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African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

Sixteenth session

Ministerial segment

Libreville, 15 and 16 June 2017

Draft decision: Africa's engagement in the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

We, African ministers of the environment,

Having met in Libreville on 15 and 16 June 2017 at the sixteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment,

Recalling United Nations General Assembly resolutions 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972 and 67/213 of 21 December 2012, which established the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, respectively,

Recalling also the outcome document of the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, held in Nairobi from 23 to 27 June 2014 under the theme "Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda, including sustainable consumption and production",

Welcoming the outcomes of the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, held in Nairobi from 23 to 27 May 2016 under the theme "Delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development",

Recalling the resolutions of the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly on giving priority to the African continent, in particular resolution 2/13, on sustainable management of natural capital for sustainable development and poverty eradication, resolution 2/14, on illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products, and resolution 2/24, on combating desertification, land degradation and drought and promoting sustainable pastoralism and rangelands, and concerned about the slow implementation of those resolutions,

Aware that the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly will be held in Nairobi from 4 to 6 December 2017 under the overarching theme "Towards a pollution-free planet",

Aware also that environmental pollution is an increasing problem in Africa and that the major forms of pollution in Africa include indoor and outdoor air pollution, land pollution and water pollution, affecting both urban and rural areas,

Stressing that efforts to reduce pollution should not undermine the development processes under way in African countries and that those efforts should be in line with the development priorities of Africa,

Bearing in mind that pollution is only one of the various environmental challenges facing African countries, given that Africa contributes the least to global pollution trends, and that the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, while primarily focusing on pollution, should also address any other environmental issues of relevance to its member States, as may be deemed necessary,

Concerned about the multifaceted challenges faced by African countries in effectively implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2063 and other global decisions, including those of the United Nations Environment Assembly and, previously, the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, mainly due to the lack of the necessary means of implementation,

Bearing in mind that Africa is richly endowed with natural resources that, if properly harnessed, could contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication in Africa,

Emphasizing the different capabilities and differing responsibilities of individual countries in addressing the three dimensions of sustainable development, including the environmental pillar,

Affirming the centrality of making available the necessary means of implementation, that is, technology development and transfer, capacity-building and financial support, which can significantly contribute towards the effective implementation in African countries of the decisions of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Governing Council,

Acknowledging the positive role that stakeholders, including the private sector, could play in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2063 and other global commitments, including those made within the framework of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and emphasizing the importance of engaging the various groups of stakeholders in a comprehensive, transparent, inclusive and balanced manner,

Appreciating the work done by the African Diplomatic Corps and its technical committee in Nairobi in all negotiations before and during the sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly, which was based on the political guidance provided by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, and satisfied with the centrality of the Conference in formulating African positions in all matters related to the environment,

Appreciating also the role played by the Permanent Representatives Committee in Addis Ababa in the matters described above,

Decide:

1. To request the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to expedite the implementation of all previous United Nations Environment Assembly and Governing Council decisions and resolutions in a balanced manner;
2. To also request the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to develop, at the earliest possible time and in consultation with member States, a monitoring mechanism by which member States can track and assess the status of the implementation of previous and future resolutions;
3. To further request the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to ensure that African countries are supported through technology development and transfer, capacity-building and financial support in order to facilitate the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals and Africa's Agenda 2063 and other global decisions, including those of the United Nations Environment Assembly and, previously, the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme;
4. To underline the importance of developing solutions to pollution in Africa that are development-oriented and that contribute to poverty eradication and the creation of jobs and wealth in the continent;
5. To stress that the outcomes of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly should be geared towards providing technological and financial support and capacity-building in order to enhance the efforts of Africa to formulate and implement policies, legislation and programmes with a view to ensuring sound environmental management, including through preventing, reversing and overcoming the effects of pollution;
6. To also stress that any commitments made by any member State during the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly shall be of an exclusively voluntary nature, non-binding to other member States, neither prescriptive nor descriptive, and shall have no implications for the programme of work and budget of the United Nations Environment Programme;
7. To urge member States to commence, at the earliest possible time, discussions and deliberations on environmental issues of priority to Africa with a view to formulating them into draft resolutions for presentation during the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly;
8. To stress that engagement with any group of stakeholders during the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, including the private sector, should be comprehensive, inclusive and geographically balanced with the overarching goal of involving African stakeholders, including the African private sector;

9. To underline the importance of finalizing the stakeholder engagement policy of the United Nations Environment Programme on the basis of the proposal presented during the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and reaffirm that, until the adoption of the policy, African countries are committed to the inclusive and meaningful participation of all accredited relevant stakeholders in the United Nations Environment Assembly and its preparatory process, while maintaining the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Environment Assembly;

10. To reaffirm the importance of concluding the work of the high-level segment of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly with an outcome document in the form of a political declaration negotiated by member States and adopted by consensus, which should be concise, focusing primarily on the theme of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and taking into consideration the different capabilities and differing responsibilities of individual countries, as well as the need to support African countries in effectively implementing the outcomes of the session;

11. To agree that the President of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and its Bureau, in collaboration with the permanent representatives based in Nairobi and Addis Ababa, shall continue to coordinate the work of the African group so as to ensure an effective and coordinated front during the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly;

12. To agree to continue to strengthen the linkages between the permanent representatives of member States at the headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa, the United Nations Environment Programme in Nairobi and the United Nations in New York, as well as at the United Nations Office at Geneva for better collaboration, so as to ensure a common understanding of, and common approaches to, the issues affecting the sustainable development agenda of the African region;

13. To request the United Nations Environment Programme to continue to support the collaborative arrangements between the African Union Commission, the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the African Diplomatic Corps in Nairobi, the permanent representatives in Addis Ababa and the African Group in New York and in Geneva to ensure a common understanding and approach to environmental issues affecting the region;

14. To also request the United Nations Environment Programme to facilitate regular interactions by the representatives of the African Union Commission, the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the African Diplomatic Corps in Nairobi and Addis Ababa among themselves and with their colleagues in New York and Geneva, building on the strategy that has been developed in that regard;

15. To encourage member States that have not done so to establish resident diplomatic representation to the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in Nairobi, given the critical role and importance of the two United Nations bodies as multilateral centres for the engagement of Africa in discussions on the global sustainable development agenda;

16. To strongly stress that the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme was based on negotiations between and consensus among the Member States at the General Assembly of the United Nations, and that any changes to the nomenclature, mandate or nature of the Programme should follow the same process as in the General Assembly of the United Nations and be conducted in an open, transparent and inclusive manner;

17. To urgently request the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to refrain from using any nomenclature, titles or designations other than those contained in the General Assembly resolutions establishing the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Environment Assembly, and to reverse any such changes made without due process and reflected on the official communications, stationary, web pages, social media pages or any other related aspects of the United Nations Environment Programme;

18. To reiterate the need to strengthen the strategic regional presence of the United Nations Environment Programme in Africa so as to support member States and ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in an integrated manner, and to enhance the capacity of the United Nations Environment Programme to support the implementation of programmes and projects at the national and subregional levels through the establishment of national and subregional programmes and offices;

19. To request the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to expedite the implementation of Governing Council decision 27/2, and in particular the consolidation of the Programme headquarter functions as contained in paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”.

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