

REPORT

REGIONAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING OF THE UNEP MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS AFRICA AHEAD OF THE TENTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE AFRICAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT (AMCEN)

1 – 2

SEPTEMBER

2024

ABIDJAN, CÔTE D'IVOIRE

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UNEP Major Groups & Stakeholders, Africa



1 - 2

SEPTEMBER

2024

**ONLINE AND SOFITEL HOTEL IVOIRE,
ABIDJAN, CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

INTRODUCTION

The Regional Consultative Meeting (RCM) of the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders in Africa was held from September 1-2, 2024, both online and in person in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Convened ahead of the Tenth Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), this meeting provided a platform for non-state actors to deliberate on Africa's environmental priorities and adopt a unified declaration to guide multilateral processes.

The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment is a critical forum for the Major Groups and Stakeholders of Africa. Over 100 participants were involved in months of preparation and coordination leading up to the 10th Special Session of AMCEN. This partnership between African Member States and UNEP-accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders is essential in addressing the interconnected crises of pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change.

UNEP's consistent support, through its Civil Society Unit and Regional Office for Africa, has been instrumental in these efforts.

The preparatory work culminated in the two-day regional consultative meeting, where nearly 160 participants from across the continent gathered in person, with additional participants joining online. These sessions were dedicated to crafting a declaration that addresses Africa's environmental challenges while aligning with global objectives. Discussions and outcomes were centered around five key themes:

- Reducing land degradation, desertification, and drought in Africa
- Climate change
- Biodiversity and loss of nature
- Plastic pollution
- The theme of UNEA 7: "Accelerating Just Transitions for People and Planet"

The meeting's success was made possible through close collaboration with partners including the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations Environment Programme, Oxfam in Africa, the Hassan II International Centre for Environmental Training, the African Wildlife Foundation, the Africa Network on Animal Welfare, and the World Commission on Environmental Law of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

The meeting featured opening remarks by distinguished speakers, including H.E. Mr. Kouadio Parfait, Director of Cabinet for the Minister of the Environment, Sustainable Development, and Energy Transition, and H.E. Ms. Rose Mwebaza, UNEP Director and Regional Representative for Africa. The agenda included presentations by leading experts from UNEP, the UNCCD, and Africa's own major groups and stakeholders.

This report documents the discussions, key outcomes, and collective vision of the 2024 RCM Africa. It serves as a guide for fostering collaboration among stakeholders and addressing the continent's environmental priorities effectively within a global context.



A:

AMCEN: African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

ANAW: Africa Network for Animal Welfare

AGN: African Group of Negotiators

AWF: Africa Wildlife Foundation

C:

CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity

CBDR: Common But Differentiated Responsibilities

CBDR-RC: Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities

COP29: 29th Conference of the Parties

COP16: 16th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

CSO: Civil Society Organization

CSU: Civil Society Unit

CYNESA: Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa

F:

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

G:

GGA: Global Goal on Adaptation

H:

HCFCs: Hydrochlorofluorocarbons

HFCs: Hydrofluorocarbons

I:

INC: Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee

IUCN WCEL: International Union for the Conservation of Nature's World Commission on Environmental Law

J:

JVE: Young Volunteers for the Environment (Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement)



LDN: Land Degradation Neutrality



MGS: Major Groups and Stakeholders



NBSAPs: National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans

NCQG: New Collective Quantified Goal

NDCs: Nationally Determined Contributions

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization



PWDs: Persons with Disabilities



RCM: Regional Consultative Meeting

RF: Regional Facilitators

ROA: Regional Office for Africa



SB60: 60th session of the Subsidiary Bodies

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

SDS: Sand and dust storms

SLM: Sustainable Land Management



UNCCD: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

UNEA: United Nations Environment Assembly

UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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Opening



David N. Munene, Programs Manager at the **Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA)**, and one of the two Regional Facilitators (RF) of **the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)** Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS), Africa, called the 2024 Regional Consultative Meeting, Africa (**#2024RCMAfrica**) to order some minutes after 9 AM GMT, Abidjan Time at Bouake Hall of Sofitel Hotel Ivoire. **Mr. Munene** invited the high-level panel comprising **Mr. Ayman Cherkaoui** (Director, **Hassan II International Center for Environmental Training** and Regional Facilitator UNEP MGS, Africa), **Dr. Rose Mwebaza** (UNEP Director and Regional Representative for Africa), and **Mr. Kouadio Parfait**, Director of Cabinet, Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Government of Côte d'Ivoire.

In his opening remarks, **Mr. Munene** stated that the RCM is the only meeting of non-state actors that has a clear mechanism to feed in to the multilateral agenda of the Continental through a ministerial conference. He also recognized the support accorded by various partners to the 2024 RCM Africa – the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, UNEP and particularly the **UNEP Civil Society Unit (CSU)**, **Oxfam in Africa**, **African Wildlife Foundation**, Hassan II International Center for Environmental Training, **the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's World Commission on Environmental Law (IUCN WCEL)**, and **the Africa Network for Animal Welfare (ANAW)**. He also ran through the agenda of the RCM in summary and invited the panelists of the high-level opening session to give their remarks.

High-level Opening Session

Mr. Ayman Cherkaoui, RF, MGS, Africa & Director, Hassan II International Center for Environmental Training

Mr. Cherkaoui recognized and commended the UNEP MGS, Africa for renewing their commitment to reinforcing African Governments in their efforts to promote environment-centered and sustainable development. He encouraged participants to look forward to UNEA 7 which will be presided over by Morocco, and therefore puts African leadership at the helm of the UNEA agenda. He further stated that cooperation between African government institutions and major groups is fundamental to driving sustainable development on the continent, and this meeting is tasked with modeling this partnership in the context of addressing degradation, desertification and drought.



**There is no better comprehension
of the African context than
the African comprehension**

“ Sustainable development
should be for Africa,
by Africa and in the African
context ”

**Ayman
Cherkaoui**

Dr. Rose Mwebaza, UNEP Director and Regional Representative for Africa

In her speech, **Dr. Rose Mwebaza**, called for a unified African approach to tackle environmental challenges. She emphasized the importance of collaboration among African governments, civil society, and international partners to develop practical solutions. Her speech also highlighted the need to incorporate indigenous knowledge and technologies into these solutions. The conclusion reaffirms Africa's commitment to leading the fight against climate change and ensuring that its needs and perspectives are heard and acted upon globally.



In his opening remarks, David stated that the RCM is the only meeting of non-state actors that has a clear mechanism to feed in to the multilateral agenda of the Continental through a ministerial conference. He also recognized the support accorded by various partners to the 2024 RCM Africa – the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, UNEP and particularly the UNEP Civil Society Unit (CSU), Oxfam in Africa, African Wildlife Foundation, Hassan II International Center for Environmental Training, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's World Commission on Environmental Law (IUCN WCEL), and the Africa Network for Animal Welfare (ANAW). He also ran through the agenda of the RCM in summary and invited the panelists of the high-level opening session to give their remarks.

**Africa always speaks
in
one voice, but it's a
fearless voice**

DR. ROSE MWEBAZA

She expressed that Africa faces serious threats from rapid desertification and land degradation, affecting regions like the Sahel and Southern Africa. Noting that sustainable land and resource management is crucial for the Continent's survival, Dr. Rose stated that the launch of the Natural Capital Atlas will map Africa's natural assets to support the global energy transition. She encouraged participants to explore solutions for existing challenges, with outcomes feeding into key international forums like the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), COP29, and COP16. Collaboration among diverse groups, from farmers to youth, is essential, and the UN remains committed to addressing these issues collectively, said Dr. Rose.

KEY QUOTES, SOUNDBITES, OR STORIES

- Our land is dying, and with it, our future.
- We must work together with our governments to find solutions that can help these challenges.
- Land is one of the most critical aspects that Africa has, yet it is rapidly deteriorating.
- No nation is an island; we must seek partnerships to mobilize resources and combat desertification

Mr. Kouadio Parfait, Director of Cabinet, Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development and Ecological Transition, Government of Côte d'Ivoire

In delivering his keynote address, **Mr. Kouadio** conveyed the greetings and good wishes of the Honorable Minister for Environment, Sustainable Development, and Ecological Transition, **Mr. Assahoré Konan Jacques**. Highlighting the climate change crisis, **Mr. Kouadio** applauded the coordinated collaboration of governments and partnerships with other stakeholders while underscoring that intellectual reflections and driving implementation of projects are critical. "The CSOs are critically important in driving resilience," said **Mr. Kouadio**. He further thanked CSOs in Cote d'Ivoire in the implementation of the Paris Agreement citing the convention of CSOs in line with the advocacy for environmental call of Cote d'Ivoire, which led to the development of a bill that was adopted to law on June 2nd, 2023. He also noted that CSOs continue to support social projects funded by donors and thanked such donor organizations. **Mr. Kouadio** underscored the role of CSOs in expressing the need of society and, hence, need to be supported.



CSOs are
critically important in
driving resilience

Opening Segment II



Mr. Ülf Bjornholm, OIC Chief, Civil Society Unit, UNEP

Mr. Bjornholm emphasized the linkages across the Rio conventions. He pointed out that while the focus of the 10th special session of AMCEN is UNCCD, there are important links to UNFCCC and CBD, both of which will convene in the next few months. He recommended that Major Groups and Stakeholders prioritize their capacity for co-creation, given the need for innovative ideas to solve unprecedented environmental challenges. **Bjornholm** encouraged consensus building, noting that a common position among Major Groups and Stakeholders can lend similar momentum and support to African Governments, and consolidate a shared agenda for collaboration beyond this meeting. He finally encouraged constructive, representative and innovative ideas that can be picked up by the AMCEN in its deliberations

KEY QUOTES, SOUNDBITES, OR STORIES

- Sustainable development is not achievable without a vibrant civil society that can make others heard. CSOs are the implementers on the ground, and we shouldn't overlook the value of their contributions.

CSOs are
the implementers on
the ground

Mr. Oyéoussi Charles Balogoun, President and founder of Afrique Esperance
NGO & Chair, UNCCD Civil Society Organizations

Mr. Balogoun recommended that Major Groups and Stakeholders seek synergies in tackling degradation, desertification and drought. He recognized that civil society organizations are alive to and have been responsive to how much of a threat these 3 issues are, which is demonstrated by the establishment of a UNCCD panel by and for civil society actors. He pointed out the long history of their interventions: for over 20 years, African CSOs have been concerned with and responding to the challenges of degradation, desertification and drought. He further emphasized that this history of CSOs action is pertinent to actions today. **Mr. Balogoun** also proposed that efficiency be prioritized, and that this meeting interrogates what aligned and coordinated actions are paramount. He further addressed the issue of soil degradation, which he asserted could be a barrier to restoration efforts if disregarded. He further recommended integrated approaches so that land neutrality, nature-based solutions and other models can be pursued jointly and consistently.



KEY QUOTES, SOUNDBITES, OR STORIES

- While it isn't possible to share all the lessons gained from civil society action on degradation, desertification and drought, it is important for us to distill some of the lessons we've had from over 20 years, and for some organizations even 50 years of action.

Mr. David Abudho, Climate Justice Advocacy and Campaigns Advisor,
Oxfam in Africa

In his address, **Mr. Abudho** highlighted the Oxfam humanitarian response approach, to showcase the importance of empowering local communities that he referred to as the “frontline communities”, to build resilience against climate shocks and to address structural issues related to governance and justice. Oxfam's primary mission is to fight inequality, poverty, and injustice in Africa. Africa faces challenges like political instability, economic stress, and climate change, which limit governments' capacity to address public needs. Land degradation and desertification are often overlooked due to other pressing issues. Oxfam therefore emphasizes the importance of involving frontline communities in decision-making and calls for global responsibility to address climate change and its impacts on Africa.



Mr. Abudho described the disproportionate impact of climate change on Africa, despite the continent contributing minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions and the strong call for climate finance to protect vulnerable populations and ensure that international commitments are honored. He underscored that Africa faces numerous challenges, including political instability, economic stress, and the effects of climate change, all of which limit the capacity of governments to meet public needs. David stated that addressing these underlying problems is crucial for enabling millions of Africans to escape poverty and build sustainable futures.

KEY QUOTES, SOUNDBITES, OR STORIES

- I can't fail to highlight the disproportionate impact of climate change on Africa, despite the continent contributing minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions.
- There is a strong call for climate finance to protect vulnerable populations and ensure that international commitments are honored
- Africa faces numerous challenges, including political instability, economic stress, and the effects of climate change, all of which limit the capacity of governments to meet public needs
- Addressing these underlying problems is crucial for enabling millions of Africans to escape poverty and build sustainable futures

Mr. Wellington Matsika, Senior Policy and Partnership Lead, AWF

Mr. Matsika put a strong emphasis on the importance of major groups and stakeholders in complementing government efforts and ambitions. The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) is dedicated to collaborating with all parties to strengthen efforts aimed at addressing the planetary crisis. He highlighted the role of African international organizations, which have provided leadership for over 60 years in building a sustainable future for Africa. These organizations are active in 10 African countries and across 70 landscapes, contributing to business development, leadership programs, and environmental conservation. The network aims to foster collaboration across Africa and beyond.



Efforts are focused on addressing key environmental challenges, including land degradation and wildlife conservation. By using an integrated landscape management model, the programs aim to harmonize community livelihoods with sustainable land-use practices. Initiatives also include the establishment of protected areas in Africa, facilitating knowledge exchange and joint action to enhance conservation efforts across the continent. The AWF secretariat plays a key role in supporting protected area authorities and promoting best practices.

AWF places great importance on building leadership capacity across the continent through programs like the Young African Policy Fellows Program. This fellowship supports young professionals, offering them opportunities for development and helping to advance their skills to drive initiatives across Africa. AWF calls for decisive action to build resilience and promote sustainable practices to combat desertification and drought. Indigenous peoples and local communities are recognized as central to environmental action, and there is a need to invest in their capacities. Sustainable and innovative financing that reaches local communities is critical to addressing land degradation, desertification, and drought.

Mr. Matsika reiterated AWF's commitment to being part of a united voice, providing leadership and strategy dedicated to addressing pressing environmental challenges.

Launch of the Africa Climate Caravans

Mr. Sena Alouka, Executive Director of the Young Volunteers for the Environment (JVE) NGO



Mr. Sena Alouka, the Executive Director of the Young Volunteers for the Environment (JVE) called for urgent global action to combat the climate crisis. He demanded that the nations responsible for the climate crisis take responsibility and support a financial ambition of between 5 and 7 trillion dollars, citing that this amount is based on solid scientific data. He advocated for increased financial support from developed nations, fair debt relief for vulnerable countries, and greater participation from all segments of society. In addition, the speaker reminds us that financing the Loss and Damage Fund and the energy transition also requires significant resources, estimated at 500 million dollars. Before concluding, **Sena** remarked, "The 'polluter pays' principle, as set out in the Rio Convention, must be respected. The industries responsible, in particular governments and the oil industry, must assume a significant share of the costs associated with the climate crisis."

Mr. Sena Alouka outlined several upcoming initiatives of JVE. he announced the launch of a petition in September, with a target of one million signatures, and a symbolic march in Abidjan, starting on September 4th as well as a caravan outside the AMCEN venue, to ensure the voice of the African people is heard. JVE emphasizes the importance of collective action to ensure a just and sustainable future for all.

**In concrete terms, we are
DEMANDING that the nations
responsible for the climate crisis
take responsibility and support a
financial ambition of between
5 and 7 trillion dollars.**

Thematic Information Session

Overview Session: UNEA 6 Outcomes

Mr. Allan Meso, AMCEN Secretariat, UNEP

Mr. Meso asserted that action on land neutrality needs to be sped up if it is to be realizable. He acknowledged that finance for degradation, desertification and drought is critical, and mobilization



Efforts and partnerships to this end need to be revisited and strengthened. He encouraged Major Groups and Stakeholders to consider their unique contribution to AMCEN and its declaration, informing the meeting that the AMCEN body will be keen to understand what implications deliberations here have for collaboration between African Governments and Major Groups and Stakeholders. On the question of the role of education, **Mr. Meso** invited participants to explore the Global Universities Partnership on Environment and Sustainability, which tackles environmental themes, including education for drought resilience. He also recommended participants to engage with the UNEP ecosystems division which has opportunities for linking educators into drought resilience and other environmental education.

**Drought is a global
phenomenon and is no longer a
regional issue**

Deep Dives

UNEA 6 Outcomes

Session Facilitators: Ms. Anna Odur and Mr. Luke Kapchanga

Ms. Odur and **Mr. Kapchanga** underscored the need for concrete action and accountability in governmental commitments. They criticized the disconnect between policy declarations and outcomes, particularly in areas like environmental conservation and food security. The two emphasized the importance of local involvement, follow-up, and strategic planning in decisionmaking processes.

They also highlighted the role of civil society in international governance and stressed the need for coordination, accreditation, and strategic engagement to ensure that resolutions lead to tangible outcomes. They emphasize the challenges of implementation and the importance of accountability in international environmental governance.



The speakers conclude with a call to action. They urge stakeholders to remain engaged and proactive in their efforts to influence policy and ensure the implementation of resolutions. Anna and Luke highlighted the need for continued coordination, strategic use of multilateral tools, and active engagement with both governments and the private sector to ensure that their voices are heard as well and that commitments are fully realized.

KEY QUOTES AND SOUNDBITES

- As we prepare for future engagements, we need to reflect on the outcomes of past resolutions and ensure that our actions are aligned with our goals. It's essential to have a clear plan for addressing any gaps and building on our progress.
- We must not only celebrate our achievements but also critically evaluate what actions have been taken on past resolutions. Effective follow-up is crucial to ensure that our voices translate into tangible outcomes
- Accreditation is crucial for stakeholders to access and influence international policy discussions and implementation opportunities. Without it, stakeholders risk missing out on significant opportunities to contribute to and shape policy decisions. Active engagement through consultations and decision-making processes is essential for making an impact
- Effective coordination among stakeholders, including major groups and Member States, is critical for advancing environmental goals. Successful examples of coordination, such as those from African Member States, demonstrate the power of a unified approach in international negotiations. Enhanced coordination and proactive engagement can lead to more impactful and sustainable outcomes.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION 1: WHAT IS THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE UNEA?

- **Answer:** Civil society plays a crucial role in influencing the UNEA by providing input, advocating for specific issues, and participating in negotiations. They are represented by major groups, such as youth, NGOs, and indigenous peoples, which have a collective voice in the decision-making process.

QUESTION 2: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE UNEA?

- **Challenges:** Civil society representatives face challenges in coordinating their efforts, ensuring effective communication, and navigating the complex negotiation process. They may also encounter difficulties in accessing information and resources.
- **Opportunities:** The UNEA provides opportunities for civil society to influence global environmental policy, raise awareness of important issues, and build partnerships with governments and other stakeholders.



QUESTION 3: HOW CAN CIVIL SOCIETY IMPROVE ITS EFFECTIVENESS IN THE UNEA?

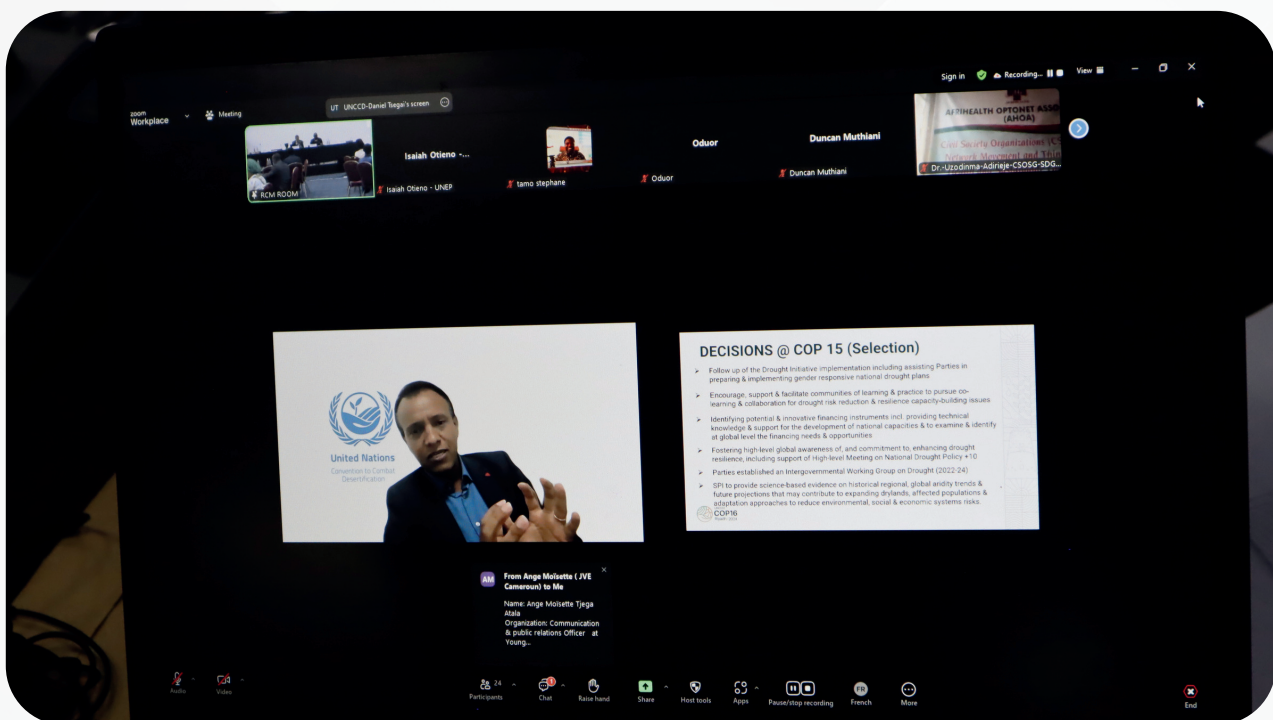
- **Answer:** Civil society can enhance its effectiveness by strengthening coordination, improving communication, and utilizing available resources. They can also actively participate in the UNEA's decision-making processes and build relationships with key stakeholders.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Civil society plays a vital role in shaping global environmental policy through the UNEA.
- Effective coordination and communication are essential for civil society to maximize its impact.
- Access to information and resources is crucial for civil society's participation in the UNEA.
- Building relationships with governments and other stakeholders can strengthen civil society's influence.
- Civil society should actively engage in the UNEA's decision-making processes to advocate for their priorities.

Mr. Daniel Tsegai, Programme Officer, UNCCD

Connecting online, **Mr. Tsegai** emphasized the critical role of major groups and stakeholders in strengthening national crisis frameworks. He stressed the necessity for enhanced practices and active participation from all parties to effectively address environmental challenges. He highlighted the importance of collaboration among governments to support drought resilience and sustainable land management. **Mr. Tsegai** noted that resilience efforts should be well-coordinated across African nations to ensure impactful outcomes.



The discussion included the need for proactive preparation for environmental crises. He called for national programs to adopt practices that foster resilience and mitigate the impacts of land degradation. **Mr. Tsegai** announced the launch of Global and Regional Communities of Learning and Practice, aimed at enhancing knowledge exchange on drought resilience. These initiatives are intended to foster collaboration among nations and stakeholders to address environmental concerns collectively.

He emphasized the need for strong leadership and capacity building to manage drought, sand and dust storms (SDS), and water scarcity effectively. Educational programs are crucial to supporting government efforts and enhancing national resilience. In addition, he called for concrete actions at COP 16, focusing on high-level political commitment to drought resilience. Technology, financing, and policy are vital in addressing emerging environmental issues. He reiterated that UNCCD is committed to enhancing global awareness and commitment to drought resilience. COP 16 is expected to catalyze a new drought resilience regime, promoting long-term sustainable practices.

KEY QUOTES AND SOUNDBITES

- **“To force the hand is most important to enhancing practice”** – Emphasizing the need for decisive action in improving drought resilience.
- **“We need to be prepared for that”** – Highlighting the urgency of proactive measures.
- **“From Geneva to Riyadh – a high-level roundtable to discuss the way forward for a holistic approach to drought, SDS, and Water Scarcity management”** – Illustrating global collaboration efforts.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



- **Question:** What are the next steps for national drought policy implementation?
Answer: The focus will be on improving current practices, addressing bottlenecks, and ensuring continued support for affected regions.
- **Question:** How will technology and financing play a role in drought resilience?
Answer: High-level interactive sessions will explore these aspects, aiming to integrate innovative solutions and secure necessary funding.
- **Question:** How to get involved in the UNCCD process?
Answer: Engage through regional coordinated policies and participate in global initiatives and discussions.
- **Question:** Is there a general policy applicable to all continents?
Answer: Regional policies may vary, but there is a need for comprehensive strategies that address global and local challenges.
- **Question:** What is the role of the educational sector in implementing the SDGs?
Answer: Educational institutions and teachers are vital in promoting awareness and integrating sustainable development goals into curricula and community actions.

Reducing Land Degradation, Desertification and Drought in Africa

**Session Facilitators: Ms. Nancy Marangu and
Mr. Tcharbuahbokengo Nfinn**



Ms. Marangu and **Mr. Nfinn** began by expounding on the need to ensure that local communities are empowered to participate in resilience measures. They posited that this requires that Major Groups and Stakeholders communicate outside of policy spaces and in relevant languages. They discussed the cross-cutting nature of degradation and its exacerbation of existing social challenges. Degradation can result in forced migration for instance, and this phenomenon, without investment in resilience, notably affects the development process. **Ms. Marangu** and **Mr. Nfinn** affirmed that policymakers must prioritize local action, if they seek systematic impact, and to address degradation as a global issue not limited to the African continent. They further affirmed that communities are an essential constituency, and they must be meaningfully engaged, which can and may be the difference between resilience and further environmental catastrophe.

They highlighted the significant environmental degradation in Africa, with 65% of the land degraded. The need for integrated mission programs to address this issue was stressed, as environmental degradation affects not only landscapes but also biodiversity and local communities. There was a strong emphasis on the importance of inclusivity in environmental action, particularly in terms of language. The speaker questioned how different communities, especially those not fluent in major languages, can be involved in these efforts. The importance of involving all demographic groups, including elders, in environmental actions was underscored.

They also advocated for practical capacity-building programs, especially for children and young people, to ensure they can contribute to environmental solutions. Innovation, including the use of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things, was identified as crucial in addressing biodiversity loss and land degradation.

Investment in nature-based solutions was recommended as a key strategy for addressing land degradation and promoting sustainable landscapes. The speaker called for partnerships that strengthen local capacities and enhance resilience against droughts and desertification.

The necessity of involving local governments and communities in environmental actions was highlighted. The speaker emphasized the importance of strong partnerships in addressing land use issues and combating the effects of droughts and desertification.

KEY QUOTES, SOUNDBITES, OR STORIES

- What deliberate commitment, intention and priority will we take from RCM and AMCEN to our local contexts?
- The proof of our success is in how effective we are in empowering communities to act.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



- **Question:** How can we use the seas and oceans to restore degraded lands?
Answer: The integration of marine ecosystems into land restoration strategies was discussed, emphasizing the potential for coastal and marine solutions to contribute to land resilience.
- **Question:** Who should we engage to identify cultural issues?
Answer: The importance of integrating indigenous knowledge and giving traditional communities the tools to address environmental issues within their cultural context was highlighted.
- **Question:** What are the solutions to address desertification, and are they replicable across Africa?
Answer: Solutions like water desalination were proposed as reliable methods to combat specific environmental challenges, with an emphasis on the replicability of these solutions across different regions.
- **Question:** How do we ensure that our efforts include young people and reflect the needs of local communities?
Answer: Programs must be designed with inclusivity in mind, focusing on practical skills and local relevance, particularly for younger generations and local populations.

Climate Change

Session Facilitators: Ms. Sharon Mutende and Mr. Ahmed Fathy

Sharon and **Ahmed** acknowledged the urgency of addressing climate change, particularly for Africa, which faces severe impacts despite its minimal contribution to global emissions. Taking the example of his own country, Egypt,



Mr. Ahmed Fathy stressed that the recent heatwaves in Egypt underlined the need for immediate action. Despite 30 years of climate efforts and 28,000 actions, Africa's minimal emissions yet significant challenges highlight the continent's critical role in global negotiations. The speakers remind us that a focus must be on climate justice for Africa, emphasizing the need for effective policies in adaptation, finance, and gender inclusion. Recalling recent discussions, they stressed the importance of mobilizing the \$5.9 trillion commitment by 2030 to support Africa's climate needs. They mentioned that Youth engagement through mentorship and conferences is vital for meaningful contributions. To close their presentation, the speakers remind, us that as we approach COP29, Africans must embrace tailored solutions, empower one another, and advocate for justice.

KEY QUOTES, SOUNDBITES, OR STORIES

- The \$5.9 trillion commitment by 2030 is a step forward, but we must ensure these funds are mobilized and used effectively.
- Empowering youth through mentorship and regional conferences is essential for meaningful climate action
- As we approach COP29, Africa must embrace solutions tailored to our needs and advocate fiercely for climate justice
- "Our voices and actions are critical in shaping the future of climate negotiations and ensuring our continent's needs are met."
- "We need policies that move beyond promises and ensure real action on adaptation, climate finance, and gender inclusion."

Biodiversity and Nature Loss

Session Facilitators: Ms. Catherine Chumo and Mr. Alaaeldin Yousif

Ms. Kate Chumo emphasized the significance of Africa's participation in COP16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), highlighting the benefits and opportunities for the continent. She discussed how Africa can leverage such events for partnership opportunities and maximize adoptable strategies. She presented compelling statistics on ecosystem restoration, noting that restoring 350 million hectares of degraded ecosystems between 2020 and 2030 could generate about \$9 trillion in ecosystem services and remove 13 to 26 gigatons of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.



She addressed the need for competitive strategies to combat climate change, including desertification and biodiversity loss. **Ms. Chumo** discussed predator-prey relationships and the need for active management in these areas. She also covered various biodiversity conservation activities, including protecting areas from poachers, habitat restoration, and engaging children in educational programs, and stressed the importance of involving indigenous communities and promoting pollution reduction.

Legal frameworks were highlighted as a crucial component of effective conservation efforts. She spoke about engaging judicial officers in training and education and mentioned successful campaigns, such as protecting Nairobi National Park and halting the construction of the Superhighway across Serengeti National Park. She underscored the importance of leveraging global and regional processes to promote ecosystem restoration, integrated efforts, and financial investments. Mainstreaming land degradation neutrality into national policies was also emphasized.

Mr. Alaaeldein Yousif provided an overview of COP16, the 16th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which will be held in Cali, Colombia, from October 1st to November 1st, 2024. He highlighted the significance of this meeting in integrating actions across various COPs to ensure effective environmental policies and preservation efforts. He reflected on the policies' impact on nature, emphasizing the need for actionable measures to preserve biodiversity, particularly in Africa, which faces significant challenges due to deforestation and biodiversity loss.



Mr. Yousif discussed the current state of Africa's forests, noting that approximately 30% have been lost since 2019, with over 1.4 million hectares lost between 2015 and 2020. He expressed growing concern about the future of Africa's forests, given the rapid deforestation and habitat loss. Seven out of the ten countries with the highest deforestation rates are in Africa.

He presented statistics on biodiversity loss, with over 600 animal species and 3,102 plant species at risk of extinction. Vertebrate species populations have declined by almost 40% over the past 25 years, as well as pointed out that this loss exacerbates competition for natural resources, leading to conflicts and increased pressure on ecosystems, which are critical for many African communities.

Mr. Yousif highlighted the impact of Africa's rapidly growing population on habitat destruction, agricultural expansion, and food demands. The introduction of invasive species is also contributing to biodiversity loss. He stressed that overexploitation of resources and resulting habitat loss threatens the continent's ecological future.

He emphasized the need for effective leadership and resource mobilization to address biodiversity loss and climate change. COP16 provides a platform for Africa to advocate for access to funds and share knowledge on biodiversity conservation. He also discussed global leadership in biodiversity protection, noting that the roadmap signed by 116 countries aims to improve resilience and connect Africa with global conservation efforts. The economic impact of biodiversity loss on African countries, particularly those reliant on tourism and natural resources, will be a key focus at COP16.

Youth engagement was highlighted as crucial for addressing biodiversity challenges. African youth play a significant role in implementing national biodiversity strategies and action plans. Strategic collaboration between youth organizations and other stakeholders is essential to overcoming challenges faced by government institutions in biodiversity conservation.

Mr. Yousif concluded with a focus on local and regional initiatives, emphasizing the importance of community projects aimed at biodiversity protection and waste reduction. These initiatives promote sustainable practices and contribute to broader biodiversity conservation goals.

KEY QUOTES, SOUNDBITES, OR STORIES

- The restoration of 350 million hectares of degraded ecosystems will generate about \$9 trillion in ecosystem services.

**Inaction would be nearly
three times costlier than
taking
proactive restoration
measures**

- Maximization of adoptable strategies is essential in Africa's participation in COP16.
- Predator-prey relationships must be actively managed to maintain ecosystem balance.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



- **Question:** What are the key benefits of ecosystem restoration?

Answer: The restoration of degraded ecosystems can generate substantial economic benefits and remove significant amounts of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

- **Question:** How can legal frameworks be strengthened to support conservation efforts?

Answer: By engaging judicial officers in training and education, revising and reforming legal frameworks, and promoting collaboration among agencies.

Plastic Pollution

Session Facilitators: Ms. Eugenia Yayra Agbley and Mr. Anthony Apkan



Ms. Agbley and **Mr. Apkan** highlighted some key statistics demonstrating the urgency of actions to reduce and eliminate plastic pollution. These demonstrated woefully low rates of recycling, the pervasiveness of single use plastics, and the production of hazardous chemicals which have known impacts on human health, and negatively impact the environment. They informed participants that plastic production rates are yet to peak, and that for Africa, rates of production are still quite high and may be the highest globally by 2060. They recognized Africa's efforts, noting that 34 African countries have passed laws to reduce plastic pollution and close to a third have enforced plastic bans. They encouraged Major Groups and Stakeholders to contribute their expertise and insight as this can help shape Africa's ambitions in ending plastic pollution and inform global ambition within the Plastics Treaty.

KEY QUOTES, SOUNDBITES, OR STORIES

- No aspect of plastic production is clean. At every step, there is pollution.
- Working closely with national delegations is important. Members are invited to a working group which will focus on raising the AMCEN declaration's ambition on Africa's position on plastics.

Preparations for UNEA-7 (including electoral elements)

Preparations towards UNEA-7 (UNEA-7 Theme)

Mr. Ülf Bjornholm, OiC Chief, Civil Society Unit, UNEP



Mr. Bjornholm walked participants through resources available for UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders to inform preparations for UNEA 7. He also provided guidance on how interested organizations can become accredited, what limitations there are to UNEP as the host to Major Groups and Stakeholders, what opportunities and benefits accreditation offers, as well as some of the resources available for accredited members to follow UNEP's input to relevant processes including but not limited to UNEA and AMCEN. He shared some of the constraints facilitators and UNEP have in supporting Major Groups and Stakeholders, as well as some of the innovative uses of the platform by members, and its positive implications for amplifying their work, strengthening networks and engaging with new policy processes.

Mr. Bjornholm also provided a detailed overview of the Monitoring and Reporting portal. This portal offers a comprehensive look at the implementation status of resolutions. Users can navigate through around 120 resolutions, filtering by various criteria such as assembly, outcome type, and status. The portal includes summaries, implementation statuses, and links to relevant projects and reports, with updates occurring every six months. These updates offer insights into progress, financial needs, and ongoing challenges associated with each resolution.

Looking ahead, UNEA 7 is scheduled for December 2025. The decision on the dates and agenda for this session was made well in advance, and preparations are underway. The theme for UNEA 7 is expected to address root causes, be solution-oriented, and align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It should also be crisp, concise, and easily communicable. The guiding principles for selecting the theme include inclusivity, transparency, and relevance to political debates and stakeholder consultations.

Three proposed themes for UNEA 7 have been put forward:

1. "Forging Tomorrow's Pathways to a Livable and Resilient Planet,"
2. "Accelerating Just Transitions for People and Planet," and
3. "New Frontiers and Solutions for a Greener Tomorrow."

These proposals, derived from scientific and technical consultations, are open for stakeholder feedback. The consultation process includes a meeting on September 26th, where stakeholders can provide input and influence the final decision on the theme. Additional consultations may occur before a final decision is made by the end of December.

Elections for UNEP Regional Facilitators

Mr. Isaiah Otieno, Civil Society Unit, UNEP

Role of Regional Facilitators: Regional Facilitators play a crucial role in the UNEP process, acting as liaisons between regional organizations and UNEP. They draft agendas for Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs), facilitate engagement with UNEP, and provide guidance to new organizations on participation.



Election process: The election process for regional facilitators is a democratic one, where accredited organizations nominate and vote for candidates. The process involves nomination, compilation, election, and verification stages.

Challenges and Recommendations: There are challenges related to candidate representation, accreditation, and participation in major groups. UNEP encourages diversity but does not mandate it. The organization also emphasizes the importance of meeting accreditation criteria and providing necessary documentation to stakeholders.

Key Takeaways: The Q&A highlights the importance of regional facilitators in the UNEP process and the democratic nature of the election process. It also addresses challenges faced by organizations and provides recommendations for improved participation and engagement.

DAY 2

Monday, September 2nd, 2024

Moderator: Mr. Ayman Cherkaoui, RF, MGS, Africa & Director,
Hassan II International Center for Environmental Training

GROUP WORK



Five working groups were constituted to address the most pertinent thematic areas in relation to the agenda of the Tenth Special Session of the AMCEN and the areas of interest of the UNEP, UNCCD, UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNEP MGS, Africa, the UNCCD CSOs, and other African grassroots CSOs. These mirrored the deep dives covered on the first day of the 2024 RCM Africa and included climate change, land degradation, biodiversity and nature loss, pollution, and the Seventh Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-7).

Climate Change

The working group on climate change addressed the urgent need for Africa to enhance its climate strategies in light of upcoming international climate conferences, including COP29. The group highlighted Africa's minimal climate finance despite its high vulnerability to climate impacts and emphasized the need for equitable financial support.



Climate Finance: Advocated for increased and equitable climate finance, with a focus on the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) to exceed the current \$100 billion benchmark. The need for simplified access to finance and support for adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage efforts in Africa was emphasized.

Local Capacity and Solutions: Stressed the importance of building local capacity and investing in African climate experts to develop context-specific solutions. The group called for clear indicators and community-led adaptation strategies.

Energy Efficiency: Underlined the role of energy efficiency in climate resilience, urging member states to incorporate energy efficiency targets into their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and phase out harmful substances like HFCs.

Youth and Education: Highlighted the need for environmental education and increased youth involvement in climate action and negotiations.

Gender Mainstreaming: Focused on enhancing gender inclusivity in climate policies, ensuring women and marginalized communities are actively involved in climate initiatives.

Resource Mobilization: Called for a robust climate finance framework with a minimum funding goal of USD 5.9 trillion by 2030, emphasizing non-debt creating support and avoiding reliance on carbon markets. The discussions led to a long statement aimed at advancing Africa's climate resilience through these key areas.

Land Degradation

Five working groups were constituted to address the most pertinent thematic areas in relation to the agenda of the Tenth Special Session of the AMCEN and the areas of interest of the UNEP, UNCCD, UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNEP MGS, Africa, the UNCCD CSOs, and other African grassroots CSOs. These mirrored the deep dives covered on the first day of the 2024 RCM Africa and included climate change, land degradation, biodiversity and nature loss, pollution, and the Seventh Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-7).



The group emphasized the need for stronger institutional capacities to monitor and address land-related risks. They urged member states to adopt policies like the African Union Land Governance Strategy and the Drought Protocol to involve stakeholders in mitigating drought and land degradation.

The importance of investing in continuous research and creating databanks to support decision-making at all levels was highlighted. The group also stressed the need for education focused on sustainable development, particularly for vulnerable groups, and the integration of local knowledge.

Technology deployment, including geospatial technologies, was recognized as key in addressing land degradation. Nature-based solutions, such as agroforestry and agroecology, were identified as essential for restoring ecosystems and building resilience, with a focus on youth and women.

The group encouraged green financing initiatives and the creation of sustainable businesses to support alternative livelihoods. Monitoring and evaluation of existing frameworks, like the UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018-2030, were considered vital to track progress in combating land degradation and enhancing drought resilience.

Biodiversity Loss

The working group on biodiversity and nature loss emphasized the need for coordinated efforts across Africa to restore ecosystems and address land degradation. The group called for substantial investments through innovative financing mechanisms such as biodiversity economies and payment for ecosystem services. Mobilizing domestic resources and reducing Africa's debt burden were highlighted as crucial steps for supporting restoration efforts.



Mainstreaming land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets into national policies was deemed essential for tackling biodiversity loss. The group urged member states to accelerate ecosystem restoration efforts by integrating nature-based solutions, sustainable agriculture, and water management plans. Strengthening inclusive monitoring systems to track progress was also encouraged.

The importance of investing in science-policy interfaces was stressed, with a call for coordinated research efforts. The group emphasized the need to combine indigenous and modern knowledge systems to enhance Africa's resilience and biodiversity conservation efforts.

As COP16 approaches, the working group urged African states to update their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) while ensuring that marginalized groups, including women, youth, and indigenous communities, are central to biodiversity planning and actions.

Plastic Pollution

At this juncture, the group had identified 10 work areas. These were around chemicals, production, instruments, financing, lifecycle, just transition, education and behavior, health, trade, and gender.



There were calls to strengthen the laws against the transboundary pollution of plastic and to make sure that African ministers understand the use of these instruments to fight against plastic pollution and, particularly, the Bamako Convention. More finance for research to find ecological alternative solutions (innovative ideas) and to make sure everyone has access were made alongside the need for Africa to undertake its own research to find its own alternatives to plastics.

On reducing the production of plastic, increased awareness and conversations around the diseases brought by plastic pollution were highlighted as potential avenues amidst calls for more finances to facilitate just transition. Reliance on traditional knowledge to go back to a free-plastic lifestyle, as before, was mentioned as an important behavioral choice to combat plastic pollution.

The group also underscored the need to be very cautious when it comes to reuse the plastic, as most of them are very toxic. In the review of barriers to ending plastic pollution, the group noted the existence of systematic barriers. In particular, it was noted that some countries do not show interest towards aligning with the idea of eradicating plastic pollution because they get (economic) benefits from its production.

Majority of the people affected by plastic pollution are in Africa. In terms of intergovernmental mechanisms, there were views that UNFCCC has the obligation to make sure that communities are part of the negotiations. It was emphasized that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) is still a process and not a plastic treaty. As such, legally binding obligations are still needed.

UNEA-7

The UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders from Africa emphasized the importance of AMCEN's policy guidance in addressing the triple planetary crisis and advancing sustainable development. The group supported the proposed UNEA-7 theme, "Accelerating Equitable Transformation for People and Planet," as it promotes inclusive participation and socio-economic development while enabling the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.



The group called on member states to prioritize local financing mechanisms for tackling environmental issues like drought, land degradation, and pollution. Strengthening partnerships, particularly with Major Groups and Stakeholders, is vital for capacity building and investment in environmental solutions.

A key message was the need to accelerate the implementation of UNEA-6 and previous resolutions at the local level, ensuring continued commitment from all stakeholders. The group urged member states to enhance their efforts to implement global and regional frameworks, such as the UN conventions on climate change, biodiversity, and desertification.

Finally, the group stressed the importance of focusing on emerging environmental issues while ensuring that ongoing processes are finalized by UNEA-7.

Stocktaking

The stocktaking session was a check-in moment to review the progress of the group work towards the development of the long statement by thematic area. Facilitated by the regional facilitators, Ayman Cherkaoui and David Munene, the various group facilitators or appointed rapporteurs presented their progress in plenary and received minor input from the participants. This enabled the entire 2024 RCM Africa to determine groups with need for assistance and to iron out any contentious issues.

Climate Change: The commitment to supporting just transitions focuses on ensuring that the shift toward more sustainable practices is equitable and inclusive. This involves addressing two remaining challenges: resource mobilization, which is crucial for funding these transitions, and extreme agendas, which might involve urgent or severe measures needed for climate action. The group discussion highlighted a significant \$5 trillion fund and its foundation board suggesting a substantial financial commitment to these goals.

Plastic Pollution: The Plastic Pollution Group was actively gathering input on various issues such as the challenges associated with transboundary plastic waste movements and financing mechanisms for just transitions. There is a strong emphasis on leveraging indigenous knowledge and practices from Africa to address plastic pollution effectively. This involves revisiting traditional methods and best practices to incorporate them into modern strategies. Additionally, the group is working on raising awareness about plastic pollution and integrating education on the topic into school curricula, aiming to instill environmental consciousness from an early age.

Nature and Biodiversity Loss: Discussions have centered on addressing biodiversity loss by focusing on mitigation strategies for drought and ecosystem restoration in Africa. The group has explored how to integrate indigenous practices and suggested that these practices, which have not yet been fully adopted at the ministerial level, could offer valuable insights. There is also a focus on evaluating neutrality targets and policies to ensure alignment with current commitments. The group is considering local solutions for land restoration and exploring alternative funding models to support these initiatives effectively.

Land Degradation and Desertification: The Group highlighted the impact of human activities on land and the need for more timely and specific data. They reiterated the need for timely data and the importance of localizing legal frameworks, recognizing the importance of a strong emphasis on involving youth in environmental conservation.

UNEA-7 Theme: The group supported the proposed draft theme, "Accelerating just transitions for people and planet," for the upcoming UNEA 7. This theme aims to address the urgent and severe challenges facing marginalized communities by focusing on equitable and transformative actions.

Finalization of Long Statement in Plenary

During plenary, the outcome statements of the various groups were presented and as is tradition, subjected to line-by-line review with minimal allowance for new input. The RFs (**Ayman and David**) took turns to facilitate the sessions to help collect and collate input from both in-person and online participants with the support from **Ms. Hala Menkari** of the Hassan II International Center for Environmental Training and **Mr. Josiah Ojwang** of ANAW. Group-by-group, the long statements were adopted with the final one on biodiversity and nature loss being agreed upon by consensus at around 3:14 AM GMT on the morning of Tuesday, September 3rd, 2024.



With Gratitude to Our Partners:

Government of Côte d'Ivoire | UN Environment Programme (UNEP) | Hassan II International Center for Environmental Training – Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection | Oxfam in Africa | African Wildlife Foundation | International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL)

Annex

1. The 2024 RCM Africa Statement of the UNEP and Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa to the Expert Segment of the Tenth Special Session of the AMCEN

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Dear colleagues from the Major Groups and Stakeholders,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is **Ayman Cherkaoui** and I am one of the two regional facilitators for the Major Groups and Stakeholders of Africa, as well as a representative of the Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection.

The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment is a conference of paramount importance for the major groups and stakeholders of Africa. Hundreds of us have been connecting online and in person over the past few months to prepare and coordinate the 10th Special Session of the AMCEN. We are convinced that the partnership between African Member States and UNEP-accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders from Africa is an essential lever for addressing the triple environmental planetary crisis of pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change. We would also like to underline the important support that UNEP, as the AMCEN secretariat, has consistently given to our work, both through the Civil Society Unit and the Regional Office for Africa.

The bulk of this preparatory work consisted of the regional consultative meeting. This began the day before yesterday and concluded early this morning. Nearly 160 people from across the continent took part in person and dozens online. To make this meeting a comfortable and successful reality, we worked closely with Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations Environment Programme, Oxfam in Africa, the Hassan II International Centre for Environmental Training, the African Wildlife Foundation, the Africa Network on Animal Welfare and the World Commission on Environmental Law of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. We thank them for their generous support.

In the opening segment, we were honored to hear from two of the distinguished speakers who spoke earlier this morning: H.E. Mr. Kouadio Parfait, Director of Cabinet for the Minister of the Environment, Sustainable Development and Energy Transition, and H.E. Ms. Rose Mwebaza, UNEP Director and Regional Representative for Africa.

The meeting consisted of a day of presentations by leading experts, including representatives from UNEP, the UNCCD and experts from Africa's own major groups and stakeholders.

This morning at 3 a.m., the Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa, adopted a lengthy 17-page declaration covering, among other things:

- Reducing land degradation, desertification and drought in Africa
- Climate change
- Biodiversity and loss of nature
- Plastic pollution
- And the theme of UNEA 7

Through these topics, we discussed a range of issues, principles and solutions at national, continental and global levels. These include, but are not limited to, and in no particular order:

- The United Nations' Agenda 2030 and the African Union's Agenda 2063.
- The principles of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), legal liability and compensation, transboundary environmental justice, prevention and precaution, and polluter pays.
- Prioritization of vulnerable populations
- Gender parity and representation of women in decision-making.
- Youth, indigenous peoples and local communities
- Institutional capacities
- Science and the science/policy interface, as well as access to data
- Research and development in Africa
- Grassroots organizations
- Education for sustainable development, environmental education and climate education.
- Behavior change
- Capacity building and development
- Partnership development in terms of capacity building and technological support.

- Technology
- Nature-based Solutions
- Sustainable financing to combat drought, desertification and land degradation
- Integrated sustainable approaches and sustainable financial investments to address ecosystem restoration
- Integrating land degradation neutrality objectives into national policies and commitments
- Climate finance and the new collective target on climate finance
- Africa's specific needs and circumstances in terms of mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage
- Energy transition and energy efficiency
- The need to ensure just transitions for African communities, including the informal sector and African small and medium-sized enterprises.
- The overall adaptation objective
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Preparing African states for COP 16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, including accelerating the updating of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and financing plans, while integrating the needs of marginalized groups.
- Preparing African states for COP 16 of the United Nations Framework Convention to Combat Desertification.
- The need to look ahead to UNEA 7, without losing sight of the need to implement the resolutions of UNEA 6, which took place for the first time under the African presidency of the Kingdom of Morocco, as well as previous UNEAs.

In conclusion, I would like to refer to an Ivorian proverb:

**“ You don't
show your village with
your left hand ”**

We are passionately proud of our continent, its people and its environment. It is a holistic, cross-cutting pride that you can see in my exchanges with colleagues from African Major groups and stakeholders, or more literally and anecdotally in this tie woven by a women's cooperative in Burkina Faso. We salute your work, including that of the African Negotiators Group. Unity is our strength.

We look forward to sharing the lengthy structured statement with you and presenting a summary of the results of our work during the ministerial segment later this week.

Thank you for your attention.

2.The 2024 RCM Africa FINAL Summary Statement of the UNEP Major Groups & Stakeholders, Africa to the Tenth Special Session of the AMCEN

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am **David Munene** with the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA) and one of the two Regional Facilitators of the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa.

I am presenting this summary statement on behalf of the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa, as an outcome of two days of intense and collaborative work during the 2024 Regional Consultative Meeting, Africa, which concluded past 3 AM on Monday morning.

First, we register our most profound gratitude to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, UNEP, and our partners (The UNCCD African CSOs, Oxfam in Africa, the Hassan II International Center for Environmental Training, AWF, IUCN WCEL, and ANAW) for their support towards the 2024 RCM Africa. We also congratulate the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for their progressive AMCEN Presidency.

To reduce land degradation, desertification and drought in Africa, we urge Member States to strengthen institutional capacities, to urgently implement policies and frameworks such as the Drought Protocol, invest in continuous research, harness the power of technology, pay attention to nature-based solutions, support green financing for healthy people and land, and measure progress of existing programmatic interventions.

On mainstreaming land degradation neutrality targets in national policies and commitments, we urge Member States to commit to the principle of land degradation neutrality to prioritize accelerated action on ecosystem restoration and biodiversity loss.

The UNCCD COP16 provides a unique opportunity to restore human dignity by creating a legacy of a future devoid of forced displacement, food insecurity, water scarcity, and insecurity caused by land degradation, desertification, and drought.

On Climate Change, capacity development at the local level is essential to enhance community resilience and adaptive capacities. It is imperative to ensure that gender equality, youth and broader inclusivity are central to development and decision-making processes.

It is crucial to establish a robust and equitable framework that addresses the special needs and circumstances of Africa and other developing regions. The New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) must set a minimum quantum of USD 5.9 trillion by 2030 reflecting the special needs and circumstances of Africa.

It is imperative to prioritize effective implementation mechanisms and ensure that resources are directed toward their intended climate action goals, particularly in areas such as loss and damage and support for National Adaptation Plans.

On biodiversity and nature loss, sustained integrated approach and substantial financial investments at regional and national levels to address ecosystem restoration we demand the resolution of the debt burden on Africa to unlock funding opportunities, including debt for nature swaps.

We applaud the member states for reinforcing the need for investing in coordinated and accessible data knowledge, and measurement systems.

We urge African member states to expedite the process of updating their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and the development of the associated National Financing Plans for Biodiversity.

Concerning Plastic Pollution, African Member States must prioritize addressing plastic pollution meaningfully, increase non-toxic circularity and fulfill the mandate of the UNEA 5/14 resolution and AMCEN Decision 19/2.

The internationally legally binding instrument must have internationally agreed targets to reduce plastic production and be matched with clear commitments to provide stable and predictable multilateral finance. We call upon African Ministers to support the adoption of the Voluntary Code of Conduct on the Sustainable Use of Plastics in Agriculture at the upcoming Committee on Agriculture of the FAO.

On education for sustainable development and behavior change, programs should involve raising awareness of the impact of pollution, reflect the ecological ancestral attitude and embed eco-behavioural practices in the early stages and throughout life to preserve the environment.

We support the proposed draft theme of UNEA-7 of, “Accelerating Just Transitions for People and Planet,” which adequately connects with the Sustainable Development Agenda and provides for inclusive participation, and socio-economic development.

We call upon member states to accelerate implementation measures and knowledge sharing of UNEA-6, the first African UNEA under the Presidency of the Kingdom of Morocco, and previous UNEA resolutions.

We also call upon member states to enhance the implementation of global and regional environmental frameworks.

Finally, we reaffirm our commitment to working with the AMCEN for the common good of our Continent.

Excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, we encourage all to engage positively in the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership and to listen to the voices of the grassroots as expressed, for example, in the drumbeats of the African Climate Justice Caravan to the UNFCCC COP29.

Thank you

3.The 2024 RCM Africa FINAL Long Statement of the UNEP Major Groups & Stakeholders, Africa to the Tenth Special Session of the AMCEN

Statement of the UNEP Major Groups & Stakeholders, Africa to the Tenth Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment Held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

Outcome of the 2024 Regional Consultative Meeting, Africa Held at Sofitel Ivoire Hotel on September 1-2, 2024

We, the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa having met in a hybrid manner in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire ahead of the Tenth Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), hereby adopt the following Statement and submit it to the member states of the AMCEN.

Preamble

We express our profound appreciation to the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for graciously hosting the Tenth Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and for their support to the preparations and hosting of the 2024 Regional Consultative Meeting of the UNEP Major Groups & Stakeholders, Africa. We congratulate the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for their progressive and inclusive Pan-African leadership since ascending to AMCEN Presidency at the Eighteenth Ordinary Session the Presidency of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment since. We also congratulate the Kingdom of Morocco for delivering a successful Sixth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, as the first African Presidency.

Acknowledging that there is a pressing need to address the escalating impacts of climate change on the continent's ecosystems and communities, and that Africa is grappling with prolonged droughts, severe flooding, and the degradation of arable land, and that this highlights the urgency of aligning Africa's environmental strategies, ahead of UNFCCC COP29, UN CBD COP 16 and UNCCD COP16,

Welcoming the outcomes of the 60th session of the Subsidiary Bodies (SB60) held in Bonn earlier this year ahead of the "Climate Finance COP," COP 29, which showed that there's an important opportunity for African nations to advocate for equitable climate finance mechanisms responding to our unique vulnerabilities,

Noting that, Africa, despite contributing less than 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions, receives minimal financing,

Recognizing that The African Union's Agenda 2063 envisions a continent resilient to climate change, emphasizing the protection of natural resources and the promotion of climate-resilient economies and communities and that this vision calls for a concerted effort to scale up finance for ecosystem restoration and protection, ensuring that Africa's environmental and socio-economic vulnerabilities are adequately addressed,

Further recognizing that Africa currently receives minimal global climate finance, far below what is needed to build climate resilience and effectively address the continent's challenges,

Noting that a key focus at COP 29 will be the establishment of a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance, expected to surpass the current \$100 billion per year benchmark, with a particular emphasis on the needs of developing countries and that, for Africa, this could mean increased financial flows to support climate adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damages efforts across the continent,

Underscoring that financial commitments need to be met and funds made accessible to those who need them most and that empowering the most vulnerable can enhance Africa's contribution to global climate action while fostering sustainable development at the grassroots level,

Convinced that Africa can advance innovative and inclusive solutions that address the continent's unique challenges,

Further convinced that by aligning its strategies with global climate objectives, African governments can drive meaningful progress towards a sustainable and climate-resilient future for all,

Noting UNEA resolution 6/14 which encourages parties to consider how to strengthen adaptation and mitigation actions and further calls on states to shift from reactive to proactive mitigation, preparedness and response,

Convinced that Africa's path to climate resilience must therefore involve greater financial support, capacity development, community-led adaptation and energy efficiency,

Noting that, by focusing on these pillars and ensuring just transitions, gender mainstreaming and stronger youth engagement, the Continent can create a future that is both sustainable and equitable, positioning itself as a leader in the global fight against climate change,

Also noting that it is estimated that up to 65% of productive land is degraded, while desertification affects 45% of land in Africa,¹ impacting over 400 million people²

Acknowledging that women, youth and people with disabilities are more susceptible to droughts and land degradation shocks due to the lack of diversification of their assets, as well as access to resources to cope with and recover from the environmental crises,

Aware that direct and indirect gender-related barriers limit the adoption of sustainable land management (SLM) practices,

Taking note of the report of The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services,³ land degradation affects 3.2 billion people globally, most of whom are in developing countries,

Acknowledging that approximately 4.4 million hectares⁴ of productive land is lost annually to desertification, reducing agricultural productivity, consequently causing undernourishment for about 68.1 million people in Africa,⁵ and particularly youth, women, vulnerable groups and the elderly,

Noting that, desertification results in the loss of over 27,000 species annually and costs the global economy 10% of its Gross Domestic Product yearly, with Sub-Saharan Africa bearing 22% of the total global cost of land degradation.⁶

Noting with concern that over 23 million people in the Horn of Africa⁷ and another 23.5 million in the Sahel⁸ are facing severe food insecurity due to drought and land degradation.

Acknowledging that efforts are being made to mitigate desertification and ensure ecosystem restoration across the continent and that restoration efforts must be synergized and allocated resources including finances, human capacity, and technological efforts,

Noting that, as emphasized in the Durban Declaration on Biodiversity by AMCEN, a coordinated approach is vital to restoring degraded lands and achieving sustainable development across Africa,

1 <https://www.fao.org/in-action/forest-landscape-restoration-mechanism/news-and-events/news/news-detail/fao-led-programme-empowers-forest-and-farm-producers-to-boost-restoration-efforts-in-africa/en>

2 <https://droughtcp.unccd.int/es/node/3584>

3 https://files.ipbes.net/ipbes-web-prod-public-files/spm_3bi_ldr_digital.pdf

4 <https://www.unccd.int/news-stories/press-releases/least-100-million-hectares-healthy-land-now-lost-each-year>

5 <https://www.fao.org/in-action/forest-landscape-restoration-mechanism/news-and-events/news/news-detail/fao-led-programme-empowers-forest-and-farm-producers-to-boost-restoration-efforts-in-africa/en>

6 <https://droughtcp.unccd.int/ar/node/3584>

7 <https://www.who.int/emergencies/situations/drought-food-insecurity-greater-horn-of-africa>

8 <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/west-central-africa/card/6uW0IQYfGL/>

Noting Decision 3/12 of the UNCCD, we concur that mainstreaming land degradation neutrality targets in national policies and commitments is important to ensure the delivery of multiple benefits to address different environmental challenges encountered in halting biodiversity loss and mitigating the climate change crisis,

We recognize that land is a critical issue in Africa as it provides habitats for people and species, provides livelihoods, and ensures food security. It is crucial to take care of the state of health of land in Africa to reduce exposure to challenges such as food insecurity and loss of biodiversity,

Welcoming UNEA 5/14 resolution to develop a legally binding instrument to End Plastic Pollution and the AMCEN 19/2 decision to “protect the African region from the health, climate, and biodiversity threats posed by plastic pollution” must guide the African positions in the plastic policy,

Appreciating that the plastic crisis is deeply interconnected with the climate crisis as both meet under the triple planetary crisis, and plastics significantly contribute to biodiversity loss and climate change; that recent studies show the need to reduce plastic production between 11.8% and 17.3% a year from 2024 to avoid breaching the 1.5-degree limit set by the Paris Agreement. Further acknowledging that plastic production harms human health, with recent studies finding microplastics in the human brain, placenta, and breastmilk,

Noting that Africa is responsible for only 5% of plastic production and 4% of consumption globally. Every year, over 400 million tons of plastic are produced worldwide, and an estimated 19 to 23 tonnes end up in lakes, rivers and oceans. Overall, less than 10% of the world's annual plastic production is recycled,

Further noting that, thousands of plastic chemicals have been identified as toxic (“chemicals of concern”), due to their harmful effects on human health or the environment and that of the over

16,000 chemicals associated with plastics, fewer than 1%¹⁰ are regulated in existing global MEAs throughout their full lifecycle

Alarmed that, many toxic chemicals, including already globally banned ones, have been shown to be present in plastics recycled for other uses,

Appreciating that, currently, there is an absence of national, regional, and international policy that articulates the necessary measures to reduce the impact on human health and the environment from agricultural plastics along their life cycles, nor one that provides guidance for their sustainable use,

⁹ <https://eta.lbl.gov/publications/climate-impact-primary-plastic>

¹⁰ <https://www.basel.int/Portals/4/Basel%20Convention/docs/plastic%20waste/UNEP-FAO-CHW-RC-POPS-PUB-GlobalGovernancePlastics-2023.pdf>

Noting that vulnerable, in particular women, youth, and PWDs are generally disproportionately impacted by exposure to plastic pollution and have less access to participation in decision-making and that the groups are impacted differently by hazardous chemicals and waste and gender inequalities exacerbate these differences, they are also impacted throughout the plastics lifecycle,

Acknowledging that science, when conducted with integrity and free from external pressures, offers the most reliable insights into the complex challenge of plastic pollution and that it is through rigorous, evidence-based research that we can develop strategies that genuinely protect human health, preserve our environment, and promote sustainable development,

Appreciating that education for sustainable development is a key pillar for Africa to change behaviors,

Noting that energy efficiency plays a crucial role in climate resilience,

Committing that, the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa stands ready to support the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) in achieving meaningful outcomes that end plastic pollution and benefit the African Region

We make the following submissions:

To reduce land degradation, desertification and drought in Africa, we urge member states to strengthen institutional capacities to monitor, assess and act on land-related risks and to communicate risk information. The information will enhance ecosystem protection and especially help communities devise locally-led initiatives to reduce land degradation, desertification and drought in Africa. We call on all member states to urgently implement policies and legal frameworks such as the Drought Protocol/Framework and to adopt the African Union Land Governance Strategy that could facilitate Major Groups and Stakeholders involvement in mitigating drought. We also call upon member states to establish a multi-stakeholder and sectoral framework community of practice that will propel knowledge sharing and best practices on land degradation, desertification and drought. Therefore, both member states and Major Groups and Stakeholders should cooperate to develop an inclusive mechanism to restore and nurture land.

With respect to research, development and design, we strongly encourage member states to invest in continuous research and to establish databanks for differentiated data for timely and actionable decision making internationally, regionally and locally. We urge member states to provide opportunities to support high-quality data gathering and analytics to evaluate the effectiveness of land degradation, desertification and drought resilience programs and to co-design mechanisms with Major Groups and Stakeholders on creating a nexus between climate action and land degradation, desertification and drought resilience programs.

Concerning education for sustainable development, we request member states to prioritize education for sustainable development especially for children and youth, women, PWDs and other vulnerable groups, in technical institutions to equip them with technical skills. This will foster the development of courses that focus on integrated landscape management with a holistic, intergenerational perspective. Further, we recommend that education for sustainable development better integrates culture and local languages in delivery of pedagogy to ensure the skills transfer to and from indigenous communities

In relation to technology deployment and absorption, we call upon the urgency to harness the power of technology; both indigenous and emerging innovations to address the root causes of land degradation and land restoration can re-engineer transformative strategies for restoring ecosystems. Indeed, we further call attention to the recognition of the capability of geospatial technologies to provide real-time data. This will enable deployment of tools and systems to map land degraded regions, which can inform deployment and absorption of localized solutions to strengthen local innovations.

Relating to nature based solutions, we call the member states to pay a particular attention to nature-based solutions, focusing on women, children, youth and offer technology, in agroecology, agroforestry, sustainable landscape management and agricultural innovations to restore degraded lands, prevent the spread of desertification and build community resilience.

On sustainable finance for drought, desertification and land degradation, we encourage member states to work with Development partners to support and explore innovative green financing for healthy people and land. The changing land paradigms can only be regenerated and restored through partnerships and collaborative relationships through green investments portfolios to reverse desertification and land degradation. We encourage the creation of green businesses through the establishment of small and medium enterprises to ensure sustainable income generation options for alternative livelihoods and the posterity of land resilience programs.

Concerning monitoring and evaluation, Member States and Major Groups and Stakeholders should measure progress of existing programmatic interventions, such as the UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018-2030 and other programs on reducing land degradation, desertification and drought resilience

On Climate Change and relating to building climate resilience, capacity development at the local level is essential to enhance community resilience and adaptive capacities. It is essential for African countries to develop more responsive and relevant solutions and technologies particularly for the most vulnerable, to enhance their resilience against climate impacts. These solutions must directly address local needs to be relevant and effective, and African countries must receive the means of implementation to advance this.

To develop responsive and contextual solutions to the climate crisis, we urge African governments to value, finance and empower African climate resilience researchers, local experts and institutions who have an understanding of the specific national contexts, trusting in the accuracy and relevance of local data, and reducing dependence on data from developed countries.

We call for African governments to develop specific, measurable, and time-bound indicators in the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) that are needed to monitor progress effectively and transparently. Setting clear, time-bound targets for critical sectors such as water, food, and health is another priority. Furthermore, support and prioritization of adaptation strategies that are led by local communities, combining scientific research with indigenous practices, will result in more effective adaptation. It is also important to distinguish between loss and damage and broader adaptation goals to ensure that interventions are targeted and precise.

We strongly encourage governments to translate the COP28 Global Stocktake commitment to “double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030” into Nationally Determined Contributions by March 2025 as it is considered the “first fuel” in clean energy transitions, reducing emissions and strengthening energy security. Energy-efficient appliances build the climate resilience of communities by lowering their exposure to climate risks and improving their overall quality of life.

Governments must set ambitious energy efficiency targets through their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and implement relevant policies, standards, and incentives to meet critical adaptation and mitigation goals on the continent. In this regard, energy efficiency emerges as a cornerstone of clean energy and cooking transitions that not only strengthens energy security for communities, including those affected by climate-induced disasters and desertification, but also reduces greenhouse gas emissions. In that regard we also urge governments to mobilize investment and support innovation of African entrepreneurs to accelerate access to clean cooking.

Ensuring an energy-efficient transition in the cooling sector is particularly important for Africa. Additionally, there should be an emphasis on the importance of climate mitigation by accelerating action to phase down hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) and HCFCs under the Montreal Protocol and the Kigali Amendment, while also reducing industrial emissions associated with their production. Addressing nitrous oxide, a significant ozone-depleting substance and greenhouse gas, is another critical area. Controlling emissions from industrial sources and enhancing international cooperation on sustainable nitrogen management through mechanisms such as the UNEP Nitrogen Working Group will be vital. This should include consistent and adequate financial assistance to Africa to support implementation. Moreover, a just and measured transition away from fossil fuels is necessary to benefit African workers, communities, and national economies. African countries should also focus on developing local economies to reduce dependency on external resources, building mechanisms that rely on local labor and innovation.

Environmental education must be prioritized to build long-term climate resilience. We strongly urge African governments to integrate climate change education into the mainstream curriculum, either as a subject or an after-school activity, which will help awaken young people to the importance of taking charge of climate action, similar to their involvement in other ethical issues. By raising awareness and integrating climate change education into schools and communities, Africans will be better equipped to understand and mitigate the impacts of climate change. These initiatives will help young people see the direct benefits of climate action, fostering a deeper commitment to climate justice.

Involving young people in the climate negotiation processes, especially those from grassroots communities, will also boost their engagement and impact. We invite African governments to collaborate with major groups and stakeholders, and grassroots movements running climate education programs should be given the opportunity to nominate youth for capacity-development workshops and climate negotiations. Member states should continue to encourage and support organizations and grassroots movements promoting climate education among youth, ensuring these initiatives receive the same level of support as other educational efforts.

To further enhance Africa's climate resilience, support for grassroots movements, major groups and stakeholders should be expanded. These groups are often well-positioned to identify community needs and ensure that local voices are heard in the planning and implementation of climate action projects while incorporating indigenous knowledge and community-driven solutions. Strengthened coordination among African negotiators and with African major groups and stakeholders is needed to present a unified stance at international forums.

On mainstreaming gender, it is imperative to focus on several key areas to ensure that gender equality and inclusivity are central to development and decision-making processes. To strengthen gender inclusion, it is crucial for governments to enhance the capacity of national gender focal points and ensure that climate policies include clear references to indigenous and other marginalized communities. Strengthening the language around means of implementation will empower those responsible for gender issues at the national level, enabling them to advocate for and execute gender-responsive policies effectively.

Promoting gender parity in decision-making forums and local development projects is essential. This includes ensuring equal representation for women, youth, and vulnerable groups in all discussions, particularly those focused on climate change negotiations and local development initiatives. The strategic pillars of the African Gender Agenda must be fully applied and implemented to reflect true gender equity.

Leadership and governance structures must see a significant increase in the representation of women at decision-making levels. By boosting the representation of women in leadership roles related to climate action, Africa can ensure that gender perspectives are fully integrated into all levels of decision-making. It is essential to fast-track and incorporate transformative climate initiatives and financing solutions that address the inequalities faced by women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs). Governments are called upon to decentralize and simplify access to climate finance, actively engaging all stakeholders and major groups in policy-making and implementation processes related to climate action.

Women must be actively involved in the design, planning, implementation, and monitoring of all climate initiatives. A clear and structured mechanism should be established to support their participation, ensuring that their perspectives are not only heard but also valued. In the media and discussion forums, creating a balanced platform that amplifies the voices of women and youth is necessary, ensuring that their contributions are recognized and impactful. Additionally, it is crucial to maintain an authentic African perspective on gender, finding a balance that fully involves all segments of society in the development process.

When it comes to climate finance, it is crucial to establish a robust and equitable framework that addresses the special needs and circumstances of Africa and other developing regions. The New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) must set a minimum quantum of USD 5.9 trillion by 2030¹¹, reflecting the special needs and circumstances of Africa, provided as grants, not loans, reflecting the critical needs across loss and damage, adaptation, and mitigation. This amount should be seen as a baseline, without the need for justification, recognizing the disproportionate impact of climate change on developing countries that contribute the least to global emissions.

Direct and simplified access to climate finance is essential. The current processes and criteria are often too complex and burdensome for many African countries and communities which may lack the necessary knowledge and resources to navigate these systems. The NCQG should guarantee this by minimizing bureaucratic hurdles and ensuring that funds are available from public sources, not private investments driven solely by profit. Climate finance must be predictable, substantial, accessible, and responsive to the urgent needs of the most affected communities. Additionally, the finance architecture should avoid exacerbating the existing debt burdens of developing countries, ensuring that financial support is non-debt creating.

¹¹ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/AIAC%20Inter-sessional%20submission%20AHWPM1_VF.pdf

The principle of “polluter pays” must be firmly embedded within the NCQG. Developed countries, which are historically the largest polluters, should lead by introducing taxes on major polluters and profiteers. This approach aligns with the principles of equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), ensuring that those most responsible for climate change bear the costs of mitigating and adapting to its effects. Furthermore, the NCQG must prohibit the use of climate finance for fossil fuel production or speculative technologies that extend the lifespan of fossil fuel assets, such as carbon capture and storage or fossil-based hydrogen. Instead, the focus should be on sustainable and resilient development, in line with the 1.5°C goal.

Carbon markets should not be considered as climate finance. The increased reliance on carbon markets as a resource for climate finance needs to be critically reevaluated. While carbon markets represent one avenue for resource mobilization, they are not a comprehensive solution for the African continent.

We call for a dedicated pillar for loss and damage that quantifies economic and non-economic losses and damages and that should be treated separately from broader adaptation goals while addressing the specific challenges posed by climate-induced losses and damages, particularly in vulnerable regions.

Goal-setting when it comes to climate finance should be independent of geopolitical influences and should be rooted in transparency, clarity, democracy and accountability. There must be a concerted effort to raise awareness about the available financing mechanisms and the accredited agencies responsible for disbursing these funds. This will make climate finance more accessible to grassroots communities, ensuring that those most affected by climate change, including women, youth, and marginalized groups, are informed about the opportunities available to them and understand how to access these resources. It is essential to also avoid structures where the developed countries dominate governance and designs policies that favor their geopolitical and economic interests.

Moreover, climate finance must integrate a human rights perspective to prevent solutions that exacerbate existing inequalities and human rights violations. COP 29 should intentionally include human rights in its agenda, potentially by establishing a Human Rights Day, to ensure that climate action is both equitable and just. The NCQG holds the potential to redefine global climate finance, ensuring that it supports sustainable development and human rights for all.

We demand financial resources that can strengthen the capacities of governments to enhance climate action. It is essential to equip ministers and government officials with the knowledge and tools needed to navigate the existing finance mechanisms successfully. The financing for such research should ideally come from the countries that are most responsible for pollution upholding the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) to ensure fair effort-sharing and equitable outcomes. This involves not only learning from best practices within Africa but also improving access to relevant documents and increasing the number of accredited agencies that can channel climate finance. Importantly, these agencies should not be exclusively government-led, ensuring a broader and more inclusive approach to resource mobilization.

When it comes to resource mobilization, it is imperative to prioritize effective implementation mechanisms and ensure that resources are directed toward their intended climate action goals, particularly in areas such as loss and damage and support for National Adaptation Plans. The focus should be on maximizing the impact of mobilized resources and preventing their diversion to other areas.

There must be deliberate efforts to develop local economies to progressively reduce dependency on external sources of funding. African countries should focus on identifying and leveraging their economic and non-economic resources, particularly natural resources, to finance climate action. Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) play a crucial role in this process, as they can work alongside governments to identify community resources. Additionally, MGS live closer to the communities they serve and have a clear understanding of local challenges and opportunities, and can therefore help mobilize resources effectively and transparently.

Finally, it is important to reassert the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. Countries historically responsible for climate change have a clear responsibility to provide adequate funding to implement the conditional elements of the Nationally Determined Contributions of developed countries. Governments should, however, be accountable for the unconditional elements of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that they have committed to finance. By doing so, we can ensure that the resources set aside for climate action are utilized effectively to support sustainable development and climate resilience in Africa.

On biodiversity and nature loss, sustained integrated approach and substantial financial investments at regional and national levels to address ecosystem restoration, we note that sustainable finance for different conventions has been a challenge in Africa, characterized by reliance on external finance and the limited reach of funds to communities on the ground that are at the frontline of land degradation, desertification, and drought effects. We demand the resolution of the debt burden on Africa to unlock funding opportunities, including debt for nature swaps.

We encourage African member states to mobilize domestic resources through innovative financing mechanisms, including promoting biodiversity economies, payment for ecosystem services, crowding in private sector finance, and national budget finance through green taxation. This approach aligns with Decision 3/COP.12 of the UNCCD, which calls for enhanced resource mobilization and innovative financing to achieve land degradation neutrality, as well as with Decision XIII/20 of the CBD, which emphasizes the need for sustainable financing from innovative sources to support biodiversity strategies. Additionally, we assert the need to link the responsibility of financing initiatives that address land degradation to those responsible for degradation, as echoed in Article 9 of the Paris Agreement.

We acknowledge the good examples of efforts that are being taken by African member states to restore degraded ecosystems. We urge governments to develop and implement policies and legislation that encourage change in food habits to reduce environmental impacts. Further, we encourage African member states to promote inclusive approaches that recognize the role of local communities and the need to build their capacities to enhance their contribution to combating land degradation, biodiversity loss, and drought. We further encourage member states to develop localized solutions that are responsive to the African context and leverage and protect Africa's rich biodiversity through protected areas and integrated landscape management approaches.

On mainstreaming land degradation neutrality targets in national policies and commitments, we welcome the ongoing consultations on the land degradation neutrality targets. We acknowledge that the land degradation neutrality targets are critical in addressing ecosystem restoration. We urge member states to commit to the principle of land degradation neutrality. We urge AMCEN to prioritize accelerated action on ecosystem restoration and biodiversity loss. We recognize that land is essential to the continent. We encourage member states to scale up interventions on land with keen efforts to address food insecurity, loss of biodiversity and land degradation.

We note that there is a need for the implementation of integrated approaches to address land degradation, including ecosystems-based mitigation and adaptation, nature-based solutions and integrated landscape management. We encourage member states to strengthen policies and action plans to integrate sustainable climate smart agriculture and sustainable water management plans. We also encourage member states to establish inclusive monitoring and reporting frameworks to regularly track progress against commitments made towards addressing land degradation, biodiversity loss and drought.

With respect to strengthening science-policy interfaces by investing in coordinated and accessible data knowledge, and measurement systems, we applaud the member states for reinforcing the need for investing in coordinated and accessible data knowledge, and measurement systems to achieve science policy interfaces. However, we note the need for science that advances sustainable solutions. We assert that research is essential in understanding levels of biodiversity loss and land degradation. With significant investment in our African research institutions, we can build the foundation for innovative solutions to address biodiversity loss and land degradation. We therefore urge member states to invest in resources and implementation of the research.

We urge member states to co-develop research studies with Major Groups and stakeholders from the initial consultation ensuring research abides to the correct methodologies to ensure effective cooperation and collaboration. We acknowledge the need for Major Groups and Stakeholders to hold member states accountable in prioritizing data to inform advocacy. We encourage member states to prioritize the installation of a long-term archiving system in order to address challenges of continuity when governments and administrations are transitioning. We encourage member states to work closely with communities and integrate indigenous science that has not been utilized to capacity and to promote its use in parallel with modern science.

On Africa's preparation for the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 16) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, we urge African member states to expedite the process of updating their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and the development of the associated National Financing Plans for Biodiversity, while ensuring the integration of the needs of marginalized groups, including youth, women, indigenous people, and local communities.

Concerning Plastic Pollution, the African Region must prioritize the targets outlined here in order to meaningfully address plastic pollution:

The plastic lifecycle includes the production of monomers, polymers, additives, and nonintentionally added substances. To address plastic pollution and fulfill the mandate of the UNEA 5/14 resolution and AMCEN Decision 19/2, the internationally legally binding instrument being negotiated must have internationally agreed targets to reduce plastic production to sustainable levels. Limiting the overproduction of plastics for major producers, none of them located in Africa, is an essential condition to enable any other solution throughout the plastics lifecycle, including reuse, recycling, and functional waste management systems. It is also key to achieving the 1.5° target of the Paris Agreement.

About chemicals, the internationally legally binding instrument being currently negotiated must eliminate chemicals that are hazardous to human health and/or the environment to address plastic pollution and to fulfill the mandate of the UNEA 5/14 resolution and AMCEN Decision 19/2. Criteria for regulating plastic chemicals may include that the chemicals are first evaluated to see if they i) are plastics chemicals ii) have available hazard data iii) increase barriers to circularity or have known or potential adverse effects for human health and/or the environment. Criteria may be evaluated quantitatively (against specific numbers) or qualitatively (weighing different aspects), or a combination thereof.

With respect to recyclability and reusability of products, to increase non-toxic circularity, including through recyclability and reusability, it is necessary that:

- Only plastics free of toxic chemicals must be considered for reuse, refilling, repurposing, and recycling. We need control measures and prohibition on recycling plastics containing hazardous chemicals, similar to the Stockholm Convention's prohibition on the recycling of waste containing Persistent Organic Pollutants. (Article 6(d)(iii)).
- Alternative plastics, including bioplastics, should have the same safety standards, as conventional plastics.
- Transparency requirements such as labels, reporting, and product passports are needed to ensure that the plastic industry is accountable for complying with these provisions and for their claims about their products (e.g., recycled content, circularity, etc.)
- The market for reusable non-toxic products must be accelerated to transform the throwaway economy into a reuse society, by creating the enabling environment to ensure the reuse market has a stronger business case than the single-use plastics market.
- The waste hierarchy is operationalized by prioritizing prevention and reduction before nontoxic recycling and disposal and ensuring environmentally sound management practices through effective measures for reusable and recycled non-toxic products must ensure

Concerning transparency and commitment, information on all chemicals including polymers and monomers used in plastics production and as plastic ingredients should be publicly available and communicated in the supply chain, including to waste managers, recyclers, and consumers through labeling and databases. Transparency approaches allow quick identification of hazardous chemicals and substitution with safer alternatives. The list of chemicals, to be controlled/regulated throughout their lifecycle should be transparent and shared publicly and globally. The list should be based on criteria to determine which chemicals to eliminate and phase out and should also include an initial list of chemicals and polymers of concern.

On health, the “No data, no market” approach, which means that only chemicals that have been tested for safety and have publicly available toxicity data, should be allowed in plastics and allowed to be traded between parties and major groups and stakeholders. Both hazardous and risk-based approaches should be avoided as they require long, costly, and often assumptions-biased evaluations of toxicity, exposure routes and levels, chemical leaching, and risk versus benefit analyses. Therefore, a hazard-based approach is the only feasible and most health-protective approach for addressing toxic chemicals in plastics. The toxicity of a chemical is enough to warrant health-protective regulations to prevent health harm. By contrast, a risk-based approach is based on the outdated assumption that a “safe” level of exposure to toxic chemicals can be established. This assumption disregards endocrine-disrupting properties and other nonthreshold toxic impacts.

With regards to financing, real action means real money: as outlined in the CRP submitted by the African Group at INC-3, a dedicated Multilateral Fund should be the principal international vehicle for providing support to developing countries for implementing their treaty obligations. This support should include direct financial support for implementation as well as robust support for capacity building and technology transfer. The Multilateral Fund should provide support on a grant basis both for enabling activities and for the incremental costs of compliance. A strong framework for means of implementation is necessary to align ambition in control measures with the financial conditions to implement them. Binding commitments to end plastic pollution should be matched with clear commitments to provide multilateral finance – stable and predictable money – to support implementation, ensure a just transition, and clear requirements to make polluters pay.

Instruments with regards to plastic pollution, different instruments should be referred to as UNEA Resolution 5/14 is underpinned by many principles of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which includes among others, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), liability and compensation, transboundary environmental justice, also known as the “no harm rule” protecting states from transboundary harm, the preventive and precautionary principle, the polluter pays principle – protection of biodiversity protection of land degradation. The implementation of the Bamako Convention should be strengthened to protect the continent from the plastic transboundary movement and provided with adequate means of implementation including, but not limited to, financing

Concerning Plastics and agriculture, we call upon African Ministers to support the adoption of the Voluntary Code of Conduct on the Sustainable Use of Plastics in Agriculture at the upcoming Committee on Agriculture of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as a policy blueprint to guide national, regional and international policy development, as well as industry commitment and action to ensure the safe and sustainable use of agri-plastics into the future. This process would be complementary to work happening in parallel to strengthen existing governance and establish a new legally binding instrument on plastic pollution. We further urge the ministers to emphasize the inclusion of Agriculture as a dedicated program of work in the legally binding treaty.

Just Transition for affected communities must be secured, including the informal sector, waste pickers, and the small and medium African businesses currently relying on plastics. This includes financial support, official acknowledgment of their rights, and full participation in policymaking. Waste pickers groups and waste workers in cooperative settings must also be prioritized in the development of waste management mechanisms and reuse systems. The valuable role of waste pickers in society must be recognised and their health protected and fair earnings subsidized by the polluters.

With respect to vulnerable people, to address the lack of inclusion, in particular women, youth, and PWDs, we must fast-track mainstreaming gender and vulnerable groups in policy processes, promote inclusion in the waste management sectors, strengthen the participation of vulnerable groups in decision-making, and provide equal opportunities and recognition.

Concerning research on the science of plastic pollution, we urge ministers, as stewards of our Continent's future, with the profound responsibility of making decisions that will shape the health and well-being of millions of Africans and safeguard our environment for generations to come, to prioritize and consider independent, unbiased and best available science as the cornerstone of their decision-making processes. We further urge the ministers to embrace the best available science and thus ensure that our policies and actions are guided not by short term interests but by the long-term welfare of our people and our planet. In this critical moment, let us commit to fostering an environment where scientific inquiry can thrive, uninfluenced by political or economic interests, and where decisions are made based on the best evidence available. Only then can we fulfill our collective responsibility to protect the health of our citizens and the environment and end plastic pollution.

On education and behavior change, official programs should involve raising awareness of the impact of plastic pollution. Furthermore, it can reflect the ecological ancestral attitude to preserve the environment. Additionally, school curricula across Africa should embed eco-behavioural practices in the early stages of learning to encourage lifelong sustainable practices. The role of public leaders and influencers on the African continent in shaping the behaviors of the public should be harnessed to portray plastic use reduction in our daily lives.

On the United Nations Environment Assembly, we support the proposed draft theme of UNEA7 on 'Accelerating Just Transitions for People and Planet', which adequately connects with the Sustainable Development Agenda the theme provides for inclusive participation, socio-economic development and the opportunity for UNEP to focus on enabling conditions for the implementation of existing multilateral environmental agreements. We further acknowledge the strengths and opportunities that are provided for by the other two proposed themes namely: (i) Shaping Tomorrow: Ways to create a habitable and sustainable planet; and (ii) New frontiers and solutions for a greener tomorrow. We urge member states as they look towards UNEA7 not to lose sight of the need to implement the resolutions of UNEA-6 and the previous UNEAs.

With respect to financing, we call upon member states to set up local financing mechanisms at national level for innovative financial mobilization for tackling drought, land degradation, desertification and pollution amongst other environmental issues. We further call upon member states to develop strong meaningful partnerships both in capacity building and technological support with inclusive, transparent participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders, to attract investments on the environment. We are also calling on member states to work together with the group of friends, especially the Major Groups and Stakeholders, in developing common understandings on emerging environmental issues and processes.

Concerning implementation, we call upon member states to accelerate implementation measures and knowledge sharing of UNEA-6 and previous UNEA resolutions at local level. Similarly, we call upon the continued robust commitment from member states and major groups and stakeholders for relevant ongoing environmental processes to be finalized by UNEA-7.

Concerning Multilateral Environmental Agreements, we call upon member states to enhance implementation of global and regional environmental frameworks including in particular the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

4. Selected 2024 RCM Africa and AMCEN Photos and Videos:

<https://awf.app.box.com/s/qgqn9d8hkptkad2lwpntr04vd9infydn/folder/282894632714>

5. Outcome documents of the Tenth Special Session of AMCEN:

<https://www.unep.org/events/conference/tenth-special-session-amcen-and-unccd-cop16-regional-consultations>