

Nineteenth Session of The African Conference on the Environment (AMCEN- 19)

African Civil Society Submission

Over 100 civil society organizations (CSOs) from Africa gathered both in-person and virtually for a roundtable discussion in Addis Ababa on August 10 - 11, 2023. The purpose of the meeting was to address concerns about safeguarding African interests in regional and global environmental and climate change dialogue processes. The participants represented environmental, faith-based, indigenous peoples, smallholder farmers, community-led, women, youth, farmer organizations, and general development sectors.

The roundtable was slated ahead of the 19th African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), taking place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from August 14 - 18, 2023.

We appreciate the opportunity to engage with AMCEN and contribute to its deliberations and outcomes, and present this statement for the 19th session of AMCEN.

A. Implementation of AMCEN decisions

We commend AMCEN for its leadership and vision in addressing Africa's environmental challenges and opportunities. We further acknowledge AMCEN's role in providing a platform for African governments and stakeholders to deliberate, develop collective positions and find solutions to address environment-related challenges at the continental level.

We however wish to express our concerns about the insufficient implementation of AMCEN resolutions and decisions and their integration into national policies and strategies, thus. We are further puzzled that many AMCEN decisions only consist of recommendations and proposals, lacking a clear plan for execution, thus leaving the forum as a mere talk-shop.

To this end, we call upon the 19th AMCEN Session to revisit and reflect on the effective implementation and monitoring of its previous Decisions, particularly the *Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa*, the *Cairo Declaration on Managing Africa's Natural Capital for Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication*, and the *Durban Declaration on Enhancing the Role of AMCEN as a Forum for Environment and Sustainable Development in Africa*.

We strongly urge AMCEN to establish a reliable, unambiguous, and open monitoring, evaluation, and learning system that can routinely monitor progress, evaluate the outcomes of regional and national decision implementation, and record best practices.

We call upon the member States to honour their commitment to environmental conservation, enhance their national resource mobilisation techniques, and meet their annual mandatory contribution of USD 10,000 to AMCEN's general trust fund so as to enable it to realise its stated objectives. Additionally, member countries must strictly control the illicit financial flows from African natural resources, which hinder the execution of environmental and sustainable development programs, causing a yearly loss of up to USD 195 billion in natural and financial resources.

To avoid fragmentation of efforts, We strongly encourage AMCEN to enhance its coordination and partnership with other regional and sub-regional organisations and initiatives, including the ClimDev-Africa Initiative mandated by the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities, as well as relevant ministries and agencies responsible for finance, economy, development planning, and environmental concerns at the national level. The goal is to achieve consistency and cooperation in implementing the environmental agenda.

We further urge African governments through AMCEN to enhance partnerships with non-state actors to accelerate the implementation of AMCEN decisions at regional and national levels. Such partnerships can benefit from technical expertise, stakeholder networks, community linkages, and non-state actors' ability to mobilise financial and human resources.

B. Climate Change

We recognise the efforts and achievements of AMCEN in advancing the common African position on climate change and promoting regional cooperation and integration, pursuant to the continent's harmonious coordination with other critical platforms such as African Group of Negotiators and the Africa Union's Committee of Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC).

We are, nonetheless, alarmed by the increasing impacts of climate change on our continent, which is the most vulnerable and least responsible for the crisis. We are concerned about the threats to our development prospects, human rights, food security, biodiversity, peace and stability posed by the climate emergency.

Consequently, we are outraged and appalled by the current state of affairs in the global climate negotiations and developed countries' lack of ambition and commitment to fulfil their historical responsibilities and legal obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned about the change in the stance of some African leaders regarding climate justice, and apparent aiding of industrialized countries to escape their obligations and transfer the same to people at the frontline of climate change impacts. For many years, Africa has stood firmly behind the principle of *common but differentiated responsibility and capabilities*. However, we have observed a shift towards a *principle of shared responsibility*, which is worrying.

We are deeply worried about the way the African Climate Summit (ACS) is being run. There is a lack of representation for African voices, particularly African CSOs, and it appears to be driven by a Northern and corporate agenda that can sometimes be anti-Africa. This is a risk to the success of the Summit, and the hard work that has been done for many years to promote African aspirations and desires.

We believe that the 19th AMCEN session will seize this moment to interrogate the ACS planning process so far, and put together corrective measures to ensure the Summit will uphold and defend the interests in international dialogue on climate change, based on equity, justice, and the right to sustainable development.

We urge AMCEN to uphold the following priorities for Africa in the decisions and engagement with global and regional stakeholders:

- Securing adequate, flexible, and predictable finance for adaptation, loss and damage and mitigation actions, especially from developed countries with historical responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions.
- Aiming to complete and adopt the framework for the global goal on adaptation at COP 28; increasing adaptation finance to Africa by more than double and ensuring it is needs-based and closing discussions on quantified goal on climate finance.
- Enhancing access to technology transfer and capacity building to enable African countries to implement low-carbon development strategies and cope with climate risks.

- Promoting equity and justice in the allocation of emission reduction targets and the distribution of climate benefits, considering the principle of *common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities*.
- Strengthening African voices and representation in the decision-making processes and institutions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its subsidiary bodies, especially those of African women, youths and other marginalised groups.
- Supporting regional cooperation and integration to foster collective action and leverage synergies among African countries on climate issues.
- Promoting low-carbon development paths and green recovery strategies in Africa that focus on renewable energy, energy efficiency, circular economy, and social inclusion.
- Pursuing a just transition attuned to Africa's reality, upholds the region's right to development, protects sectors and workforces likely to be affected by the transition.

We also call on AMCEN to reject any false solutions or conditionality that undermine our sovereignty, rights and interests, such as carbon market interventions, climate geoengineering, etc. We urge AMCEN to reiterate and uphold the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities that form the bedrock of Africa's common position and reject new narratives promoting the deceptive principle of shared responsibilities.

We reaffirm our solidarity and support to AMCEN as an essential voice of Africa in the global climate arena. We commit ourselves to continue working with AMCEN and other stakeholders to advance the African agenda on climate change and ensure a fair, equitable, ecologically just, effective, and ambitious outcome of the UNFCCC COP 28 in 2023.

C. Implications of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework on Africa:

We acknowledge that biodiversity is essential for human health, livelihoods, food security, and cultural diversity, and we express our concern over the alarming rate of biodiversity loss and degradation in Africa and globally.

We welcome the ongoing negotiations for a post-2020 global biodiversity framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and we urge AMCEN to ensure that the framework reflects the aspirations and priorities of Africa, as well as its fair and equitable share of benefits from the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

We strongly encourage AMCEN to back the creation and execution of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) that align with the global framework. We also urge them to gather sufficient

resources and partnerships to support African biodiversity preservation and restoration efforts. This should include assessing the economic and social value of Africa's natural capital and its potential contribution to GDP and other development indicators.

We strongly encourage AMCEN to advocate for coordinated efforts to implement the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the Paris Agreement. This will allow for a more practical approach to addressing the issues of global biodiversity loss and climate change.

We urge AMCEN to prioritize achieving Target 8 of the Kunming Montreal Biodiversity Framework, which focuses on reducing the effects of climate change and ocean acidification on biodiversity. This can be achieved by implementing measures such as mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions and utilizing nature-based and ecosystem-based solutions. It's crucial to ensure that these actions positively impact biodiversity and minimize any adverse effects caused by climate action.

We call on AMCEN to aim towards banning dangerous pesticides and other substances that are harmful to biodiversity in line with Target 7 on the Kunming Montreal Biodiversity Framework.

D. Plastic Pollution and the International Legally Binding Instrument to End Plastic Pollution

The increasing problem of plastic pollution of Africa's land, water, and air is a cause for concern. It poses significant risks to human health, wildlife, ecosystems, climate, and economy. We urge AMCEN to take notice of the connection between plastic pollution, climate change, and regional and global reliance on fossil fuels and factor these linkages in their effort to address the plastic pollution crisis.

We support the establishment of an international legally binding instrument to address the global plastic crisis, as proposed by several African countries at the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5).

We urge AMCEN to champion this proposal at UNEA-6 and other relevant fora and to ensure that such an instrument addresses the entire life cycle of plastics, from production to disposal, as well as the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, polluter pays, precautionary approach, circular economy, extended producer responsibility, and environmental justice. AMCEN should also aim to develop a clear roadmap for establishing this instrument by UNEA-6.

E. UNEA-6

We look forward to participating in UNEA-6 as a significant group representing African civil society organizations.

We appreciate the theme of UNEA-6: "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals", which is timely and relevant to Africa's environmental and sustainable development agenda.

We call on AMCEN to engage constructively with other member states and stakeholders at UNEA-6 and adopt ambitious resolutions to advance global environmental governance and action.

We also call on AMCEN to support strengthening UNEP's mandate, authority, capacity, funding, accountability, transparency, inclusiveness, and regional presence.

Done and adopted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 11 August 2023