



Distr.: General
18 May 2010

Original: English

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

Expert group
Thirteenth meeting
Bamako, 21–25 June 2010

Interim draft indicative work programme of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment for the biennium 2011–2012

Note by the secretariat

I. Proposals for the indicative work programme for the biennium 2011–2012

A. Introduction

1. The African region offers significant potential for human, social and economic development. It is, however, facing huge challenges. Rising levels of poverty and inappropriate development practices are among the main factors influencing the state of the environment in Africa. Other factors that have led to continued environmental degradation include climate change, land degradation and desertification, biodiversity loss, drought and other natural disasters, disease, ineffective development policies, unfavourable terms of trade and debt.

2. The preparation of the work programme of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) has in recent years taken into account the commitments made by heads of State and others in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted in New York in September 2000; in the action plan of the environment initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); in chapter VIII of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002; in the Millennium Development Goals; and in the aims of and decisions by AMCEN at its sessions.

3. It is therefore noteworthy that the main objective of the current session is to provide a platform for environment ministers to deliberate on substantive issues of importance to Africa that must be tackled in the context of desertification, continuing negotiations on climate change and biodiversity. The ministers will consider the indicative AMCEN work programme for 2011–2012. They will also review progress made towards Africa's preparations for developing a common negotiating position on a comprehensive international climate change regime beyond 2012; the development of a comprehensive framework of African climate change programmes; and Africa's preparations for developing a common negotiating position on an international regime on access to and the sharing of the benefits of genetic resources.

4. The ministers will also deliberate on the new status of AMCEN as a specialized technical committee of the African Union and on the status and use of the AMCEN trust fund. The available records show that member States have been contributing to the fund at a rather low rate, hampering the effective implementation of AMCEN decisions and its work programme. There is, therefore, a pressing

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need for ministers to make critical assessments and give further guidance on how contributions to the trust fund can be enhanced.

5. The ministers will reconsider the revised draft constitution, which was amended pursuant to the recommendations of ministers at the eighth session, endorsed at the ninth session and referred for further consideration at the tenth, eleventh and twelfth sessions.

6. The expert group will bring emerging issues, such as chemicals, to the attention of the ministers for their consideration. The group will also highlight a review of work being undertaken on the implementation of the action plan of the environment initiative of NEPAD.

B. Action plan of the environment initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development

7. The action plan of the environment initiative of NEPAD is a coherent, strategic and long-term programme of action prepared to promote Africa's sustainable development. This is consistent with the emphasis placed by NEPAD on measures that will ensure that the continent is able to confront its short-term economic growth challenges without losing sight of long-term environmental, poverty-eradication and social development imperatives. Sustainable development is a long-term undertaking and can only be achieved through investments in the future. Thus, the action plan of the environment initiative of NEPAD takes a long-term approach. It involves processes, projects and related activities that are aimed at enlarging Africa's economic prospects through sustainable environmental management.

8. The action plan of the environment initiative of NEPAD was prepared at the continental level. The following six thematic areas were selected through consultative and participatory processes: combating land degradation, drought and desertification; conservation of Africa's wetlands; prevention, control and management of invasive alien species; conservation and sustainable use of marine, coastal and freshwater resources; combating climate change in Africa; and transboundary conservation or management of natural resources.

9. The cross-cutting issues set out in the action plan include: health and environment; transfer of environmentally sound technologies; assessment of and early warning on natural disasters; and the environment directory of NEPAD.

10. A publication on the action plan, giving details on the thematic areas and the cross-cutting issues, can be found on the AMCEN website.¹

11. The implementation of the action plan began in 2004. The African Union Commission, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (formerly the NEPAD secretariat) and AMCEN are each implementing aspects of the action plan.

12. AMCEN is responsible for the implementation of its work programme and relevant decisions, which form an integral part of the action plan. The implementation of the work programme for the biennium 2008–2010 is therefore based on the thematic areas set out in the action plan and the decisions of AMCEN taken at its twelfth session, held in Johannesburg, South Africa (see document UNEP/AMCEN/13/4 for more information).

13. It is worth noting that the action plan was designed to be implemented over an initial period of 10 years. For this reason, among others, the African Union Commission, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency and AMCEN have initiated a process to review its implementation. The process involves a comprehensive stocktaking exercise, analytical work, the preparation of relevant documents with recommendations, consultative meetings for key stakeholders and the establishment of a partnership platform. The review work began in April 2010 and is expected to be completed in July 2010 with the launch of the partnership platform.

14. In view of the above, the proposed draft indicative work programme of AMCEN for 2011–2012 is interim in nature and the narrative part of the present document has therefore been kept brief. It is suggested that a new draft indicative work programme for AMCEN be prepared after the comprehensive review of the implementation of the action plan has been completed.

1 <http://www.unep.org/roa/amcen/>.

II. Clusters in the work programme for the biennium 2011–2012

15. The proposed programme elements of the interim draft indicative AMCEN work programme for the biennium 2011–2012 are organized in clusters of processes, programmes, projects and related activities to be implemented in the biennium. They are:

- (a) Political, policy, advocacy and environmental law and agreements;
- (b) Environmental conventions;
- (c) Capacity-building (others).

A. Political, policy, advocacy and environmental law and agreements

16. The key components of this cluster include:

- (a) Enhancing the links between AMCEN, the African Union, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency and the United Nations Environment Programme;
- (b) Enhancing the capacity and capability of AMCEN to oversee the implementation of its work on climate change in Africa;
- (c) Communicating the objectives of AMCEN work on climate change in Africa;
- (d) Mobilizing resources for AMCEN work;
- (e) Undertaking work in the field of environmental law and agreements.

B. Environmental conventions

17. The key components of this cluster include:

- (a) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
- (b) United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa;
- (c) Convention on Biological Diversity;
- (d) Chemicals-related conventions;
- (e) Amended Nairobi Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Western Indian Ocean;
- (f) Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region (Abidjan Convention);
- (g) Revised African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Maputo Convention);
- (h) Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes Within Africa.

C. Capacity-building (others)

18. The key components of this cluster include:

- (a) Providing political support and policy guidance for capacity-building efforts;
- (b) Building the capacity of sub-Saharan African countries to implement the Rio and chemicals-related conventions.

19. Further details on the interim draft indicative work programme of AMCEN for the biennium 2011–2012 can be found in the annex to the present document. The matrix gives an outline of the main objectives and key components; specific activities to be undertaken; expected outcomes; status of implementation; and collaborators.

III. General comments

20. As shown in the report of the secretariat for the biennium July 2008–June 2010 (UNEP/AMCEN/13/4) steady progress was made in the implementation of the work programme of AMCEN during that period. Steady progress in implementing AMCEN work programmes has been a continuing trend since July 2004, when the implementation of the action plan began. Apart from the implementation of some activities in some programme areas, however, efforts to scale up the level of activities have generally been deferred as a result of the perennial financial constraints facing AMCEN. It is hoped that the current session will help to tackle this major constraint that is hampering the enhanced implementation of the work programmes and decisions.

21. The comprehensive review of the implementation of the action plan and the subsequent wide-ranging review of the work programme of AMCEN for the biennium 2011–2012 will offer an opportunity for further consideration of how best to scale up some AMCEN activities. The successful enhancement of activities related to climate change during the biennium 2008–2010 is a good pointer for the way forward.

Annex

Interim draft indicative work programme for the biennium | 2011–2012

Main objectives and key components	Specific activities	Outcomes	Status	Collaborators
1. Political, policy, advocacy and environmental law and agreements				
To enhance existing links between AMCEN, the African Union, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency and UNEP	- Co-facilitate the process of enhancing the status of AMCEN as a specialized technical committee and the interlinkages between AMCEN, the African Union Commission and the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency - Enhance communication links with the African Union Commission, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency and UNEP	- AMCEN status as a specialized technical committee of the African Union enhanced and follow-up institutional arrangements made - The roles of the secretariat of AMCEN, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency and the African Union Commission harmonized, particularly with regard to implementation of the action plan of the environment initiative of NEPAD	Continuing Mix of new and continuing	AMCEN, AUC, NPCA, UNEP AMCEN, AUC, NPCA, UNEP
To enhance the capacity of AMCEN to oversee the implementation of its work on climate change in Africa	Give technical and policy briefs to AMCEN to enable it to provide guidance on the implementation of its work on climate change in Africa	Effective implementation of measures to combat climate change in Africa	Continuing	AMCEN, UNEP, ECA, CSOs, IOs
To communicate the objectives of AMCEN work on climate change in Africa to all AMCEN stakeholders and target groups	- Finalize the AMCEN climate change communication strategy - Implement the climate change communication strategy	Four main areas of intervention enhanced: partnership and networking; capacity-building; advocacy; communication and outreach.	Mix of new and continuing	AMCEN, UNEP, AUC, ECA, CSOs, IOs
To mobilize resources for AMCEN work	Undertake resource mobilization, including the forging of responsive partnerships	AMCEN better resourced to carry out its objectives and goals	Continuing	AMCEN, AUC, NPCA, UNEP, ECA
To undertake work in the field of environmental law and agreements	- Strengthen the capacity of African countries to develop, improve and implement environmental legal frameworks - Assist countries to develop access and benefit-sharing	- Compliance with and implementation of environmental laws and key conventions, in addition to capacity-building for environmental protection, made a greater priority of member States - Awareness of environmental law created among key	Continuing	UNEP

Main objectives and key components	Specific activities	Outcomes	Status	Collaborators
	legislation and implementation plans, including nomination of national focal points Build the capacity of African countries to establish and implement biosafety coordination mechanisms and to the use the Biosafety Clearing-House	stakeholders - Access and benefit-sharing legislation developed or enhanced and national focal points nominated - Capacity of countries to implement the Biosafety Protocol and use the Biosafety Clearing-House strengthened	New New	AMCEN, UNEP, AUC, ACP secretariat, CBD secretariat AMCEN, UNEP, AUC, ACP secretariat, CBD secretariat
2. Environmental conventions				
(i) Framework Convention on Climate change	- Support and facilitate Africa's quest for a shared vision for climate change and a common and informed voice for the continent at the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change - Coordinate the final stages of the development of a comprehensive framework of African climate change programmes and associated subregional frameworks of climate change programmes - Coordinate implementation of the comprehensive framework and associated subregional	- Common negotiating position for Africa for sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change - Comprehensive framework of African climate change programmes - Framework of subregional climate change programmes - Enhanced implementation of measures to combat climate change in the region and subregions	Continuing Continuing New	AMCEN, AUC, ECA, UNEP, NPCA, RECs, CSOs, IOs, etc. AMCEN, AUC, ECA, UNEP, RECs, CSOs, IOs AMCEN, AUC, ECA, UNEP, RECs, CSOs, IOs

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