisions of the Conference be established such that subsequent decisions are informed by specific gaps, emerging issues and opportunities critical to catalysing more implementation successes?

(b) How can Environment Ministers enhance participation of their counterparts from non-environment productive ministries – agriculture, energy, trade, finance, planning, infrastructure – to strengthen the policy taskforces for systematic feedback of both implementation progress and gaps?

(c) What role can environment ministers play through the Conference, in supporting and reinforcing Africa's efforts on empowering youth as a significant non-state actor constituency in Africa, for environment and climate action enterprises?

(d) What role can environment ministers play through the Conference, in supporting and reinforcing efforts for the establishment of innovative financing structures for environment and climate enterprises in countries?
