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African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
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Status of implementation of the decisions taken by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment at its eleventh session and of other related activities over the period July 2006–May 2008

Report of the secretariat

I. Introduction

A. Foundation, mandate and activities of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

1. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was established in December 1985, following a conference of African ministers of environment held in Cairo, Egypt. Its mandate is to provide advocacy for environmental protection in Africa; to ensure that basic human needs are met adequately and in a sustainable manner; to ensure that social and economic development is realized at all levels; and to ensure that agricultural activities and practices meet the food security needs of the region.
2. AMCEN has continued to give guidance in respect of key political events related to multilateral environmental agreements. AMCEN has also led the process for the development of the action plan for the environment initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). AMCEN prompted and encouraged the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to prepare a comprehensive regional report on the state of Africa's environment, entitled *Africa Environment Outlook*. Furthermore, AMCEN successfully facilitated the revision of the 1968 African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Algiers Convention). Measures have been taken to strengthen the linkages between AMCEN and the region's two marine and coastal conventions, namely, the Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region (Nairobi Convention) and the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region (Abidjan Convention).
3. AMCEN has continued to pay particular attention to the implementation of environmental conventions established pursuant to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa and the

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United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol (the Rio conventions).

4. The recently published *History of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (1985–2005)* gives an objective account of the achievements and challenges of the Ministerial Conference. The history of AMCEN was reviewed through three different periods marked by significant shifts in the political context in which the Conference was operating. It is evident from this that there has been continuity in the performance of AMCEN. The measures adopted in seeking solutions to environmental concerns in Africa have consistently been participatory and consultative during the entire history of the Ministerial Conference.

B. Institutional arrangements

5. Since the first session of AMCEN, a number of programmes and initiatives have been developed to facilitate the effective implementation of its mandate for environmental protection in Africa. Of particular note are the development of the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative and the publication of the Africa Environment Outlook report. In addition, the decisions taken at various meetings of AMCEN were implemented successfully when resources were available.

6. Regular sessions of AMCEN are nowadays held once every two years. Since its creation, sessions have been held in various African capitals and sponsored by development partners, UNEP and African States.

7. The UNEP Regional Office for Africa serves as the secretariat to AMCEN.

8. The objective of the present report is to inform participants at the twelfth session of AMCEN of the status of implementation of decisions taken by the Ministerial Conference at its eleventh session and other follow-up activities mandated by AMCEN at other formal meetings convened by the President during the intersessional period.

9. The report on the activities undertaken during the period from June 2006 to May 2008 focuses on the following five main issues:

- (a) Status of implementation of decisions taken by AMCEN at its eleventh session;
- (b) Status of implementation of the programme of work for the period from June 2006 to May 2008;
- (c) AMCEN-related meetings and conferences;
- (d) Major activities initiated and undertaken by the President of AMCEN during the intersessional period;
- (e) Participation of the AMCEN secretariat in activities related to the June 2007–May 2008 programme of work.

C. Status of implementation of the decisions taken by AMCEN at its eleventh session

10. At its eighth session, AMCEN decided to restructure its subsidiary institutional structure into a geographically balanced bureau, an intersessional committee and an inter-agency technical committee. AMCEN instructed the secretariat to revise the AMCEN constitution to reflect those institutional changes. Document UNEP/AMCEN/EGM/9/2/Add.1, prepared by the secretariat, contained proposals for such changes and was considered by AMCEN at its ninth session. The outcome of those deliberations was inconclusive. Nevertheless, the ministers modified AMCEN operations to reflect a new vision and strategy for the Ministerial Conference within the context of emerging African initiatives. A further review of the AMCEN constitution was therefore required.

11. At its ninth session, AMCEN adopted the Kampala Declaration on the Environment for Development, which provided policy guidance on many issues pertaining to the effective implementation of the AMCEN programme of work within the framework of emerging initiatives in Africa and the challenges of the new global economic order. AMCEN instructed the secretariat to revise the AMCEN constitution on the understanding that the secretariat should initiate a process for further intergovernmental consultations, taking into account the need to follow closely the evolution of initiatives of the African Union and NEPAD.

12. At its tenth session, AMCEN adopted the Sirte Declaration on the Environment and Development, which provided policy guidance on many issues related to the effective implementation

of the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD, including the AMCEN work programme. AMCEN directed the secretariat to conduct another round of intergovernmental consultations and incorporate the review comments of member States into the draft revised constitution and submit it for consideration by the Conference at its eleventh session.

13. At its eleventh session, AMCEN decided to defer any discussions on the constitution until the evolving structures of the African Union, with respect to the specialized technical committees, became clearer.

14. Eleven decisions were adopted by AMCEN at its eleventh session on the following themes, discussed in greater detail below:

- (a) Implementation of the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative;
- (b) Institutional linkages and harmonization of activities in the context of the implementation of the NEPAD environment initiative;
- (c) AMCEN constitution;
- (d) Status and use of the AMCEN general trust fund;
- (e) Implementation of a strategic approach to international chemicals management and other chemical and hazardous waste management issues;
- (f) Africa Environment Outlook and the Africa environment information network;
- (g) Integration of environmental dimensions into disaster risk reduction programmes in the context of the Africa regional strategy for disaster risk reduction;
- (h) Implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building;
- (i) Green Wall for the Sahara initiative;
- (j) Resource mobilization for the implementation of environmental projects and programmes at national, subregional and regional levels;
- (k) African Environment Facility.

1. Decision 1: Implementation of the action plan of the environment initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development

15. Following the tenth session, the momentum behind implementation of the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative increased considerably. A brief update on the status of implementation of the action plan is provided below. The detailed version of the report is contained in document UNEP/AMCEN/12/4.

16. It is noteworthy that the African Union Commission, the NEPAD secretariat and AMCEN are each implementing various aspects of the action plan. AMCEN is responsible for the implementation of its work programme, which is an integral part of the action plan. In this regard the work programme of AMCEN for the period 2006–2008 was based mainly on the thematic areas in the action plan, as well as on policy and advocacy and on environmental law.

17. Under the guidance of AMCEN, the activities undertaken within the context of the implementation of the action plan can be grouped as follows: implementation of aspects of the action plan by member States; implementation of the 2007–2008 work programme of AMCEN.

18. Ministerial-level consultative meetings on the subregional environmental action plans for Eastern, Central, Southern, North and West Africa were held from 28 to 30 March, on 7 and 8 April, from 25 to 27 April, on 4 and 5 June, and from 25 to 27 June 2007 respectively. The main objectives of the meetings were, first, to review the finalized subregional environmental action plans with the view to having them endorsed by the ministers of environment in the respective subregions and, second, to discuss the modalities, where appropriate, for submitting the action plans to the respective councils of the regional economic communities. It is worth noting that all the subregional environmental action plans were endorsed by the ministers of the various subregions, who requested the respective vice-presidents to submit the action plans to AMCEN at its twelfth session, scheduled to be held in South Africa in June 2008.

19. The development of the NEPAD national action plans for the environment for Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Mozambique are nearing completion. These involved participatory and consultative processes in the above-mentioned countries.

2. Decision 2: Institutional linkages and harmonization of activities in the context of the implementation of the NEPAD environment initiative

20. AMCEN is guiding the process of implementing the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative, particularly through the implementation of its work programme.

21. The evolution of the structures of the African Union is advancing and the revitalization of AMCEN is progressing steadily. Furthermore, the need for harmonization of the structures of AMCEN, the African Union and the NEPAD secretariat has been recognized by those bodies. Further consultations with the African Union Commission are expected, in view of the outcome of the ninth and tenth summits of the African Union, held in Accra, Ghana, in July 2007 and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in February 2008 respectively, with regard to the general audit of the structures and organs of the African Union, including the Commission.

22. The eighth ordinary session of the African Union, held in Addis Ababa in January 2007 marked a milestone for AMCEN with regard to the implementation of the work programme of AMCEN for the 2007–2008 biennium. Decision EX.CL/Dec.322 (X) of the Executive Council of the African Union reads as follows:

“The Executive Council

“1. *Takes note* of the report of the eleventh regular session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in Brazzaville, Congo in May 2006;

“2. *Notes with satisfaction* the progress made in strengthening the working relations between the Commission and AMCEN towards the adaptation of the mandates, structure and activities of AMCEN with a view to integrating them into the activities of the Commission and its specialized technical committees in accordance with the requirements of the Sirte Declaration on Agriculture and Water of February 2004;

“3. *Endorses* the decisions and the Brazzaville Declaration on the Environment adopted by the Conference of Ministers;

“4. *Supports* the proposal to establish an African environment facility at the African Development Bank and calls upon the African Development Bank to facilitate the establishment of the said facility;

“5. *Urges* all Member States and development partners to contribute to the Fund after its establishment;

“6. *Requests* the Commission, the NEPAD secretariat and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as well as other development partners to support AMCEN in the implementation of its programme of work for the biennium 2007–2008.”

3. Decision 3: Constitution of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

23. Decision 3 of the tenth regular session of AMCEN held in Sirte, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, in June 2004, noted with appreciation the efforts made by the AMCEN secretariat to facilitate the completion of the document on the revised AMCEN constitution. It also noted that only a few countries had submitted comments on the draft constitution and therefore requested the secretariat to circulate the draft revised constitution immediately, both in English and in French, to all African countries for their review and comments.

24. The secretariat was further requested to incorporate the comments of member States into the draft revised constitution and submit it for consideration by AMCEN at its eleventh session. This was duly accomplished and the draft document was submitted to the eleventh regular session through the Bureau of AMCEN. At its eleventh session, AMCEN decided to defer any discussions on the constitution pending the complete establishment of the structures of the African Union, in particular its specialized technical committees.

4. Decision 4: Status and use of the general trust fund for the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

25. The implementation of the AMCEN programme of work continues to be limited by financial constraints. A report on the contributions by member States of AMCEN and use of the general trust fund is contained in UNEP/AMCEN/12/5.

5. Decision 5: Implementation of a strategic approach to international chemicals management and other chemical and hazardous waste management issues

26. The implementation of the strategic approach to international chemicals management and other chemical and hazardous waste management issues has been carried out by the UNEP Chemicals Branch as follows (see UNEP/AMCEN/12/4):

- (a) Holding a symposium on illegal international traffic in hazardous chemicals;
- (b) Nominating national Strategic Approach focal points and establishing inter-ministerial or inter-institutional arrangements to oversee implementation of the Strategic Approach at the national level;
- (c) Implementing the Strategic Approach on an inclusive multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral basis;
- (d) Commencing preparation for national action plans for implementation of the Strategic Approach;
- (e) Including sound chemicals and hazardous waste management considerations in national planning strategies and programmes, where appropriate;
- (f) Exploring possible regional approaches to implementation of the Strategic Approach, including holding of regional and subregional consultations and development of a regional action plan for Africa;
- (g) Ensuring active participation of the African Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, the NEPAD secretariat and subregional organizations such as the Arab Maghreb Union, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Basel Convention regional centres and other bodies in the implementation of the Strategic Approach;
- (h) Ensuring that the Inter-Organization Programme for Sound Management of Chemicals, (IOMC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank give priority to the needs of African countries when developing activities to support implementation of the Strategic Approach;
- (i) Encouraging international and regional partners to support efforts to strengthen the ability of the Basel Convention regional centres to undertake capacity-building for chemicals and hazardous waste management in related multilateral environmental agreements in Africa.

6. Decision 6: Africa Environment Outlook and the Africa Environment Information Network

27. A total of 34 countries have participated in the Africa Environment Information Network (AEIN) initiative. Twelve of these participated in the pilot phase, including Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Seychelles, Senegal, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zambia. Twenty-two additional countries were included in the second phase of the implementation of AEIN, namely Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Gambia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Niger, Morocco, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malawi, Namibia, Mauritania, Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania.

28. A publication on environmental change in every African country (*Atlas of Our Changing Environment*), with accompanying report on that country's progress toward achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goal 7, has been produced by UNEP in partnership with a number of other organizations. This publication, which gives a visual portrayal of the dramatic changes being wrought on Africa's landscapes, will be launched at the twelfth regular session of AMCEN.

29. At its eleventh regular session, AMCEN requested the Executive Director of UNEP to continue mobilizing financial support for capacity-building through the Africa Environment Outlook and the Africa Environment Information Network processes and to support the production of the third Africa

Environment Outlook report as one of the main components of the programme of work of AMCEN. In this regard, an inception meeting for the third report in the Africa Environment Outlook series, *AEO-3*, was held in Cairo, on 1 and 2 August 2007. This scoping meeting was aimed at establishing the principal focus for the report, taking into account the “current environment and development debate in the Africa region and other global processes”.

Decision 7: Integration of environmental dimensions into disaster risk reduction programmes in the context of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction

30. In response to decision 7 of the eleventh session of AMCEN, UNEP continued to implement activities to promote the integration of environmental dimensions into disaster risk reduction in the African region through the participation in meetings, workshops, and colloquiums and with the organization of conferences.

31. UNEP jointly organized the West Africa subregional conference on hazards and risk reduction, with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO) under the auspices of the African Union and ECOWAS. The conference identified the main natural and technological hazards in the subregion and agreed on the priority capacity needs and actions to be taken to reduce disaster risk within the framework of the African Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction. The conference was attended by ministers and other high-ranking government officials from 15 countries of the sub-region, together with representatives from the African Union, ECOWAS, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the World Bank, WHO, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development (ACMAD), the Regional Training Centre for Agrometeorology and Operational Hydrology and their Applications (AGRHYMET) and UNEP.

Decision 8: Implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building

32. It will be recalled that, in compliance with the decision of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its twenty-third session, UNEP initiated a pilot project on the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan in Africa, which covered the following six countries: Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Rwanda and Tunisia. The main aim of the Bali Strategic Plan pilot project was to help the countries to develop national capacity-building and technology-support plans on the basis of existing assessments. The needs and priorities identified were to form the basis for the development of specific project proposals. Lessons learnt from the pilot project were to inform the design of the next stage of the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan.

33. At its eleventh session, in its decision 8 on the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan, AMCEN reaffirmed its position on the plan and called on member States and UNEP to expedite its implementation in Africa. At its twenty-fourth session the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum decided to incorporate the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan into the work programme of UNEP. Measures have been taken to effect this decision.

34. Since the Governing Council of UNEP decided to mainstream the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan, measures are being taken by UNEP to effect this decision, including the development of the medium-term strategy for 2010–2013. UNEP developed this strategy in consultation with its Committee of Permanent Representatives, the secretariats of UNEP-administered multilateral environmental agreements and representatives of civil society and the private sector. The following six cross-cutting thematic priorities were identified (listed in alphabetical order):

- (a) Climate change;
- (b) Disasters and conflicts;
- (c) Ecosystem management;
- (d) Environmental governance;
- (e) Harmful substances and hazardous waste;
- (f) Resource efficiency – sustainable consumption and production.

35. Details on the UNEP medium-term strategy for 2010–2013 may be found in document UNEP/GCSS.X/8. This strategy places renewed emphasis on measures to help UNEP become more effective, efficient and results-focused, through:

- (a) Significantly enhancing its capacity to deliver on the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building;
- (b) Further embracing its role as the environment programme of the United Nations;
- (c) Ensuring its actions are founded on sound science;
- (d) Fully implementing results-based management.

9. **Decision 9: Green Wall for the Sahara initiative**

36. In July 2005, Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, proposed to the African Union at its fifth ordinary summit an initiative for the establishment of a so-called “Green Wall for the Sahara”. Specifically the initiative was designed to combat the advance of the Sahara desert southwards and to improve the livelihoods of the inhabitants of the Sahelo-Saharan zone. It was envisaged that the initiative would mainly be carried out in the following countries: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Guinea Bissau, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Saharawi Arab Republic, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, the Gambia, and Tunisia.

37. The African Union Commission has led implementation of the decision on the Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative and an overview of this will be presented at the twelfth session of AMCEN.

10. **Decision 10: Resource mobilization for implementation of environmental projects and programmes at national, subregional and regional levels**

38. A session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment on the Global Environment Facility strategic investment programme for sustainable land management in sub-Saharan Africa was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, from 24 to 26 April 2007 (see Ouagadougou Declaration in the annex to the present document). This major event introduced the new Global Environment Facility approach in addressing one of the key environmental problems in Africa – land degradation – through country partnerships that would channel resources to the grass roots, in order to ensure a greater impact. The Facility envisaged investing \$130–\$150 million in this programme. It was also hoped that this would serve as leverage to encourage a further \$500–\$750 million in co-funding.

11. **Decision 11: African Environment Facility**

39. As stated in paragraph 21 above, at the tenth ordinary session of the African Union, by decision EX.CL/Dec.322 (X), the Executive Council of the African Union:

- (a) Supported the proposal to establish an African environment facility at the African Development Bank, calling upon the Bank to facilitate the establishment of such a facility; and
- (b) Urged all member States and development partners to contribute to the Fund after its establishment;

40. Following that decision, the secretariat held further discussions with officials of the African Development Bank in the margins of the forty-second annual meeting of the Board of Governors of the African Development Bank, held in Shanghai, China, in May 2007. One of the topics under discussion was the proposed working visit of the President and other members of the Bureau to the headquarters of the African Development Bank in Tunis for further talks on the establishment of the African Environment Facility. The secretariat also held discussions with officials of the African Development Bank in the margins of the international conference on international solidarity on climate change strategies for the African and Mediterranean regions, held in Tunis in November 2007.

D. **Other activities undertaken over the period June 2006–May 2008**

41. As stated earlier, the work programme of AMCEN is an integral part of the action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative. The implementation of the AMCEN work programme is making steady progress. Elements of a report on this issue may be found in document UNEP/AMCEN/12/4. Reasonable progress continues to be made in the work programme of AMCEN.

1. **Meetings of the Bureau of AMCEN**

42. Three meetings of the Bureau of AMCEN were held between June 2006 and May 2008.

43. An extraordinary meeting of the Bureau of AMCEN was held in August 2006 in Cape Town, South Africa. The issues discussed included the following (see UNEP/AMCEN/12/INF/5):

- (a) Follow-up to the eleventh regular session of AMCEN (including the role of the Bureau during the tenure of its members);
- (b) Some key matters of relevance to Africa arising from the Global Environment Facility Assembly held in Cape Town on 29 and 30 August 2006;
- (c) The support given by South Africa and Egypt to other African countries to develop their designated national authorities for the Clean Development Mechanism;
- (d) Sustainable hydropower in Africa;
- (e) The twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the second session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

44. Benin, Congo, Egypt and Rwanda were represented at the ministerial level.

45. The Bureau agreed that there was a need for the development of a communications strategy to mobilize support for AMCEN from other partners to complement that being provided by UNEP. On resource mobilization, the Bureau agreed that the active dialogue between AMCEN and the African Development Bank should be stepped up. It will be recalled that, as part of the implementation of the NEPAD environment initiative, subregional environmental action plans were being developed for adoption by AMCEN at its twelfth regular session. Members of the Bureau agreed that each would present its respective subregional environmental action plan to the twelfth session. That would be consistent with the lead roles which the Bureau members were expected to play.

46. The Bureau discussed matters arising from the debate on the recommended decision of the third Assembly of the Global Environment Facility on the proposed amendment to the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility; and a mechanism for feedback (from African representatives on the Global Environment Facility Council) and consultations on Global Environment Facility-related matters. It was recalled that Congo had proposed an additional amendment, to recognize the Global Environment Facility as a financial instrument for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in the Global Environment Facility Instrument. The Bureau reiterated its concern that the Global Environment Facility had not implemented the decision made at its second Assembly to create a financial mechanism to deal with land degradation and desertification. In accordance with the decision of the Bureau, the President of AMCEN submitted a letter to the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility seeking redress.

47. The twenty first meeting of the Bureau of AMCEN was convened in Nairobi on 13 November 2006 to consider a variety of issues, including the following (see document UNEP/AMCEN/12/INF/4):

- (a) Report of the twentieth meeting of the Bureau of AMCEN;
- (b) Matters arising from the extraordinary meeting of the Bureau of AMCEN;
- (c) Matters related to the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the second session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol;
- (d) Second Intergovernmental Review Meeting of the UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, held in Beijing from 16 to 20

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