



African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

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African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
Twelfth session
Johannesburg, 10–12 June 2008

Report of the ministerial segment held from 10 to 12 June 2008

Introduction

1. The ministerial segment of the twelfth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was held in Johannesburg from 10 to 12 June 2008.
2. It was attended by ministers from AMCEN member States and representatives of African regional and subregional organizations, United Nations agencies, secretariats of various environmental conventions and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The full list of participants at the twelfth session may be found in document UNEP/AMCEN/EMG/12/INF/6.

I. Opening of the ministerial segment of the twelfth session

A. Opening statements

3. The ministerial segment was officially opened by Mr. André Okombi Salissa, Minister of Tourism and Environment of the Congo and President of AMCEN, at 3.45 p.m. on Tuesday, 10 June 2008.
4. Opening statements were also made by Mr. Marthinus van Schalkwyk, Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism of South Africa, Mr. Babagana Ahmadu, Director of the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture of the Commission of the African Union, and Mr. Achim Steiner, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
5. In his opening statement, Mr. van Schalkwyk outlined the challenges currently facing humanity in terms of the rising world population and the concomitant increase in demands for water, energy and food resources. He called upon Africa to take a leading role in the debates on international environmental governance and to ensure that the continent's concerns and interests were at the forefront of United Nations environmental reform. He suggested, first, that an office of chief scientist should be established within UNEP, to serve as the authoritative voice on the environment; second, that serious and properly resourced efforts should be made to implement the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building and, third, that UNEP should be requested to lead an audit of the funding for environment-related activities available within the United Nations system.
6. Noting that a road map to the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Copenhagen in 2009, had been adopted at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali in 2007, he said that, as

AMCEN ministers, they should agree on an African road map for climate negotiations to demonstrate that Africa was well prepared and united, given that the continent was particularly vulnerable to climate change as a result of multiple stresses and low adaptive capacity. In conclusion, he called for a more empowering framework that would enable effective capacity-building, technology transfer and financing.

7. In his statement, Mr. Ahmadu thanked the Government and people of South Africa for hosting the meeting and expressed the Commission's gratitude to UNEP for its unwavering support to AMCEN and its invaluable role in shaping the environmental agenda of the African continent. He also conveyed the greetings of Mr. Jean Ping, the new chair of the Commission. Noting the likely integration of AMCEN into the specialized technical committee structure of the African Union, he reiterated the Commission's commitment to working together with UNEP and other partners to ensure the successful implementation of the AMCEN programmes. Relations between the Commission and UNEP had been strengthened by the establishment in Addis Ababa of the UNEP office for liaison with the African Union.

8. He outlined a number of the new programmes being developed by the Commission and its partners, including the Climate for Development in Africa programme (ClimDevAfrica), which would enhance the use of climate information for development in Africa while supporting adaptation to climate change; the African Monitoring of the Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD) project, which would use satellite-based technology to monitor environmental change to assist policy development; the Great Green Wall for the Sahara initiative, which would help to prevent land degradation in the Sahel and Sahara; and a disaster risk reduction programme. He conveyed the Commission's support for the annual celebration of Africa Environment Day. In conclusion, he highlighted the current rapid rise in global food prices, which had severely affected Africa and required a firm and coordinated global response.

9. In his statement, Mr. Steiner said that, while the world's attention was often turned towards the economic and environmental issues affecting Asia, much less attention was paid to the almost 1 billion people living in Africa. A possible reason, he said, was the difficulty faced in finding a single voice for the many diverse countries in Africa; in that respect, AMCEN had a crucial role. The view of Africa as a region of wide open spaces was no longer valid as its environmental resources came under increasing pressure, with large areas of land degraded and water and food shortages worsening. In the crisis-beset modern world, development choices were being made that were not tilted in favour of the long-term well-being of the people of Africa, but geared more towards achieving short-term economic benefits. Sufficient information was available to challenge that development paradigm and the launch of the atlas on the changing African environment offered a further means of demonstrating the cumulative impacts of those development choices on the continent.

10. Noting the widespread misconception that the environment was marginal to the central development agenda, he urged those present to take every opportunity to challenge that myth, particularly the contradiction that, while environmental resources underpinned economic development strategies, environmental protection was commonly viewed as a constraint to development. In the lead-up to the Copenhagen climate conference in December 2009, it was crucial that Africa articulated a compelling and well-informed agenda on climate change if it was to reap the benefits of such instruments as the Clean Development Mechanism. Biodiversity issues presented a similar challenge, bearing in mind that access and benefit-sharing represented one of the three pillars of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Lastly, he reaffirmed the determination of UNEP to work with and through AMCEN in its efforts to develop a more audible voice in global policy-making.

11. In his opening statement, Mr. Salissa pointed out that the twelfth session of AMCEN was opening against a backdrop of international tension, with various natural phenomena wreaking havoc around the globe. He said that, over the period June 2006–May 2008, AMCEN had been working continuously to confront the threats facing Africa in particular. Thanking the various partner institutions for their support, he cited examples of progress during that period, such as the development of subregional environmental action plans and the publication of *Africa: Atlas of Our Changing Environment*. He expressed concern, however, that there was no lead institution to undertake work on invasive alien species.

12. He said that the objective of the twelfth session of AMCEN was to provide ministers with a framework that would enable them to examine the work already completed in the implementation of the environment initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and thereby improve its execution. He explained that the ministerial segment would provide the opportunity for policy dialogue on climate change and the Bali Action Plan; financing adaptation and environmental programmes and

projects; and international environmental governance and United Nations reform. The conclusions of those discussions would be submitted to the African Union at its forthcoming summit. He set out the challenges facing Africa, including land degradation, loss of biodiversity and deforestation, and said that there was much work to be done, lest the social and biophysical tipping point be reached. In conclusion, he called for environmental education at all levels and said that it was possible to attain Africa's dreams – but that doing so would require significant effort.

B. Launch of the publication *Africa: Atlas of Our Changing Environment*

13. The publication *Africa: Atlas of Our Changing Environment* was launched officially by the President of AMCEN, who urged the assembled ministers to promote the atlas in their countries to help raise awareness of the problems of climate change.

II. Organizational matters

A. Election of officers

14. The following countries were elected to serve on the Bureau of AMCEN for the period 2008–2009:

Subregion	Country	Position
Central Africa	Gabon	Vice-President
Eastern Africa	Eritrea	Vice-President
North Africa	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Vice-President
Southern Africa	South Africa	President
West Africa	Burkina Faso	Rapporteur

15. On assuming the presidency, Mr. van Schalkwyk commended the outgoing members of the Bureau on their work and the outgoing president on his outstanding leadership. He emphasized that AMCEN had a key role to play in harmonizing programmes and initiatives in Africa, especially those related to climate change. Expressing concern about the apparent divide-and-rule policy followed by the developed countries in relation to climate change, he stressed the need for Africa to put in place agreed common positions on climate change, in order to combat such divisive tactics, and pledged the determination of South Africa to strive to attain the objectives of AMCEN.

B. Adoption of the agenda

16. The ministers adopted the following agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda prepared by the secretariat (UNEP/AMCEN/12/1):

1. Opening of the twelfth session.
2. Organizational matters:
 - (a) Election of officers;
 - (b) Adoption of the agenda;
 - (c) Organization of work.
3. Consideration of the report of the expert group meeting.
4. Ministerial policy dialogue.
5. Consideration of matters related to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment process:
 - (a) Amendments to the constitution of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment;

- (b) Status of the general trust fund of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment.
- 6. Country and subregion case studies.
- 7. Consideration of some matters related to the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.
- 8. Venue for the thirteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment.
- 9. Adoption of the report of the ministerial segment.
- 10. Other matters.
- 11. Closure of the session.

C. Organization of work

- 17. The President of AMCEN introduced the draft programme of work and the list of documents for the ministerial segment contained in annexes I and II to the annotated provisional agenda (UNEP/AMCEN/12/1/Add.1).

III. Consideration of the report of the Expert Group segment

- 18. The Chair of the expert group segment, held from 7 to 9 June 2008, presented the report of the segment, contained in document UNEP/AMCEN/EGM/12/3, drawing attention to the salient points in the group's deliberations and introducing the draft declaration and decisions prepared by the experts and submitted for consideration and possible adoption by the ministers. In addition, the experts had reviewed and introduced modifications to the programme of work of AMCEN. The amended programme of work would be circulated in due course by the secretariat.
- 19. Following a discussion, in which a number of ministers proposed amendments to the text of the decisions and the declaration, the ministers adopted, as orally amended, the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment Johannesburg Declaration on the Environment for Sustainable Development, as contained in annex I to the present report, and the decisions, as contained in annex II.

IV. Ministerial policy dialogue: President's summary

A. Introduction

- 20. The policy dialogues were introduced by Ms. Juliette Biao-Koudenoukpo, Minister for the Environment of Benin, Ms. Halima Tayo Alao, Minister of Environment, Housing and Urban Development of Nigeria, and Mr. Momodou Cham, Minister of State of Forestry and the Environment
- 21. of the Gambia. In the introductions to the policy dialogues, the respective chairs expressed condolences to the Governments and people of Kenya and the Sudan on tragic aviation accidents in those countries the previous day, sentiments which were echoed by ministers in their statements during the dialogue.
- 22. In their dialogue, ministers debated issues grouped under the following three headings: "Africa's Climate Roadmap: from Johannesburg through Africa to Copenhagen", "Financing NEPAD implementation" and "Africa's vision for international environmental governance".

B. Dialogue

1. Africa's Climate Roadmap: from Johannesburg through Africa to Copenhagen

23. In their statements, many representatives underscored the importance of the decision and outcomes of the United Nations Climate Change Conference¹ held in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007, in particular the agreement on the Bali Action Plan, which set 2009 as the end date for negotiations on strengthening the climate regime beyond 2012. Representatives also noted that Africa had a shared vision on adaptation and mitigation, using a sustainable development policies and measures approach, supported and enabled by finance, technology and capacity-building. It was agreed that Africa must speak with one voice in advancing the continent's interests in negotiations for the climate regime beyond 2012.

24. Given that intensive negotiations were needed to achieve an outcome by the end of 2009, representatives stressed the need for Africa to identify the key political messages to inform the global debate and negotiating process, in terms both of the commitments that it sought from the international community, and also of the actions that African countries would take themselves. The Bali Action Plan offered Africa the opportunity to build consensus on the complex issues of climate change and sustainable development, to the benefit of the continent. Many representatives stressed the importance for an African consensus on ways of enhancing implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol beyond Copenhagen, on the basis of the established principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

25. For the development of an African common position as part of the African Roadmap to Copenhagen, representatives proposed an African high-level expert panel on climate change, to include senior officials, and African focal points for the Framework Convention on Climate Change, working in collaboration with UNEP, NEPAD and the Commission of the African Union and mandated to develop a draft common position, including a plan of action for building consensus in the region and supporting a focused and coordinated approach to the climate change negotiations. It was noted that, at its twelfth session, AMCEN had decided to establish a work programme with milestones for the development of the common position, with the President of AMCEN mandated to steer the African Roadmap process.

26. Representatives also welcomed Algeria's offer to host the first meeting of the planned AMCEN high-level expert panel, working towards the African ministerial meeting on climate change to be held in Algiers in October 2008 and the adoption of a final common position at the special session of AMCEN to be held in June–July 2009 in the margins of the thirteenth African Union Summit. In addition, they welcomed the decision of the joint annual meeting of the African Union Conference of African Ministers of Economy and Finance and the Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), to establish an Africa climate-change policy centre at ECA, and highlighted its role in supporting the development of an African consensus. Other representatives suggested that UNEP, the Commission of the African Union and the secretariat of NEPAD were well placed to assist in that regard.

27. Among the specific suggestions made in the policy dialogue, representatives outlined the following elements for the process of developing a common position:

(a) Africa agreed to put forward a shared vision based on scientific evidence and broad political consensus. That shared vision would have several key elements: the future climate-change regime should accommodate the priorities for Africa of sustainable development, poverty reduction and attainment of the Millennium Development Goals; increased support should be provided under the regime for capacity-building, financing and technology development and transfer for adaptation and mitigation in Africa; and the stabilization of emissions in the atmosphere;

(b) With regard to the need to keep global atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases at a manageable level, Africa should seek agreement on a future global emissions reduction regime with targets for all developed countries to reduce their emissions, by 2020, towards the upper end of the 25-40 per cent range for emissions reductions below 1990 levels, and, by 2050, by between 80 and 95 per cent below those levels, to achieve the concentration of 450 ppm of carbon dioxide equivalent in the atmosphere. With developed countries taking the lead in that regard, developing countries would be

¹ The United Nations Climate Change summit in Bali, Indonesia, consisted of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

able to deviate substantially from “business-as-usual” baseline emissions, enabled and supported by finance, technology and capacity-building from developed countries, in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner;

(c) Adaptation in Africa must be given higher priority in order to balance it with mitigation on the international negotiating agenda. The future regime should emphasize assisting developing countries with adaptation technologies, finance and capacity-building. The adoption and further development of Africa’s indigenous knowledge relating to sustainable development and natural resource management were critical for successful adaptation programmes in Africa;

(d) Significantly upscaled adaptation financing, that was new and additional and that did not divert existing overseas development assistance away from poverty eradication and other development priorities, must be channeled through the Kyoto Protocol’s Adaptation Fund. Representatives expressed concern that some existing climate funds were largely mitigation-oriented and stressed that Africa must ensure that funds were to be made available for concrete adaptation projects;

(e) The importance of a coherent financial architecture for climate change, guided by agreed principles and with equitable governance, was stressed. Regarding access to the international climate funds, representatives called for the simplification of procedures and the removal of conditionalities. They also underscored the importance of climate-friendly investment flows and stressed that Africa must use the opportunity created by the current negotiating processes to act immediately and create enabling conditions for the rapid transition of African countries away from carbon-intensive development towards a low carbon economy and society. Africa must position itself to build international competitiveness within the emerging low-carbon global economy and must work to structure the climate change regime in a way that enabled it to build its own competitive advantages and to reach economic development and sustainable development goals while decarbonizing growth;

(f) Representatives attached importance to the carbon markets, and the Clean Development Mechanism in particular. Engagement by all developed countries in ambitious multilateral, legally binding, absolute emission reductions was critical in securing the carbon market. It was noted that carbon markets could provide some incentives for available commercial technologies but their financing must be supplemented by private sector financial flows and massively scaled-up public investment;

(g) It was noted that there was a need to rectify the skewed distribution of Clean Development Mechanism projects at the international level, and to rationalize financial and investment frameworks and mechanisms. Representatives stressed the need to negotiate improvements to the Clean Development Mechanism rules to enable Africans to take advantage of funds from the carbon market to support sustainable development and the transfer of climate-friendly technologies to Africa. Many representatives supported efforts by African countries to increase the share of Clean Development Mechanism projects in Africa, while several highlighted the need for institutional capacity-building and awareness-raising and for the private sector to become more actively involved in carbon trading;

(h) National growth and poverty reduction aspirations remained key imperatives and could be supported through increased investment and incentives for technological innovations, including incentives to support home-grown technology. Representatives also called for direct access to funds and for the creation of mechanisms for the development, transfer and uptake of mitigation and adaptation technologies;

(i) Representatives emphasized the importance of regional preparations for the Copenhagen meeting in 2009 and stressed that regional strategies for implementation were also important. Representatives also called for the involvement of women and young people in climate strategies at all levels, particularly in the areas of education and awareness-raising and capacity-building. Others highlighted the need to include the private sector and civil-society organizations in order to ensure an effective African response to climate change;

(j) On international cooperation and solidarity, representatives proposed that Africa should renew partnerships on an equitable basis with, among others, the Group of Eight, China, India, Japan, South America and the European Union, through concrete projects in Africa to deal with the global problem of climate change at the continental and subregional levels.

2. Financing for NEPAD implementation

28. On the issue of gaining access to financing mechanisms, representatives stressed the need to simplify the various mechanisms for the expeditious allocation of funds once country and regionally driven needs had been identified. New reforms and simplification of procedure, including the reduction of conditionalities, must be adopted as a matter of urgency as most developing countries lacked access

to adequate sources of funding. Partnerships between the public and private sectors should be enhanced and strengthened. Capacity-building and the development of technology were also identified as priorities.

29. Regarding the financing of environment programmes, there was a need to refocus the discussion on how Africa could ensure the sustainable use and management of its rich environmental resources. The environment should take centre stage in economic and development activities, in order to ensure true sustainable development where all three pillars – economic, social and environmental – were placed on an equal and integrated footing.

30. Representatives said that a suite of funding mechanisms, investment structures and policy tools would be required to overcome barriers associated with the various types of technology and stages of technology development. For the wider deployment for existing technology, the price gap must be closed. For retrofitting, refurbishment and rehabilitation projects, the challenge was to overcome the overcapitalization risk. Venture capital would be required for bringing near-commercial technologies to the market, whereas public-private investment would be required for technology research and development of a longer term nature. There was a call for African countries also to source funds from outside the convention process. In addition, Africa should insist on an effective and equitable carbon price.

31. Representatives stressed the need to take full advantage of the NEPAD capital flows initiative and urged the African Development Bank to provide additional environmental finance.

32. Representatives further stressed the need to increase domestic resource mobilization. Resource mobilization efforts often fell short for a number of reasons. For example, accessibility of many of the global funding mechanisms continued to be a problem, and funding for NEPAD programmes might not necessarily be a priority for Governments faced with competing demands for finance. One approach would be to consider integrating environmental priorities into national planning processes to attract support from national budgetary allocations. Other representatives said that financing for adaptation must be additional to the existing commitment of developed countries to provide 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product to development assistance.

33. There was a strong call for the African Development Bank to clarify formally its position on the long-standing request by AMCEN and the African Union for the establishment of the African Environment Facility.

34. Representatives recognized the important role of GEF but encouraged it to undertake a serious review of its co-financing principles, and to use vulnerability criteria in the allocation of resources based on countries' needs and priorities.

35. Representatives noted the World Bank's proposals on new climate investment funds.

36. Representatives recognized that, as African ministers, they must plan in an integrated way, identify their needs and priorities for support, and not leave planning and prioritization to donors.

3. Africa's vision for international environmental governance

37. Noting the challenge posed by the proliferation of agreements and conventions which demanded ever-increasing resources and capacity to ensure their effective implementation, representatives stressed the need to engage the African Union and, through that body, to build capacity to ensure the national operationalization of multilateral and regional environmental conventions and agreements, in particular the Convention for the Protection, Management, and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region, the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West, Central and Southern African Region, the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa. The full implementation of UNEP Governing Council decision SS.VII/1 on international environmental governance – often referred to as the "Cartagena package" – was stressed.

38. Representatives stressed the need for AMCEN to participate in the global discussion on international environmental governance and to bring an African vision to the negotiation process. Other representatives expressed the need to establish a think tank as a working group to guide Africa's positioning in and input on international environment governance. The AMCEN President and Bureau were urged to consider establishing a process to prepare a consolidated African position on that subject

and to convene preparatory processes to ensure the enhanced participation of African negotiators in international meetings on international environmental governance.

39. Representatives expressed the need to examine the strategic role of AMCEN in regional governance and its cooperation with the growing intergovernmental machinery in Africa, such as the African Ministers' Council on Water, the Forum of Energy Ministers in Africa and the structures of the African Union.

40. Many representatives asked whether AMCEN should review its institutional and governance structures and discussed the measures to be taken to enhance and strengthen AMCEN, to structure the agenda of meetings to focus on strategic political issues, related to the environment in particular, and to encourage participation at the highest level.

41. There was a strong sense that AMCEN should play a key role in taking Africa's environmental agenda to the international community, and, through the structures of the African Union, act as Africa's environmental conscience and voice. The proposal was supplemented by the suggestion for AMCEN also to tackle issues of national environmental governance and work towards greater harmonization of environmental policies and programmes.

42. Representatives called for a review of the role of African ministers of environment and their contribution to the sustainability agenda. They underscored the need to bring the global debate on environmental issues to the forefront of the developmental debate and to ensure that environment concerns were at the heart of political and economic decision-making at the national and global levels. Representatives highlighted the need to make the notion of sustainability central to ministries of environment and to use those notions as the basis for a future role for UNEP in that field. It was emphasized that form must follow function.

43. Representatives highlighted the need for stronger involvement of ministries of finance and of foreign affairs to support the AMCEN programme at the national level. They also highlighted the need to engage with ambassadors in Nairobi and New York.

44. Representatives called for a review of environmental financing and, in particular, the role of GEF.

45. Many representatives supported the idea of transforming UNEP into a central, rather than marginal, player at the intergovernmental level. They also called for the effective mobilization and use of resources (finance, technology, knowledge and capacity) for actual implementation of environmentally sustainable development interventions.

46. In relation to enhancing the leadership role of UNEP within the United Nations system, representatives suggested a number of innovative measures, such as:

- (a) Enhancing the role of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in providing policy advice and guidance;
- (b) Establishing UNEP as authoritative voice on the environment by strengthening scientific knowledge and assessment capacity;
- (c) Bridging the gap from science to policy implementation;

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