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African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

Tenth special session

Abidjan, 3–6 September 2024

Abidjan Declaration on raising Africa’s ambition to reduce desertification, land degradation and drought*

We, African ministers for the environment,

Having met in Abidjan on 5 and 6 of September 2024 at the tenth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment,

Welcoming and appreciating the participation of the ministers responsible for agriculture and their representatives in this tenth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment,

Recalling the outcomes of the nineteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment held in Addis Ababa on 17 and 18 August 2023,

Concerned about the alarming rate at which land degradation is occurring, affecting an estimated 65 per cent of Africa's land and impacting over 400 million people¹, and noting the severe consequences for livelihoods, biodiversity, water resources, and economic stability,

Also concerned that around the world and especially in Africa, prolonged droughts have become increasingly common and severe in intensity due to rising global temperatures and land degradation, resulting in adverse impacts including loss of livelihoods, water, food, and energy insecurity, conflicts and instability as well as forced internal displacement and migration,

Acknowledging that drought, land degradation, and desertification on the African continent has caused serious challenges severely impacting on the economies and livelihoods of the people, food security and ecosystems, reversing the gains made towards poverty eradication and undermining achievement of the sustainable development goals and Africa Union Agenda 2063,

Alarmed by the high socio-economic losses as a result of inaction, undermining social and ecosystem resilience of African countries, while aggravating their economic and debt situations as resources meant for development activities are diverted to address the humanitarian emergencies,

Recognizing ongoing efforts at the national, regional and global levels in promoting sustainable land management practices and recognizing the urgent need for increased financial

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

¹ State of the Climate in Africa 2023, WMO-No. 1360, © World Meteorological Organization, 2024.

resources, strong partnerships, and integrated policies to address the challenges of land degradation, desertification, and drought,

Recalling decision 16/1 of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, on Innovative Financing to Maximize Africa's Catalytic Sectors that states that Africa needs up to United States Dollars 1.2 trillion² to implement the Sustainable Development Goals and therefore the need to engage in innovative approaches that will unlock direct and indirect financing,

Recalling the Windhoek Declaration for Enhancing Resilience to Drought in Africa, adopted at the high-level meeting of the first African Drought Conference, held in Windhoek from 15 to 19 August 2016 and the sixteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment both of which called for the establishment of a binding protocol on drought management and enhancing resilience within the framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification,

Also recalling General Assembly resolution, A/RES/70/206 on implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, adopted by the Assembly of the African Union at its twenty-second session,

Further recalling the commitments made under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and other relevant international frameworks, in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, and stressing the urgent need for ambitious and collaborative actions to achieve land degradation neutrality targets,

Noting with deep concern that implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa has been experiencing funding challenges and therefore the urgency to scale up efforts to addresses the challenges posed by drought, land degradation and desertification,

Recognizing Decision 3/COP.15 of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification on the implementation of the Convention and land degradation neutrality that calls on developed country Parties, and others in a position to do so, to provide financial and technical support for the implementation of the Convention and the achievement of land degradation neutrality,

Welcoming the outcomes of the Africa Union Commission High-Level Conference on the Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 30 May to 2 June 2023, and further welcoming the development of the African Union Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2030, to guide implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in Africa,

Aware of the forthcoming sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity that will take place in Cali, Colombia, from 21 October to 1 November 2024, and the twenty-ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that will take place in Baku, Azerbaijan from 11 to 22 November 2024,

Welcoming the African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022 – 2032), which provides a comprehensive framework for coordinated climate action across the continent,

Further welcoming regional initiatives, including the Africa Adaptation Initiative, the Africa Adaptation Acceleration Platform, the Africa Climate Resilient Investment Facility, Climate Research for Development for Africa, the Climate Action Window of the African Development Fund and the Africa Action Plan on Carbon, in addition to the initiative for a coherent approach for

² Report of the sixteenth session of AMCEN: https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25881/amcenmin_rep2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

addressing biodiversity loss, climate change and land and ecosystems degradation launched at the Fourteenth meeting of the Convention for Biological Diversity,

Aware of the forthcoming fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including marine environment that will take place in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 25 November to 1 December 2024,

Noting the forthcoming sixteenth session of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification that will take place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from 2 to 13 December 2024,

Recognizing the continued support of the Global Environment Facility to eligible countries in Africa on, land degradation, drought, desertification, biodiversity, climate change and pollution,

Recognizing the collaborative efforts of the Africa Group of Negotiators on Climate Change, the Africa Group of negotiators on Combating Desertification, Africa Group of Negotiators on biodiversity, Africa Group of Negotiators on plastics pollution and the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment in addressing the urgent need to combat desertification, land degradation, to mitigate drought and climate change, to reduce biodiversity loss and reduce plastic pollution for a resilient Africa,

Reiterating the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment Decision 18/1/8 on the coherent approach for addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and land and ecosystem degradation, that stressed the need to enhance synergies at the international level and between the three Rio environmental conventions (climate change, biodiversity and combatting desertification) and the need to support and promote this initiative, as appropriate and, taking into account national and organizational circumstances,

Recalling the decisions and commitments made under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Convention on Biological Diversity, which recognize land as a common denominator that underpins the objectives of all three Conventions,

Emphasizing that coordinated efforts among the Rio Conventions can increase the cost-effectiveness of activities at national and regional levels, unlock potential for sectoral and interministerial coordination, and catalyse resource mobilization,

Recognizing the Africa Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy And Action Plan (2022-2032), Great Green Wall Strategy and ten years implementation framework (2024-2034), Circular Economy Action Plan (2024-2034) and the Green Recovery Action Plan (2021-2027), Strategy on Land Restoration, Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) (2015 – 2030),

Determined to raise Africa's ambition to combat desertification, land degradation, and drought, enhance the resilience of our people and ecosystems, promote water, food and energy security, among others to advance socio-economic development and poverty eradication through collaborative actions,

Hereby declare our resolve:

1. To reiterate our call for the establishment of a legally binding protocol on drought management and enhancing resilience within the framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa;
2. To call for building or strengthening of global and regional partnerships, including governments, international organizations, civil society, academia, local communities and the private sector, through financial and technical support to Africa, to tackle desertification, land degradation and drought;

3. To encourage member States to enhance allocation of domestic resources towards combatting desertification and mitigate the effects of drought, while enhancing resilience of people and ecosystems through sustainable land management;
4. To urge member States to work towards achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030 and encourage member States to integrate this objective into national development plans and policies;
5. To encourage member States, Regional Economic Communities, the African Union and development partners to address the socioeconomic drivers of desertification, land degradation and drought, including poverty, gender, population pressure, and inadequate land tenure systems, through integrated and inclusive development approaches;
6. To encourage regional cooperation and the sharing of information, knowledge, technologies and innovations and best practices, among member States to enhance the effectiveness of sustainable land management strategies and achievement of land degradation neutrality;
7. To continue strengthening private and public partnerships and innovative financing mechanisms and establish centres for sustainably harnessing natural capital and value addition and reversing of environmental losses;
8. To encourage member States to actively engage and involve all relevant stakeholders including, women, youth, and persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities in decision-making, designing, planning, implementation and evaluation processes related to desertification, land degradation and drought and ecosystems restoration;
9. To request the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification to mobilize new, additional and adequate financial resources to support member States;
10. To further request the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification to strengthen capacities of member States to access global financial mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund, Climate Investment Funds, Adaptation Fund and the Global Environment Facility, to address the adverse impacts of climate change, loss of biodiversity, pollution, desertification, land degradation and drought to achieve land degradation neutrality targets;
11. To request the Global Mechanism and its financing partners, including the Global Environment Facility, Green Climate Fund and others to simplify their procedures and conditions for accessing quality funding by country parties for the implementation of the Convention;
12. To request financial institutions including multilateral development banks to provide new, additional and innovative financial resources to enable member States to meet their ecosystem restoration and drought resilience needs;
13. To request the African Union Commission, African Development Bank, United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Economic Commission on Africa, the United Nations Development Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and other development partners, private sector and other relevant organizations to provide technical, capacity building and financial support to member States in combating drought, enhancing resilience of people and ecosystems and sustainable land management;
14. To request the African Development Bank, Africa Union Commission, African Union Development Agency - NEPAD in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, to support the work of the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment, especially in the areas of climate change, biodiversity, pollution, drought, land degradation, desertification and environment governance;
15. To request member states to enhance support to ongoing African initiatives on carbon markets such as the Africa Carbon Market Initiative launched at COP 27 in Egypt in 2022, the African Union's Strategy on Carbon Markets and the African Development Bank's Africa Carbon

Support Facility, the United Nations Environment Programme and other relevant United Nations agencies to provide technical assistance and capacity-building support as a means of enhancing carbon reduction strategies, which critical play a role in advocating Africa's position on, and increased access to carbon markets;

16. To request the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification and other regional and global organizations to continue supporting regional initiatives, such as the Great Green Wall Initiative and the West African Action Plan for Combating Desertification, African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative and Africa Disaster Risk Reduction Platform and other such initiatives, which aim to restore degraded lands and enhance ecosystem resilience, and carbon sequestration through afforestation, reforestation, soil conservation, contributing to combating climate change;

17. To reiterate the commitment made at 17th Ordinary session of the of the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment to raise awareness on the circular economy and to encourage members states to join and support the African Circular Economy Alliance to harness the benefits of circular economy to minimize resource extraction, generate green jobs and safeguard the planet, in line with Africa's ambition to reduce land degradation, desertification and drought;

18. To appreciate the work of the Africa group to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to continue strengthening the common Africa positions and voice in the negotiations of the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, including on the need to develop a protocol on enhancing drought resilience;

19. To appreciate the work of the Africa group of negotiators on plastic pollution and request the group to continue strengthening the common Africa position, taking into consideration the interests of all African states, for the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee meeting to negotiate an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including marine environment scheduled to take place in Busan, Republic of Korea from 25 November to 1 December 2024;

20. To appreciate the work of the Africa group of negotiators on climate change and request the group to continue strengthening common Africa position for the twenty-ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change scheduled to take place in Baku, Azerbaijan from 11 to 22 November 2024;

21. To appreciate the work of the Africa group of negotiators on biodiversity and request the group to continue strengthening common Africa position for sixteenth session of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity is scheduled to take place in Cali, Colombia from 21 October to 1 November 2024;

22. To appreciate the work of the Africa group in Nairobi and request the group to continue strengthening Common Africa Positions in the framework of the Committee of Permanent Representative to the United Nations Environment Programme in liaison with all relevant bodies of the African Union;

23. To encourage all relevant Ministers of African States to participate in the High-Level Ministerial Segment of Convention on Biological Diversity at the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties;

24. To call upon the Africa Groups on negotiators on climate change, combating desertification, plastic pollution and biodiversity to work in synergy to develop strategies to address climate change, desertification, land degradation, drought, plastic pollution and biodiversity loss and present a report on this at the twentieth ordinary session of African Ministerial Conference on the Environment;

25. To take note of the outcomes of the first International Conference on Afforestation and Reforestation that was successfully held in Brazzaville from July 2 to 5, 2024;

26. To take note of the outcomes of the twelfth Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa that was held in Abidjan 30 August to 02 September 2024 and renew our support for the Climate for Development in Africa initiative;

27. To recognize the active role and efforts of the major groups and stakeholders, civil society and the private sector in addressing land degradation, desertification and drought and protection of the environment of the continent and request their continued active participation;

28. To express our profound appreciation to the Africa Union Commission, United Nations Environment Programme, African Development Bank the African Union Development Agency, and other development partners and institutions for their continued support to the African Group of Negotiators on plastic pollution, climate change, biodiversity and combating desertification and request for their continued support by providing technical and financial resources;

29. To thank the President and the people of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for their warm welcome and hospitality in hosting this tenth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment;

30. To mandate the President of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment to submit the report of the tenth special session of the, including the present Abidjan declaration on raising Africa's ambition to reduce desertification, land degradation, and drought and the annexes thereto, to the African Union Commission for further action by the policy organs of the African Union, as well as to development partners and the United Nations institutions.
