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African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

Second extraordinary meeting on climate change
Copenhagen, 15–16 December 2009

Report of the second extraordinary meeting on climate change

Introduction

1. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) held its second extraordinary meeting on climate change at the Bella Centre in Copenhagen on 15 and 16 December 2009.

I. Opening of the meeting

2. The meeting was opened on Tuesday, 15 December 2009, by Ms. Buyelwa P. Sonjica, Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs of South Africa and President of AMCEN, who welcomed participants.

A. Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following AMCEN member countries: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Chad, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Kenya, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

4. It was also attended by representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; the African Union Commission; the Southern African Development Community (SADC); and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

5. A complete list of participants may be found in annex II to the present report.

B. Officers

6. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Sonjica.

C. Adoption of the agenda

7. The Conference adopted the following agenda, based on the provisional agenda prepared by the AMCEN Secretariat:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Organizational matters:
 - (a) Adoption of the agenda;
 - (b) Organization of work.

3. Presentation by the Secretary of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment on the objectives of the meeting.
4. Presentation by the chair of the African group of negotiators on the status of climate change negotiations and the African common negotiating position.
5. Deliberations on and adoption of the updated African common negotiating position and key political messages.
6. Modalities of engagement at the high-level segment of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.
7. Consideration and adoption of a draft decision on the further implementation of work by the African Ministerial Conference on climate change in Africa.
8. Closure of the meeting.

8. A point of clarification was sought on the availability of an updated report on the negotiations and the African common position, and also on when and how ministers would brief their heads of State. The Chair directed that those two issues would be taken up under agenda item 6.

D. Organization of work

9. The AMCEN Secretary explained the organization of work, an outline of which had been circulated prior to the meeting by e-mail. He drew attention to the key working documents of the meeting, highlighting their contents, and outlined the key issues under agenda items 2–9.

II. Panel presentations

10. The representative of the Sudan, speaking as chair of the Group of 77, acknowledged and welcomed the efforts by the African group of negotiators, the Group of 77 and the coordinators. Pointing out that Africa was one of the most vulnerable continents and therefore in grave danger from the impacts of climate change, he said that the Copenhagen negotiations afforded an opportunity to Africa to showcase the continent's concerns. There were already inconsistencies in the negotiations evident in the manner in which the developed countries were avoiding making any concessions. Africa must be patient and maintain its solidarity, but should continue to exercise tact, given the possibility that there would be last minute and unexpected presentations of positions and negotiations. He urged representatives to support fully the efforts of the Group of 77 and China.

11. The Chair, speaking as AMCEN President, observed that Africa had a particular strength in that it was the only continent with a united position on the issue; that position was guiding the African negotiators. Africa was also strong because the Group of 77 was chaired by the Sudan, an African country, and South Africa was part of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention. She advised ministers to take advantage of those strengths to promote what was good for Africa, recognizing such opportunities as a power that Africa should positively and strategically exploit to the continent's advantage.

12. The Commissioner of the African Union thanked the AMCEN Secretariat for having organized the meeting and commended the African group of negotiators on its sterling technical work. The group's sustained efforts should be duly acknowledged and its productive work carried forward to a successful completion. It was time for the African ministers to assert the African common position: it was therefore of crucial importance that negotiators should properly brief the ministers on the developments from the Bali climate meeting in 2007 to date, so that they in turn could brief their heads of State. Calling for continued efforts to advance the African common position, and recognizing the continent's solidarity and unity, she noted that Africa had consistently spoken with one voice and that should be maintained throughout the Copenhagen negotiation process and beyond.

13. She also recalled that, at its thirteenth ordinary session, in July 2009, the Assembly of the African Union had established the Committee of Ten, comprising selected African heads of State, and that the Committee had enhanced consultations on the climate change process. She pointed out, however, a need for back-up support for the Committee and reiterated her view that Africa could, with one voice, secure commitments useful to the continent. Her office remained at ministers' disposal in providing the necessary back-up, she said, informing representatives that Mr. Meles Zenawi,

Prime Minister of Ethiopia, would head the Committee on behalf of the African heads of State and government.

14. The Minister of Environment of Algeria, chair of the African group of negotiators, acknowledged the support accorded to the chair and the group, citing the many hours of work, late into the night, put in by the technical team. He commended the Commissioner of the African Union on the facilities made available to the experts to enable them work effectively, efficiently and in a timely manner. He stressed that Africa's position was dynamic – and, for that reason, changing – and although it was a common position, it continued to evolve. He urged representatives to bear in mind that the position was not rigid and was based on both the unity of Africa and its solidarity with other groups such as the Group of 77 and like-minded groups. He also recalled that the African common position had been accepted by the Group of 77 and China.

15. Turning to the principle of equity, he emphasized that the African position was based on equity in recognition of the principle of historical responsibility: that was why Africa was seeking compensation. That position was based on the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, while the African common position was guided in that process by the continent's shared vision. Where the two-track outcome was concerned, he pointed out that the African negotiators expected two legal decisions: the Kyoto Protocol and the long-term actions. The content of the Protocol had changed and that some elements would therefore be difficult for those parties which had not embarked on the Protocol process at all.

16. He maintained that adaptation was the greatest priority, given that Africa was the continent most vulnerable to adverse environmental impacts and would be hit by the full force of climate change and variability. On the issue of food security (in which some 13 priority sectors had been identified, including water, energy and agriculture), Africa needed to prepare for adaptation. For Africa, mitigation was a quite different undertaking from that required of the developed countries and must therefore be very viable, sustainable and accompanied by significant resources, including financing.

17. On the issue of resources, he emphasized that Africa needed new resources and drew attention, in that context, to the framework developed by the Group of 77. He pointed out, however, that there was a need to modernize and adjust financing mechanisms to render them fair, equitable, manageable and accessible.

18. He also said that technology would make it possible to democratize at various scales – country-by-country and region-by-region – by ensuring that areas of excellence were scaled up. Africa would not waver in its position vis-à-vis attempts, so to speak, to “kill” the Kyoto Protocol since that instrument constituted the basis on which Governments based their mandates. Africa had devised figures for the period 2020–2050 as indicated in the Algiers report and would not accept misinformation and misleading statements from any quarter: Africa was determined to be respected and it wanted to count; it was not its wish to create fear but it was clear that other parties wanted to create division.

19. He appealed to ministers to remember that, although united, the continent was not homogenous and there was a need for clear understanding and an awareness of what brought the continent together, in order to resist any orchestrated division. He reiterated the importance of the support provided by different parties, which was necessary to enable Africa to move forward in a manner that was irreversible. He drew attention again to the issue of sudden changes in negotiation tactics at the levels of language, transparency and associations and insisted that such moves were to be seen as mere diversionary tactics and called for calm and focus in resisting their effect.

20. The President briefed ministers on the status of the negotiations in Copenhagen, noting that on Sunday, 13 December 2009, the negotiations had finally made it possible to review the agenda and put the discussion on the two tracks with two facilitators (one appointed from the North and one from the South) and a deadline to report back on Monday, 14 December 2009, with separate reports for the Kyoto Protocol and for the Bali Action Plan to be followed by a plenary meeting. She drew attention to the agreement that there would be no agreement unless there was an agreement between all parties.

21. Where the African group was concerned, she explained that ministers would submit reports to the Committee of Ten, which would then present them to their head of delegation, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia. The membership of the high-level segment would comprise those representatives selected by the Prime Minister from among heads of State.

22. It was anticipated that documents would be prepared on the two tracks – the Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Action Plan – together with a defined agenda, to ensure a basis for the implementation of specific steps after the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties.

23. The representative of Ethiopia reiterated that, while Africa was united, it was already under immense pressures that could easily divide the continent if members were not vigilant. Africa was the continent most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and yet it deserved to suffer the least from those effects, given its insignificant contribution to greenhouse-gas emissions and climate change. Even though the problems resulting from emissions were created by industrialized countries, Africa would nevertheless join in adaptation and mitigation efforts for the sake of future generations.
24. He reiterated that, given the continent's current disadvantaged position, it needed financial resources and technological capability. In that context, proposals were being put forward for funding to the tune of some \$10 billion per annum for developing countries for adaptation. The view of the African heads of Government was that by 2015 that figure should rise to at least \$50 billion for mitigation and \$100 billion for adaptation.
25. He stressed that the negotiation process would not end in Copenhagen and put forward the view that, although some political conclusions were expected, there was also the possibility of legally binding decisions on many issues being negotiated. In that connection he stressed that Africa must ensure that such legally binding aspects of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol were maintained.
26. The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa said that Africa had a very strong negotiating position which was just and equitable and which should be staunchly defended. He urged ministers to recall the role played by civil society organizations in that process. The Commission, he said, worked to foster support for the continent on the issue of climate change and, in that context, pan-African institutions had begun looking at ways to support the Africa climate change regime and the actual implementation of the Africa climate change agenda. He reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to put together meaningful and continuing programmes of action to support climate change responses in the continent.
27. Following those panel presentations, the Conference agreed that the ministers should take up agenda item 3, using the inputs from the chair of the African group of negotiators. The Conference also agreed that, since the Minister of Environment of Algeria would meet the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, the Committee of Ten and the AMCEN Bureau could accompany him for the briefing.

III. Ministerial discussions

28. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Kenya said that a report to ministers was required, alongside a written report to be submitted to heads of State. That statement was echoed by the representative of Senegal, who indicated that the provision of a written document from the chair of the negotiators was necessary to ensure that members did not shift the focus of the African common position. He raised concerns, however, regarding the role of heads of State as negotiators.
29. The President recalled the agreement that, when heads of State arrived in Copenhagen, they must receive the relevant documents on the issues. The African common position as presented to the heads of State should be the same document that would formally be presented in the negotiations.
30. The representative of Mali endorsed the appeal made by the chair of the Group of 77 that member States must remain united, emphasizing that the statement to be delivered by the African group of negotiators must be clear and precise. The African common position should be familiar to everyone, so that there could be no deviation from it by any African party. He was of the view that African countries should not make statements on an individual basis during the plenary meetings. He also proposed that a document should be made available that gave the current status of negotiations for Africa.
31. Reaffirming Malawi's commitment to the African common position, the representative of that country warned African ministers of environment to be wary of informal invitations to such events as lunches and cocktails that could be used to compromise and divide the solidarity among African participants and the continent's common position in Copenhagen and beyond. Speaking further on the issue of divide-and-rule, the representative of Liberia cautioned African ministers and the negotiating group against allowing themselves to be compromised or short-changed.
32. Recognizing the fears expressed by other representatives that technical discussions might be turned into political negotiations, the representative of Liberia called for scientific and technical guidance since climate change negotiations were highly technical and scientific. The representative of Sierra Leone further drew attention to the need for consistency in the continuing negotiation process, recalling that decisions made by ministers in Copenhagen were binding on the rest of the continent.

33. The representative of Namibia explained that the manoeuvres by industrialized countries and other players would easily be countered if Africa remained united and he thence urged ministers to do their part in speaking with one voice. That view was also supported by the representative of Uganda, who said that Africa had set the pace and African negotiations should persist on the two-track approach and avoid being lured by bilateral meetings into the formation of divisions. The representative of Egypt insisted that African ministers should agree on the principles and main issues that underpinned the African common position.

34. The representative of Nigeria emphasized that Africa must remain united, that the negotiations should continue to follow the two-track approach and that the experts should continue providing technical inputs. That position was endorsed by the representative of Burkina Faso, who indicated that the decisions taken to respond on the basis of the Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Action Plan already showed that Africa was upholding the continent's common position.

35. The representative of Senegal, recalling that the continuity of the Kyoto Protocol was more relevant than before to the issue of emissions, highlighted an apparent lack of will from Annex I countries. He insisted that Africa must at all times be on its guard against diversionary tactics that might emanate from some partners. With regard to the figures being tabled, he maintained that those should be clear; the reduction emissions should not be less than 45 per cent; and African countries should not deviate from the African common position. He also urged ministers to engage consistently in consultations with heads of State and key negotiators, so that the process did not remain a matter of just two leaders.

36. The representative of the United Republic of Tanzania called for agreement on numbers and asked whether fellow representatives would support 450 ppm or 350 ppm, considering that the emissions reduction rate should be 45 per cent. On the issue of emissions reductions, the representative of Mauritius said that there was perhaps a need to compel Annex I parties to respect the Kyoto Protocol and to take action on greenhouse-gas reductions, emphasizing the importance of legally binding instruments for climate change management. He added that adaptation remained a top priority for Africa.

37. Expressing support for the Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Action Plan, the representative of Côte d'Ivoire maintained that, taking due account of historical responsibilities, the polluter-pays principle should be honoured by industrialized countries. The representative of Kenya said that Annex I countries might be pressing for China to be brought on board so that China could also be compelled to reduce its emissions by over 30 per cent.

38. The representative of the Congo asked what the acceptable levels should be, relative to other continental positions, such as the American position, and how Africa could ensure that the Conference of the Parties took due account of the particular vulnerability of Africa to the adverse effects of climate change. The same concern was raised by the representative of Zambia, who expressed dismay that Annex I countries were showing themselves unwilling to make a commitment to the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol if any one of the parties was not prepared to commit itself: in other words, Annex I countries did not appear to be willing to support the African common position if the United States of America did not support it. She also sought clarification on what position Africa would take, if that situation prevailed, and if by Friday, 18 December, there was no negotiated settlement. She reiterated that Africa was not seeking favours as a continent. Africa should not have to bear the costs of the actions of industrialized countries. The representative of Rwanda was of the opinion that if there was no agreement by Friday, 18 December, the process should be postponed.

39. The President clarified that heads of State would take decisions based on the recommendations that would be brought before them.

40. Some areas that continued to require agreement were identified by the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania, who strongly supported the retention of the Kyoto Protocol and the continuation of technology and capacity-building efforts. Those areas included: the issue of numbers – carbon emission concentrations: those need to be reinforced and the African common position should be upheld; the issue of yearly financing – as computed by a United Nations Development Programme study, Africa needed \$86 billion a year for adaptation; reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) – noting that Africa needed to agree whether to go for fund-based or market-based mechanisms. She made reference to Articles 4.3 and 4.0 of the Convention, pointing out that, under the provisions of Article 12 of the Kyoto Protocol, there were discussion forums of the market mechanisms approach. She proposed the use of fund-based mechanisms.

41. On the issue of compensation and equity, the issue of the moral and human rights implications of climate change was introduced by the representative of Uganda, who explained its relevance and explained that Africa was suffering from the consequences of climate change caused by historical emissions of greenhouse gases by industrialized countries. She was concerned that those countries were not dealing with and responding to the moral and human rights issues surrounding the vulnerability of the African continent and the question of its very survival, which was directly jeopardized by their actions. She emphasized that Africa was insisting on its rights and calling for compensation for those unjustly and adversely affected. Africa was willing to support and cooperate in the negotiation process, but it was demanding adaptation actions, including the implementation of national adaptation programmes of action.
42. Drawing attention, likewise, to the issue of the moral responsibility of the industrialized countries, the representative of Kenya said that what he termed “the preachers of democracy” would need to uphold their own moral uprightness by taking responsibility.
43. Highlighting the priorities for Africa, the representative of Cameroon supported the adaptation process for Africa.
44. On financing mechanisms and the role of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), representatives who took the floor expressed a wide range of views. The representative of Burkina Faso called for the creation of a fund that would be administered and managed by the parties themselves. At the same time, however, he sought clarification, in that context, of the role of GEF and how long it would take for a new financing mechanism to be fully and effectively implemented. He expressed the view that, GEF weaknesses notwithstanding, it could be reformed and improved, arguing that it could take time before any new mechanism became operational and effective.
45. The representative of the Congo said that in practice, when new funding mechanisms were promised, it took time to set them up, and that in general Africa had no control of that process and was not sufficiently well informed about such mechanisms. Expressing concern about the implementing agencies for the new financing mechanisms, he called for the multiple funding sources available to be harmonized. He recalled that, at the eleventh session of AMCEN in Brazzaville, in 2006, a decision had been reached on the creation of an African environment facility in the African Development Bank, given the difficulties related to securing funds through GEF. A sustainable development facility was also in existence, he said, stressing the need for GEF to undertake reforms as soon as possible.
46. The representative of Zambia proposed that a new financing mechanism that enabled access and functioned effectively under the guidance of parties was needed. The representative of the United Republic of Tanzania suggested that Africa should focus on a financial mechanism and not institutions, elaborating that, whatever the mechanism, it should have a balanced representation and effective access and that those properties should serve as the guiding principles for selecting the best financing option.
47. The President of AMCEN expressed her view that three options were emerging from discussions on GEF: that it should be reformed; that it should be rejected; or that a new proposal should be tabled. She suggested that a proposal could be developed setting out the three options.
48. The representative of Uganda expressed a readiness to discuss reforming the GEF mechanism, but on the strict condition that the funding was available, and that the length of time to secure funds would be drastically improved. Similarly, the representative of Côte d’Ivoire supported the view that GEF should be reformed to ensure that it functioned effectively and efficiently. The representative of Namibia was also of the view that positive changes to GEF would be welcome and wondered whether members could consider what he termed “individual pledges”.
49. The representative of Senegal recommended that GEF should exist and should be strengthened to bring it as close as possible to user countries by overcoming the access difficulties experienced in the past. In addition, he recalled the possibility of using existing regional organizations through which additional funds could be disbursed throughout Africa.
50. The representative of Ghana supported the view that GEF needed to be reformed and suggested that, in the interim, a new funding mechanism could be put in place with geographical representation, and kept in operation for a period of two or three years, until the GEF reform was accomplished. The representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo supported the proposed idea of a phased approach.

51. On the question of financing, the representative of Kenya indicated that the gross domestic product figures should be taken as the basis for funding and, in that context, cited the example of Kenya: the country's climate change strategy required \$10 billion to identify areas for projects and to implement those projects. Accordingly, he advocated adequate, new and additional resources to enable African countries to tackle the adverse impacts of climate change and variability. He also proposed that the role of UNEP on the future of the environment should be reviewed, giving consideration in particular to governance issues, and proposed that UNEP could perhaps be upgraded to a world environmental organization which would be entitled to predictable and reliable funding.

52. The representative of Gabon supported the ideas put forward by the representative of Kenya on the role of UNEP and noted that while it was moving through that negotiations process Africa needed a world environment organization with funds that were predictable and reliable. On the issue of financing mechanisms and GEF, he therefore supported the idea of a funding organization. Where the selection of GEF as the funding mechanism was concerned, as the problems besetting GEF were well known, consideration should be given to the African Development Bank instead. He recalled, however, that, while there was universal support for the reform of GEF, the Group of 77 rejected the idea that GEF should hold the new funding mechanism.

53. The representative of Togo suggested that a proposal could be developed on the issue of a mechanism that captured all the new ideas put forward and ensured that those suggestions were respected and given due consideration. The representative of Egypt supported the proposal that GEF should be reformed, in particular with specific improvements relating to the accessibility of funds and the transparency of its operations.

IV. Presentation by the Secretary of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

54. At the invitation of the President, the AMCEN Secretary made a brief presentation on the implementation of the AMCEN decision regarding Africa's preparations for the development of a common negotiating position on a comprehensive international climate change regime beyond 2012. He acknowledged the support provided by AMCEN partners, and gave a brief account of the outcomes attained from the meetings held under the auspices of AMCEN, namely, the meetings of the African high-level expert panel on climate change; some meetings of the African group of negotiators; the subregional consultative meetings for Central and Eastern Africa; the technical meeting of African experts on climate change held in October 2009 in Addis Ababa; and the special session on climate change of AMCEN held in Nairobi in May 2009.

55. African countries had a common position adopted by AMCEN and endorsed by the African Union. African countries would speak with one voice and make political statements in Copenhagen based on agreed positions reached through the various consultations made in the course of developing Africa's shared vision and its common negotiating position. There appeared to be a disconnection between the highest political levels and the negotiators even at the global level. In conclusion, he stressed that Africa's political leadership should agree on the irreducible minimum for the continent ahead of the high-level segment in Copenhagen, since those would inform Africa's acceptance of the politically binding agreement likely to be reached in Copenhagen as its overarching outcome.

V. Summary by the President of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

56. The President noted with concern the persistent unofficial reports that an advance document was being prepared which would be imposed at a particular time as the final outcome of the Copenhagen meeting. She warned ministers to be vigilant since, according to those reports, some heads of State were already being lobbied for their support. In that context, she condemned the allegations put about by countries intent on fomenting division and urged Africa to be alert to such divisive rumours. Arguing that the continent's engagement in Copenhagen necessitated a certain measure of give and take, she urged representatives to bear in mind that Africa was firmly focused on, and unequivocal in its commitment to, the two-track approach. She further reiterated the need to consolidate the African common position continuously with strategic partners such as the Group of 77 and China.

57. She called for negotiations to continue, stressing the need for Africa to maintain pressure on the content of any agreement and to ensure that the negotiating processes were transparent, inclusive, bottom-up and participatory. On the Kyoto Protocol she confirmed that there were no targets on the table as yet, noting that the aggregated target being offered by the developed countries was between 18 and 23 per cent, rather than the targeted 25–40 per cent below the 1990 baseline prescribed by scientists. The consequence of that, she said, was that the Annex I Parties would emit even more and therefore encroach still further on the development space of the developing countries.

58. She drew attention to reports that there had been a shift in the African common position from 450 to 350 ppm carbon dioxide equivalent concentration and, accordingly, from 2° C to 1.5° C global temperature increase. The figures had not been changed in a very consultative manner by the experts. Even though there was room for some flexibility, such decisions would have to be endorsed by the ministers responsible for the future of Africa. The agreement earlier reached was that the figures would be 450 ppm and 2° C, as opposed to 350 ppm and 1.5° C.

59. In response, the representative of Kenya, concurring with those views, reaffirmed that the figures should stand as they were in the African common position because any measure of flexibility vis-à-vis that position would likely be exploited with the aim of derailing the negotiations for the African continent. Representatives agreed that the original figures should be maintained.

60. The President requested ministers to identify the redlines and determine the bottom line in their negotiating position, and to have that presented formally to ministers. On financing, she said that there were no financial commitments on the table and very little for mitigation or the first track. Where new financing mechanisms and GEF were concerned, there were a number of options and the ministers would be presented with three or four of those, together with a justification for each.

61. She concurred with the remarks by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire that adaptation was – as he termed it – a priority of priorities. The importance of adaptation was further heightened by the fact that Africa was the most vulnerable continent, yet very little money had been allocated for climate change programmes there. There was a need to campaign for more financing. She suggested that African ministers should have at their disposal a precise summary of the African common position and a comprehensive document that provided details on the status of the negotiations.

62. On Wednesday, 16 December, the President reported that in her discussions with the Prime Minister of Ethiopia held the previous evening, as directed by AMCEN, the Prime Minister had confirmed that the Nairobi Declaration on the African Process for Combating Climate Change would continue to guide ministers in the negotiation process. In view of that agreement, he had indicated that individual countries were at liberty to make statements on key issues of the African common position during the plenary meetings. He had clarified that his presentation to the African ministers at the AMCEN meeting of Tuesday, 15 December, in which he had emphasized that the priority for Africa was funding, did not in any way imply that the other issues in the common position were not important, but that he had focused on what he deemed to be the continent's priority.

63. The President said that, acting on her own initiative, she had carried out some damage control by drafting a press statement which she had read to the ministers, with the hope that they might endorse it before its release. In preparing the draft press statement, she had remained mindful that the Prime Minister's statement had caused both confusion and concern not just among the ministers and negotiators but also among the general public in African countries. The press statement was mainly about managing the crisis and concerns that might have arisen among groups and partners supporting

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