

AMCEN @ 40

**A Legacy of Environmental
Diplomacy and Leadership
in Africa**



Reflect.
Reimagine.
Rise.

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Chapter 1: The Africa Ministerial Conference at a glance

This fortieth-anniversary report charts the evolution of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) since its inception in 1985. It offers a comprehensive reflection on the Conference's contributions to Africa's environmental agenda—tracing its policy leadership, institutional development, and role in catalysing collective action across the continent.

It also aims to distil critical lessons from AMCEN's thematic interventions, including achievements in policy harmonization, capacity building, and regional cooperation.

As AMCEN celebrates four decades of environmental diplomacy and leadership service in 2025, the report also reflects its forward-looking orientation, embracing integrated ocean governance, climate resilience, and inclusive green and blue economies as priorities for the coming years.

These themes underscore AMCEN's continued relevance as the continent's foremost platform for environmental policy and diplomacy.

Finally, this report highlights the institutional evolution that underpins AMCEN's work. The adoption of a formal constitution in 1997, the establishment of a representative Bureau, and the creation of the AMCEN Trust Fund have all strengthened its governance and operational continuity. Improved coordination with key continental and international institutions has further consolidated AMCEN's role as the authoritative voice on Africa's environmental priorities, positioning it to guide the region into its next chapter under Agenda 2063 and beyond.





10th Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN),
Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 30 August - 6 September 2024

1.2 Origins and Mandate

AMCEN was inaugurated in December 1985 in Cairo, Egypt, as a landmark collaboration platform between the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). AMCEN emerged in response to mounting environmental pressures across the continent that posed serious risks to Africa's ecosystems, health systems, and long-term development prospects.

Recognizing that environmental challenges often transcend national boundaries, AMCEN was established to provide a continental forum for environment ministers to engage in coordinated policy dialogue, deliberate on shared priorities, and articulate joint positions in global negotiations. By bringing together all African countries, AMCEN offered a unique platform for harmonized action and consensus-building on the environmental dimensions of sustainable development. From its inception, AMCEN positioned itself not only as a forum for political dialogue, but also as a driver of solutions,

convening multilateral development banks, United Nations agencies, and civil society to catalyse action, attract technical and financial support, and launch continent-wide initiatives.

Over time, AMCEN's role as Africa's institutionalized voice on the environment was formally acknowledged by the global community. In 2013, UNEP's first universal Governing Council (Decision 27/2) "stressed the importance of the regional ministerial environment forums for which UNEP serves as secretariat" and invited them to contribute directly to UNEP's governing body. UNEA Resolution 2/2 (2016) further defined the functions of those regional forums, welcomed their achievements, including AMCEN's and requested the UNEP Executive Director to support and strengthen their convening and capacities.

These resolutions effectively institutionalized AMCEN within the UNEP/UNEA architecture, granting it a formal mandate to integrate Africa's regional priorities into global environmental decision-making.



AMCEN@40 Journey Timeline



Over four decades, AMCEN has evolved into the continent's principal policy body for environmental coordination, with the capacity to influence national agendas, regional strategies, and global negotiations. It has played a central role in shaping Africa's collective positions in multilateral environmental agreements, strengthening environmental institutions, and embedding sustainability into broader policy frameworks such as Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

AMCEN's major achievements reflect its unique convening power and continental legitimacy. It has unified Africa's voice in global environmental diplomacy, supported regional programs such as ecosystem restoration and pollution control, and promoted integrated solutions through partnerships spanning finance, health, agriculture, and technology sectors. As AMCEN marks four decades of environmental diplomacy and leadership, it stands not only as a conference of ministers, but as the coordinating hub of a continent-wide environmental governance ecosystem.

AMCEN's founding mandate encompassed three core functions. First, it provided a platform for harmonizing environmental assessments by standardizing methodologies, data collection protocols and reporting formats across Member States and subregional bodies. Second, it served as a clearinghouse for information exchange, convening expert working groups, producing environmental outlook reports and maintaining collaboration with United Nations agencies, research

institutions and civil society. Third, AMCEN orchestrated partnerships with development agencies, ensuring that policy directives were matched by funding, technical assistance and implementation support at national and subregional levels. This tripartite focus—assessment, exchange and partnership—remains central to AMCEN's enduring relevance and capacity to adapt its agenda to new challenges.

Over subsequent decades, AMCEN has evolved through five broad phases (1985–1993; 1993–2000; 2000 - 2005; 2005 - 2015; 2015 - 2025). The first period focused on pilot projects and building capacity on environment. In the second- period, spurred by the 1992 Earth Summit, AMCEN shifted toward policy guidance and Africa's representation in global negotiations, adopting a formal constitution in 1997 and streamlining its committees into standing technical bodies. During the third period, AMCEN revitalized its structure to align with the emerging African Union and NEPAD, leading the development and implementation of NEPAD's Environment Action Plan and reinforcing its role as the continent's environment governance platform. In its early years, AMCEN's focus on natural resource management was framed within the Cairo Programme's broad mandate to halt environmental degradation and promote sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goals also played a crucial role in AMCEN's third phase that saw deliberate framing of continental environmental priorities to support MDG targets, notably those on safe drinking water, sanitation and biodiversity.



*Thirteenth Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN)
Bamako, Mali, 23-25 June 2010*

Between 2005 and 2015, following its revitalization in 2005, AMCEN deepened its integration within AU structures and entered a fourth phase marked by consolidation of its institutional role within the African Union, the maturation of its flagship of the Africa Environment Outlook (AEO) reporting process as its primary vehicle for continental assessment and a decisive pivot toward global climate and chemicals agendas.

In its fifth phase, between 2015 to present, as the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 were adopted, AMCEN moved from policy declarations to concrete action and implementation. Session agendas and ministerial decisions began explicitly referencing relevant SDG targets and Agenda 2063 flagship goals. AMCEN also pivoted toward scalable solutions. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic's economic shock, AMCEN launched the Africa Green Stimulus Programme in 2021, demonstrating how environmental solutions can drive recovery and resilience. In its most recent phase, AMCEN has incubated cross-cutting environmental innovations such circularity among others.

From Cairo to Nairobi: Defining Milestones in AMCEN's Evolution to Its 40th Anniversary.

a) Cairo, 1985: Establishing the African Ministerial Conference on Environment

In December 1985, African ministers of environment convened in Cairo to establish the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN). This inaugural session created a permanent forum for

coordinating environmental policy across the continent. The establishment of AMCEN was driven by mounting concern over environmental degradation and its link to poverty and development. From the outset, AMCEN's mandate reflected a broad vision: to promote regional cooperation on pressing environmental challenges while ensuring that environmental protection and natural resource management advance sustainable development and human well-being in Africa. set the stage for Africa's collective environmental leadership and "inspired action, pioneering reform and a durable path towards sustainability" over the coming decades. It was an historic moment that launched AMCEN as the continent's ministerial voice on the environment.

b) 1997-2002: Institutionalization of AMCEN (Dakar, Senegal,) and establishment of the African Environmental Information Network (AEIN)- (Kampala Uganda)

Twelve years after its formation, AMCEN at its seventh session in Dakar Senegal in 1997 marked a pivotal milestone with the adoption of the AMCEN Constitution, which formally established it as the permanent ministerial authority for environment and sustainable development in Africa, aiming to strengthen cooperation among African governments. Concurrently, the period saw the establishment of the African Environmental Information Network (AEIN) at its ninth session in Kampala Uganda in 2002, an initiative designed to enhance access to quality environmental information, build capacity in environmental information management, and address the lack of harmonized efforts for environmental assessment and reporting, thereby facilitating environmental enforcement and compliance across the continent.

c) 2002–2003: Johannesburg, South Africa; The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)-(Rio+10)

The African Ministerial Conference on Environment was at the centre of Africa's preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) – also known as Rio+10 – held in Johannesburg in 2002. In the lead-up to this global summit, AMCEN helped articulate a common African agenda for sustainable development, emphasizing poverty reduction, technology transfer, and financing for environmental initiatives. The eighth AMCEN session (Abuja, 2000)



President Thabo Mbeki (centre) of the Republic of South Africa, closes the World Summit on Sustainable Development on September 4, 2002

adopted the Abuja Declaration, which highlighting Africa's priorities for the WSSD. Building on the momentum from the WSSD in Johannesburg, African leaders launched the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) with environment as a key pillar. AMCEN was instrumental in shaping NEPAD's environmental Pillar: at a special session in Maputo (June 2003), AMCEN ministers unanimously adopted the Action Plan for the Environment Initiative of NEPAD. This plan, prepared through a broad consultative process, ensured that Africa's development blueprint included concrete measures for environmental management and sustainable use of natural resources. The Maputo session – attended by heads of state – underscored AMCEN's growing influence beyond environment ministries, integrating environmental

priorities into continental development strategies. It forged closer partnership with finance and planning officials through NEPAD, cementing the principle that economic growth and environmental stewardship must advance hand-in-hand in Africa.

d) 2005 – 2007: Twenty Years on: Expanding the Agenda to Chemicals and establishment of the Great Green Wall and Sahel Initiative (Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo)

Around AMCEN's 20th anniversary, African ministers were responding to emerging challenges of pollution and land degradation. At the Eleventh Ordinary Session in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo and Twelfth Session in Johannesburg, South Africa, AMCEN expanded its mandate to encompass chemicals and hazardous waste management, reflecting rising concern over toxic pollution and the implementation of new global treaties like the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. Indeed, AMCEN's work in this period resulted in numerous projects to help African countries meet their obligations under international chemicals agreements. This broadened scope led to initiatives on phasing out leaded gasoline, managing e-waste, and controlling pesticides – embedding health and pollution issues firmly in AMCEN's agenda.

During this period Desertification and sustainable land management also took centre stage. In the eleventh session AMCEN also adopted the Great Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative—marking AMCEN's initial political engagement with what would become a Pan-African greenbelt to combat Sahelian desertification. On January 29–30, 2007, African Heads of State and Government formally endorsed the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI) at the Eighth Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly in Addis Ababa. AMCEN would go on to help craft a harmonized regional strategy for the GGWSSI. The Great Green Wall became a flagship programme for Africa, contributing to the global goal of achieving “a land degradation neutral world” set out at Rio+20. In sum, the mid-2000s marked an inflection point where AMCEN's portfolio grew to address chemicals and pollution control, while also spearheading transformative land restoration efforts like the Great Green Wall.



e) 2008 – The Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa, the outcome of an unprecedented joint conference of African environment and health ministers (Libreville, Gabon)

As the linkages between environmental quality and human health gained prominence, AMCEN helped forge partnerships beyond the environment sector. A milestone came in 2008 with the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa, the outcome of an unprecedented joint conference of African environment and health ministers (Libreville, Gabon). At this historic gathering – convened with support from UNEP and WHO – ministers resolved to build a strategic alliance to reduce environmental threats to human health. They recognized that issues like unsafe water, pollution, and ecosystem degradation were fuelling diseases (from cholera to respiratory illnesses) across Africa. The Libreville Declaration committed governments to integrate health and environment linkages into national development plans and policies, and to “optimize synergies between health, environment and other sectors” through institutional and investment reforms. In the wake of Libreville, AMCEN amplified its focus on cross-sectoral approaches – for example, endorsing the Africa Environment Outlook reports that examined health-environment interlinkages for example the Africa Environment Outlook-3 on: “Our Environment, Our Health”). By championing the Libreville Declaration, AMCEN demonstrated evolving relevance, positioning environmental management as integral to public health and sustainable development. This milestone laid the groundwork for ongoing Environment and Health initiatives in the region, ensuring that African environmental policy would increasingly account for impacts on human well-being.

f) 2010 Bamako Declaration on the Environment for Sustainable Development (Bamako, Mali)

At its Thirteenth Ordinary Session in Bamako, Mali (23–25 June 2010), AMCEN ministers adopted the Bamako Declaration on the Environment for Sustainable Development, Africa’s common position for the Rio+20 conference. This declaration articulated Africa’s priorities for the upcoming Rio+20 conference – calling for sustainable development that aligned with African needs, and importantly, for reforms to strengthen international environmental governance. African ministers specifically advocated for upgrading the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to better serve developing countries. This position was adopted at Rio+20: in the summit’s outcome document, world leaders committed to “strengthening and upgrading” UNEP, including establishing universal membership in UNEP’s governing council and bolstering its financing and coordinating role. It was a significant global reform (captured in paragraph 88 of The Future We Want outcome) that had been championed by AMCEN and the African Union in the negotiations.

In September 2012, shortly after Rio+20, the 14th AMCEN session in Arusha, Tanzania solidified Africa’s post-Rio roadmap. Here ministers issued the Arusha Declaration on Africa’s Post-Rio+20 Strategy for Sustainable Development, outlining how the continent would implement the commitments from Rio+20. The Arusha Declaration underscored Africa’s determination to “effectively articulate and tackle” its sustainable development priorities in line with the Rio+20 outcomes, including calls for technology transfer, capacity building, and financing for Africa’s green



Thirteenth Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) Bamako, Mali, 23-25 June 2010

growth. It also reaffirmed Africa's resolve to reach a fair and legally binding climate agreement – foreshadowing the continent's unified stance for the 2015 Paris COP. By linking regional action to global milestones, AMCEN in 2010–2012 ensured that Africa's voice on issues like the Green Economy, institutional framework for sustainable development, and a strengthened UNEP was heard and reflected on the world stage. This period cemented AMCEN's role as a bridge between African environmental policy and global sustainability agendas, from the Bamako Declaration to Arusha's Post-Rio+20 strategy.

A pivotal milestone also occurred at the 5th Special Session of AMCEN, held in Gaborone, Botswana (October 15–18, 2013). Ministers adopted the Gaborone Declaration on Climate Change and Africa's Development, which articulated Africa's collective position in advance of COP19 and reiterated calls for predictable climate finance, enhanced technology transfer, and capacity building. Notably, this session deepened Africa's engagement with the concept of natural capital accounting, building upon earlier initiatives like the Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa (2012), which had been championed by heads of state. AMCEN's endorsement of this agenda reinforced the integration of natural resource valuation into national economic planning, aligning environmental sustainability with Africa's broader development and green growth objectives. The Gaborone session marked an important step toward mainstreaming environmental governance into national economic frameworks, bridging AMCEN's technical policy work with high-level commitments made at the AU and continental planning institutions.

g) 2015 – Africa's Common Position on the Paris Agreement and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Cairo, Egypt)

2015 marked AMCEN's 30th anniversary, and fittingly its 15th session (held in Cairo, the birthplace of AMCEN) was both a celebration of three decades of progress and a strategic pivot toward emerging challenges. Convened in March 2015, the Cairo session occurred at a crucial moment in global policy, just months before the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement. African ministers used this milestone meeting to align the continent's environmental agenda with these global developments. The Cairo Declaration (2015) adopted at AMCEN's 15th session reaffirmed Africa's commitment to sustainable development and the post-2015 agenda, stressing that environmental priorities must support poverty eradication. Ministers agreed on the need to "harness Africa's natural capital" for sustainable development and poverty reduction – a theme that highlights AMCEN's engagement with finance and planning sectors. In fact, the 2015 conference provided an opportunity to engage African Ministries of Finance and Planning on integrating natural capital valuation into decision-making. Participants, including development partners like the World Bank, noted a new enthusiasm for measuring and accounting for natural capital as part of national economic planning. This reflected a strategic partnership between environment ministers and finance/planning officials, aimed at elevating natural resources to "strategic national assets" in budgeting and development plans. Notably, the Cairo Declaration explicitly acknowledged the Gaborone Declaration for



Sustainability in Africa.

At the same time, AMCEN's 2015 session looked to the future of environmental management in Africa, endorsing innovative approaches such as the green economy and circular economy principles. Ministers discussed Africa's transition to low-carbon, resource-efficient growth, with case studies showing billions in potential savings and jobs from green investments. There was a clear call to integrate the inclusive green economy across all sectors and to mainstream sustainability into Africa's long-term agendas. By its 30th anniversary, AMCEN was actively championing sustainable consumption and production patterns – from addressing e-waste to pushing for a circular economy for plastics – as part of Africa's environmental agenda.

Importantly, the Cairo 2015 session also coincided with negotiations on climate change. AMCEN ministers forged a common African position for the Paris Agreement, calling for parity between adaptation and mitigation and highlighting Africa's special needs. The Cairo Declaration affirmed Africa's resolve to see a “binding climate change agreement that reflects the continent's priorities” at COP21 in Paris. This position contributed to the successful adoption of a balanced Paris Agreement later in 2015. Thus, at three decades old, AMCEN demonstrated its continuing relevance and agility – aligning its regional milestones with global ones like the SDGs and Paris Accord and evolving its focus to new frontiers.

h) 2020–2025: The Africa Green Stimulus Programme in response to the COVID Crisis

During this period, AMCEN emerged as a continental catalyst in post-pandemic recovery and strategic environmental finance. In response to the socio-economic crisis triggered by COVID-19, AMCEN launched the Africa Green Stimulus Programme (AGSP) in 2021 at the eighth special session that was held virtually. The AGSP was then endorsed at the Resumed eighteenth session of AMCEN in Dakar, Senegal in 2022. The AGSP brought together existing and new initiatives under a unified continental

framework aimed at promoting green investments across sectors—such as renewable energy, ecosystem restoration, waste management, and climate-smart agriculture. It served as both a policy signal and a practical roadmap for aligning recovery efforts with sustainability objectives and encouraged countries to anchor environmental goals within national stimulus packages and financing plans.

Two major milestones followed in 2022. First, AMCEN facilitated the launch of the African Environmental Partnership Platform (AFEPA)—a mechanism to enhance coordination between national agencies and regional institutions, in implementing AMCEN decisions. AFEPA institutionalized a platform for structured implementation of AMCEN decisions that often went unimplemented. Second, 2022 saw the release of the Africa Atlas of Natural Capital, a landmark knowledge product co-produced with partners, that maps the continent's ecological wealth in a way that integrates it into national and regional planning. This Atlas exemplifies AMCEN's growing investment in science-policy interfaces, ensuring that decisions are grounded in evidence and that natural capital is treated as an economic and developmental asset.

Together, these milestones from 2013 to 2025 underscore AMCEN's continued evolution—from a forum for political consensus to a strategic institution catalysing green recovery, institutional coordination, and knowledge-based policy across Africa.



i) Partnerships and Collaboration

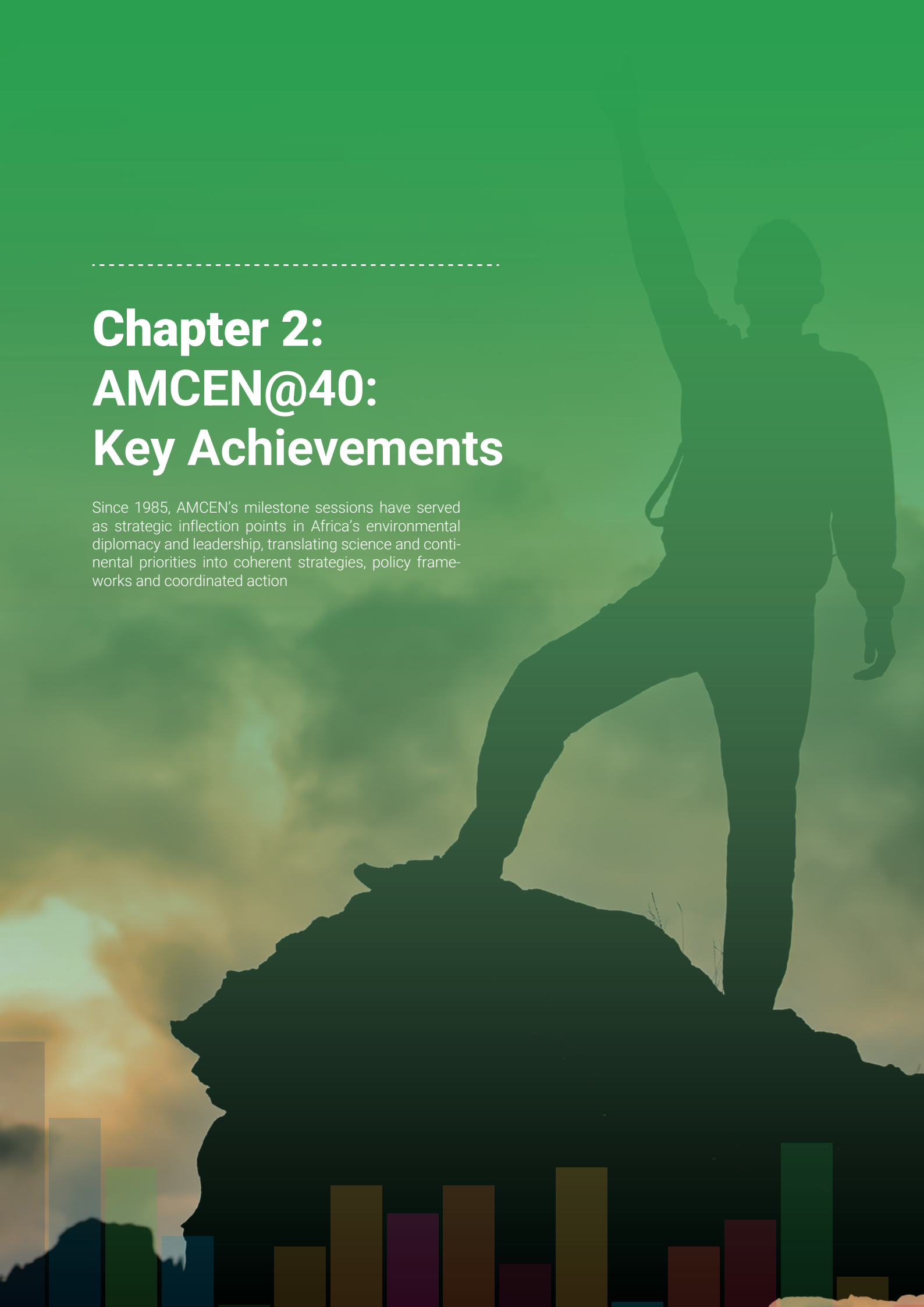
AMCEN's forty-year journey is distinguished not only by policies and programs but also by the robust partnerships and collaborative mechanisms it has cultivated. As a pan-African ministerial body, AMCEN's ability to convene diverse stakeholders, governments, international organizations, civil society, academia, and the private sector, and forge common cause has been a major achievement in itself. These partnerships have amplified Africa's environmental efforts, mobilized resources, and integrated environmental considerations into other sectors and fora.



Environment, Climate Change, and Forestry Cabinet Secretary of Kenya and Inger Andersen Executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme at the 10th Special Session (AMCEN), held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast in September 2024

Chapter 2: AMCEN@40: Key Achievements

Since 1985, AMCEN's milestone sessions have served as strategic inflection points in Africa's environmental diplomacy and leadership, translating science and continental priorities into coherent strategies, policy frameworks and coordinated action



2.1 Establishment of Africa Groups of Negotiators (AGNs)

From its inception, AMCEN has provided political guidance and leadership on Africa's environmental agenda. A key achievement is the establishment of Common African Positions (CAPs) on global environmental negotiations. In the 1990s, AMCEN shifted from running projects to focusing on policy coherence and coordination, ensuring Africa speaks with one voice in the global multilateral processes. By its 8th Session in 2000, ministers had decided to develop common positions for all major environmental conventions. This led to the formation of the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) – expert negotiators supported by AMCEN to articulate Africa's common position in international environmental agreements on climate change, biodiversity, desertification, chemicals and more. Through AMCEN's direction and guidance African negotiators became more effective, overcoming earlier limitations in securing advantageous outcomes for the continent. Notably, AMCEN's decisions and key messages have provided the basis for Africa's common position at UN climate conferences (COPs) and at the UN Environment Assembly, amplifying Africa's influence in global negotiations.

a) Africa Group of Negotiators on Climate:

Ahead of each annual United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties, AMCEN convenes ministerial meetings to refine Africa's common position. These meetings often result in clear directives to negotiators. Leading up to the Paris Agreement, AMCEN convened ministers and the AGN to solidify Africa's priorities – demanding parity between adaptation and mitigation, climate finance, and recognition of Africa's special circumstances. The African Common Position on Climate Change, regularly updated via AMCEN, became the cornerstone of Africa's engagement in UNFCCC talks. At COP21 (2015), Africa's unified voice was pivotal in securing a global goal on adaptation and anchoring the principle

of climate justice. **Ban Ki-moon (UN Secretary-General, COP21 2015)** – praised Africa's cohesion: "I also commend Africa's commitment to speaking with one voice in the negotiations. United, you are a powerful bloc of 54 nations, and your interests will be better served." . He urged African ministers to remain united, noting that as a single bloc they are especially strong. In the run-up to COP26 and COP27, AMCEN again stressed critical issues: recognizing Africa's special needs under the Paris Agreement, setting a post-2025 finance target that addresses loss and damage from climate extremes, and supporting just energy transitions in Africa.

The outcome at COP27 was historic, Parties agreed to establish a Loss and Damage fund, a long-standing demand of African countries. This victory traces back to years of unwavering advocacy by AMCEN and the AGN to put climate justice for vulnerable nations at the centre of negotiations. At COP29 in Baku, AGN-Climate's unified leadership delivered several landmark outcomes for Africa, including agreement on a New Collective Quantified Goal of USD 300 billion annually by 2035 with a roadmap to scale total climate finance to USD 1.3 trillion, the launch of the Baku Adaptation Roadmap and High-Level Adaptation Dialogue to rigorously track and elevate adaptation finance and indicators.

b) Africa Group of Negotiators on Wildlife –

CITES and Combating Illegal Trade: In 2022, AMCEN formally established an African Group of Negotiators on Wildlife to coordinate Africa's position at CITES.

This mechanism – the first of its kind for wildlife – has helped Africa speak with one voice on historically divisive issues such as ivory and rhino horn trade. Under AMCEN's guidance, the AGN-Wildlife has advocated stronger trade controls and zero-tolerance for illegal wildlife trade (IWT). For example, African ministers have jointly pushed for up-listing threatened species under CITES Appendices and for robust enforcement against wildlife trafficking. AMCEN's coordination ensured that African positions emphasizing "zero tolerance"



for corruption in wildlife trafficking and recognizing the role of local communities were reflected in global resolutions. As a result, Africa's influence in recent CITES Conferences of the Parties (CoPs) has grown, with unified African proposals (e.g. on elephants, pangolins, and rosewoods) gaining traction and new global commitments to combat IWT being adopted. The creation of the AGN-Wildlife under AMCEN is a milestone that elevates Africa's agency in CITES and strengthens collaborative action against poaching and illicit wildlife trade.

c) Africa Group of Negotiators on Plastics Pollution

Toward a Global Plastics Treaty: AMCEN has been pivotal in shaping Africa's evolving position in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on plastics pollution. As early as AMCEN's 17th session (2019), African ministers jointly endorsed the call for a legally binding global treaty on plastics. This position was reinforced at the 18th AMCEN (2021) session, where ministers pledged support for an agreed common African approach to negotiate a binding instrument. At AMCEN's 9th Special Session in Feb 2022, just before UNEA-5.2, Africa's environment ministers unanimously called for establishing an INC to develop a plastics treaty. Subsequently, AMCEN created an AGN on Plastics to coordinate the continent's engagement. By the 19th AMCEN (2023), ministers commended the AGN-Plastics and under AMCEN's guidance, Africa has consistently called for a treaty with clear, enforceable targets.

d) Africa Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity:

AMCEN played a central role in shaping Africa's unified voice during the negotiations of the Kunming–Montreal

Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) at CBD COP15. Ahead of COP15, AMCEN sessions enabled African governments to agree on common priorities and red lines. Through AMCEN's coordination, Africa pushed for two key outcomes: a new Global Biodiversity Fund dedicated to financing implementation in developing countries, and a fair solution on Digital Sequence Information (DSI) benefit-sharing. This unified advocacy had tangible results. While not all African demands were fully met, the adopted GBF did include the establishment of a GBF Fund and a COP15 decision launching a DSI benefit-sharing mechanism. These outcomes reflected the pan-African priorities AMCEN championed. Through AMCEN, Africa entered CBD COP15 with a Common African Position and emerged with a stronger collective influence on the GBF. The continent's unified advocacy was acknowledged as a major factor in securing a post-2020 framework that, for the first time, commits to new financing streams and addresses Africa's equity concerns.

e) Africa Group of Negotiators on Desertification:

AMCEN has robustly supported African negotiators under the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), especially in advancing the continent's call for a Protocol on Drought and resilience. At the 10th AMCEN Special Session in Abidjan (Sept 2024), African environment ministers adopted the Abidjan Declaration urging the establishment of a legally binding protocol on drought management under UNCCD – with special focus on Africa's needs. This high-level call, issued as Africa prepared for UNCCD COP16, underscores AMCEN's commitment to elevating Africa's asks in global fora. It builds on work that AMCEN and the African Group of Negotiators on desertification have pursued since COP15 (2022). In fact, COP15 in Côte



The African Group of Negotiators (AGN) on Climate Change, at the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 29) in Baku, Azerbaijan - November 2024

d'Ivoire agreed on setting up intergovernmental working groups (IWGs) to explore drought governance solutions – a decision strongly advocated by African negotiators. AMCEN's influence also extends to ensuring desertification and land restoration remain high on the global agenda. For example, UNEA-6 in 2024 echoed an AMCEN-backed resolution to intensify efforts on land degradation and drought resilience.

f) Africa Group of Negotiators on Chemicals and Waste

Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) Beyond-2020 and the New Chemicals Framework: AMCEN has aligned Africa's policies on chemicals management with global frameworks, ensuring the continent speaks with one voice on safe chemicals use, pollution prevention, and capacity development. Since the early 2000s, AMCEN ministerial decisions have endorsed the aims of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) – notably the goal that by 2020 chemicals are used and produced in ways that minimize significant adverse impacts on human health and the environment. As SAICM's original timeframe lapsed, AMCEN advocated for an ambitious "Beyond-2020" platform. This advocacy bore fruit in 2023 at ICCM5 (the 5th International Conference on Chemicals Management), where countries adopted the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC) – a comprehensive new roadmap for managing chemicals and waste throughout their lifecycle. Indeed, African negotiators –

strongly supported by AMCEN – were at the forefront of securing concrete risk reduction targets in the GFC. Furthermore, AMCEN's coordination ensures Africa speaks cohesively in related conventions, Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Minamata.

2.2 Bringing science to Policy Action: Establishing the Africa Environment Outlook (AEO) Series and Africa Forum of Environment Protection Agencies

AMCEN initiated flagship assessment reports to guide decision-making at national and regional level. Recognizing the need for Africa-specific environmental data, AMCEN called for the establishment of Africa Environment Outlook (AEO) series. Ministers institutionalized the AEO process as a monitoring and reporting mechanism for sustainable environmental management, with AEO reports to be produced periodically. AMCEN also established the Africa Environment Information Network (AEIN) to harmonize data and support these assessments. These outlook reports, alongside global assessments, have transformed environmental decision-making –



Fitsum Assefa Adela, AMCEN current President & FDRE Minister of Planning and Development & Elizabeth Mrema, UNEP Deputy Director & Assistant Secretary General



Group photo at the nineteenth ordinary session of AMCEN, held from 14–18 August 2023 in Ethiopia, under the theme: "Seizing opportunities and enhancing collaboration to address environmental challenges in Africa."

providing credible evidence on trends such as land degradation, deforestation, pollution, and climate impacts. AMCEN's emphasis on science-based policy is further seen in initiatives like the Global Environment Outlook Regional Assessment for Africa and a dedicated Global Environment Outlook for Youth in Africa, showcasing youth-led solutions. Such knowledge products – endorsed by AMCEN – have raised awareness among policymakers and the public, and informed national environment policies.

In addition to the flagship Africa Environment Outlook (AEO) series, AMCEN has championed specialized assessments like the Africa Waste Management Outlook. This comprehensive report – the first of its kind for the region – analyses Africa's waste generation, management trends, and impacts, and calls for urgent action to improve waste management across the continent. AMCEN has also promoted the development of high-quality environmental atlases, visually rich publications that map and illustrate environmental trends, to bring science closer to policymakers and the public. Notably, the Africa: Atlas of Our Changing Environment (2008) was launched at an AMCEN meeting providing striking before-and-after satellite imagery and maps of environmental change across Africa. This and subsequent atlases

serve as evidence-based, policy-relevant tools that complement the AEO reports by conveying complex data highlighting regional and thematic issues in a way that decision-makers and communities can readily grasp. In recent years, AMCEN recognized the need to more strongly link environmental sustainability with economic and business interests. The Africa Environment Outlook for Business is a pioneering effort in this regard. Conceived under AMCEN's auspices AEO for Business is the first-ever environment outlook tailored to the business community. Its objective is to identify and document opportunities where pursuing environmental sustainability aligns with and augments Africa's business growth.

Another innovative achievement by AMCEN is the establishment of the Africa Forum of Environment Protection Agencies forum at its eighteenth session in decision 18/1 where heads of national environmental agencies meet to share science, technical solutions and best practices. The forum has also been strengthened through creation of MATATU -a data-sharing platform to support the science policy interface.

Under AMCEN's leadership ministers endorsed the NEPAD Environment Action Plan in 2003, after an inclusive process involving regional consultations

and expert workshops. The plan was subsequently adopted by the AU Assembly, cementing environmental sustainability as a core component of Africa's development strategy. This achievement showcased AMCEN's ability to shape continental policy and rally political will at the highest levels. AMCEN's success also inspired the creation of sister forums such as Africa Ministerial Conference on Water and the Africa Circular Economy Alliance, extending its diplomacy and political leadership new sectors.

2.3 Unlocking Sustainable Finance through Partnerships with Ministries of Finance, Planning, Energy, Agriculture and Health

A noteworthy collaborative achievement is AMCEN's work with ministries beyond the environment sector within governments. AMCEN has formally encouraged partnerships with Ministries of Finance, Planning, Energy, Agriculture, Health, and others. As mentioned, environment and finance ministers are now beginning to participate in each other's conferences to align budgets with sustainability goals. In 2022 at the eighteenth session, AMCEN ministers explicitly resolved to strengthen collaboration with African Ministers of Finance and Economic Planning, recognizing that unlocking green development requires finance ministers' buy-in. Already, this has yielded initiatives like the incorporation of natural capital accounting into finance ministries' work and the organization of joint climate finance training for finance planners and environmental experts. Similarly, AMCEN has worked with agriculture ministers to promote sustainable soil management initiative which positions climate-smart agriculture on continental agendas.



Planning and Economic Development of the Economic Commission for Africa (COM57) explicitly called for Environment and Finance Ministers to convene a joint session, ensuring that economic plans factor in climate risks and adaptation needs.

This inter-ministerial approach is yielding innovative solutions, like climate-informed budgeting and green investment frameworks. Furthermore, AMCEN supports programs that combine mitigation and adaptation co-benefits. By endorsing such holistic projects, AMCEN ensures that Africa's pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is climate-compatible and resilient.

A recent decision at the Fifty-Seventh session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance,



2.4 The African Ministerial Conference on Environment and the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA)

AMCEN has established itself as the vehicle for African consensus in global environmental diplomacy, particularly within UNEP's governance structures. By uniting 54 countries behind common positions, AMCEN empowers African states to negotiate as a region in the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) and the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) in Nairobi. This unity has translated into concrete influence at UNEA. African ministers, through AMCEN, have successfully sponsored and shaped several UNEA resolutions such as the UNEA resolution 3/5. Investing in innovative environmental solutions for accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, UNEP/EA.6/Res.3 Enhancing the role and viability of regional forums of environment ministers in tackling environmental challenges among other resolutions reflecting Africa's priorities. These priorities have included promotion and scaling-up technology-driven and nature-based approaches to deliver practical, affordable solutions that drive clean energy, sustainable agriculture, waste reduction and ecosystem resilience in support of the 2030 Agenda and strengthening regional environmental ministerial fora and UNEP's regional offices as catalytic platforms.

Beyond resolutions, AMCEN's influence is institutional. Africa group in Nairobi are guided by AMCEN decisions, to negotiate UNEA texts. AMCEN routinely briefs the African group in Nairobi and UNEA delegates on its outcomes. For instance, after AMCEN's 18th session (2022), the AMCEN President formally transmitted Africa's key messages on biodiversity, climate, chemicals and plastics to the UNEA Bureau and CPR, ensuring they fed into UNEA-5.2 negotiations. This coordination means Africa speaks in UNEA's halls largely with one coordinated voice, amplifying its bargaining power.

AMCEN has spearheaded a dedicated programme on environmental diplomacy for the Africa Group in Nairobi, aimed at enhancing the capacity of African diplomats and negotiators to effectively engage in UNEP's policymaking processes. This programme includes regular briefings, technical dialogues, and preparatory workshops on priority thematic areas. It also fosters intersessional coordination ahead of UNEA and CPR meetings, ensuring that African delegates are well-prepared to advocate for AMCEN-endorsed positions. By building the negotiating skills and technical understanding of African representatives, AMCEN strengthens Africa's long-term influence within UNEP governance structures and promotes continuity in leadership across successive UNEA cycles. Through this initiative, AMCEN is not only reinforcing Africa's voice in multilateral diplomacy but also nurturing the next generation of African environmental negotiators. Shaping UNEP's Strategy and Programmes: AMCEN also plays a critical role in steering UNEP's institutional priorities to align with Africa's. The UNEP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and Programme of Work (PoW) are key planning instruments that guide UNEP's focus and budget. AMCEN ensures African priorities are reflected in these plans through the Africa Group in Nairobi. During the 10th special session held in Abidjan in September 2024, ministers requested UNEP to scale up interventions on Desertification, Land degradation and Drought that are now reflected in the proposed MTS and PoW for UNEP.



2.5 Championing Multilateral Environmental Agreements and promoting Coherence and Synergy in the Rio Conventions

AMCEN has functioned as the convening hub for Africa's coordination on multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). AMCEN has championed the ratification and implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) across Africa. AMCEN actively encouraged countries to sign and ratify the three global Rio conventions on biodiversity, climate change, and desertification. Similarly, AMCEN pushed for the revitalization of the 1968 African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Algiers Convention). It requested the AU to expedite updating this treaty, leading to a revised African Nature Convention adopted in 2003 in Maputo with modern provisions on biodiversity, soil, water, and climate. AMCEN has also promoted ratification and coordinated implementation of treaties on chemicals and waste such as Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Minamata, regional seas conventions such as the Nairobi Convention, wildlife-related conventions such as the migratory species (CMS), CITES among others.

By providing technical and policy support, AMCEN has strengthened concrete implementation steps. AMCEN decisions have encouraged countries to align their Nationally Determined Contributions, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and Land Degradation Neutrality targets, leveraging synergies in planning, resource mobilization, and implementation of the related MEAs.

More recently, AMCEN at the Tenth Special Session in Abidjan decision AMCEN/SS.X/2 urged member States to revise and update their national biodiversity strategies and action plans in alignment with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework,



and its goals and targets, and urged member States that have not yet done so to expedite the revision and submission of their national targets in the standardized format by the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and further develop national indicators, taking into consideration the African Union Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

Notably at the tenth special session in the Abidjan Declaration on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought: The ministers reiterated earlier AMCEN guidance (Decision 18/1) to enhance synergies among the “three Rio Conventions” UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD. The decision stresses that coordinated efforts among the secretariats of the Rio Conventions can increase the cost-effectiveness of national and regional implementation. In addition, the Declaration calls on African negotiator groups on climate, desertification, plastics and biodiversity to work in synergy on strategy development, explicitly linking climate change, land and biodiversity objectives into a unified approach.

2.6 Ecosystem Restoration

AMCEN has continuously highlighted ecosystem-based approaches to restoration. Early in its history, it recognized issues like deforestation, soil erosion, and drought as existential threats to African development. The very first AMCEN session in 1985 set priorities of halting environmental degradation and restoring balance between population and resources.



a) Great Green Wall:

AMCEN provided political leadership and an enabling policy environment for the great green wall in Africa, at its twelfth Session in South Africa, ministers called on development partners to continue regional coordination efforts including the development of initiatives such as the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel, extending such programmes to similar subregions of North-East Africa and Southern Africa and at its sixth special session in Niamey, the ministers called stakeholders to support the implementation of regional initiatives such as the Great Green Wall Initiative in Africa. The above showcases that Environment ministers collectively recognized the urgency of halting the spread of the desert and restoring fertility to Africa's drylands.

b) Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration:

At the African Biodiversity Summit in Sharm El Sheikh (2018), environment ministers and heads of delegation,

in a forum co-convened with AMCEN, agreed on the "Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience" as the continental agenda for restoration both biodiversity and climate adaptation. This high-level commitment, facilitated by AMCEN, is accelerating efforts such as reforestation, regreening of landscapes, and sustainable land management across Africa.

c) Mountain ecosystems:

In 2002, AMCEN endorsed the Nairobi Declaration on the Sustainable Development of African Mountain Regions, promoting conservation and restoration in critical mountain ecosystems. Likewise, AMCEN supported sub-regional restoration programs, such as the Regional Initiative for the Restoration of the Lake Chad Basin and transboundary conservation areas, acknowledging that ecosystem boundaries often cross-national borders.



The Great Green Wall: A flagship UNCCD initiative restoring Africa's land and legacy.

d) Land Degradation Neutrality:

Under AMCEN's guidance, the Sixth Special Session in Niamey, in October 2014, in Decision SS.VI/3, ministers called for African countries to support the programme on Land Degradation Neutrality target setting in the context of achieving land degradation neutrality and in the tenth Special session called for LDNs to be to integrate LDNs into national development plans and policies

e) Building partnership for restoration:

AMCEN's convening power has supported partnerships for restoration. Among these, Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative, which planted over 25 billion trees by 2022, was formally showcased at the nineteenth session of AMCEN in Addis Ababa as a flagship model for scaling up restoration across drylands. Likewise, Madagascar, officially appointed by UNEP as a UN Decade Restoration Champion, was lauded at the Tenth Special Session in Abidjan for its large-scale mangrove and coral reef rehabilitation efforts, demonstrating how AMCEN elevates member-state innovations to mobilize technical and financial support continent-wide. Additionally at its Tenth Special Session in Abidjan, AMCEN ministers formally welcomed the Abidjan Legacy Programme as a model for dryland restoration, and noted that the programme should be supported, replicated and adapted across the Sahel and beyond

Chemicals and waste: In the realm of chemicals and waste management, AMCEN has guided Africa's engagement with global treaties and catalysed regional action. African leadership was crucial in negotiations of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and the Minamata Convention on Mercury, given the continent's vulnerability to toxic substances. AMCEN Decision 7/4 on Ratification of International Environmental Conventions and Protocols urged countries to ratify these agreements and coordinated capacity-building for their implementation. On mercury, AMCEN highlighted the plight of artisanal gold mining spurring support for the Minamata Convention's provisions on controlling mercury in mining. Bamako Convention: Thanks to AMCEN's advocacy, the Bamako Convention entered into force and held its first Conference of Parties, reinforcing Africa's commitment to prevent dumping of poisonous chemicals and waste on its soil. This Africa-led legal instrument stands as a pioneering achievement in the Global South, reflecting AMCEN's capacity to develop home-grown solutions when global action falls short. Decision SS-VII/1: Strengthening Chemicals and Waste Management in Africa, reaffirmed support for the Bamako Convention as the regional complement to the Basel Convention and called for enhanced implementation, including capacity-building for hazardous-waste controls.

a) Plastic pollution:

One of AMCEN's most recent and impactful achievements is its continental leadership on plastic pollution. African ministers through AMCEN have been at the forefront of calls for the proposed legally binding instrument on plastic pollution including in the marine

2.7 Pollution Management

AMCEN has addressed pollution across several fronts – air, waste, chemicals and plastics – with explicit decisions and declarations.



environment. The eighteenth Session in Dakar decision 18/2 endorsed Africa's participation in the International Negotiating Committee (INC) process and established the AGN on plastics. The 19th Ordinary Session in decision 19/2 reaffirmed Africa's commitment to advancing the continent's position in the INC process.

b) Open burning of waste:

AMCEN's work on pollution also encompasses solid waste management and the circular economy. Recognizing the chronic issues of waste disposal, ministers at the eighteenth session of AMCEN, decision 18/1 (b) agreed on time-bound actions to eliminate



open dumping and open burning and established a Multi-Stakeholder Partnership—open to national governments, local authorities, civil society, private sector actors and development partners—to coordinate efforts toward phasing out open burning of waste by 2040. The multi-stakeholder partnership to eliminate open burning of waste in Africa was launched at COP 27 in Sharm el-Sheikh in November 2022.

c) Circularity:

AMCEN's leadership in advancing the circular economy and other green growth models in Africa. AMCEN

Ministers agreed to promote strategies on “circular economy, green economy, and industrial symbiosis” as early as 2017 at the sixteenth session in Libreville, to enhance economic prosperity while reducing waste and pollution. Responding to this mandate, African countries, with AMCEN's guidance, launched the African Circular Economy Alliance (ACEA) in 2017 and serves as a platform for sharing circular economy roadmaps, business innovations, and financing opportunities. AMCEN has worked closely with ACEA and partners like the World Economic Forum and African Development Bank to prepare the guidelines to acceleration of circular economy in Africa and the green financing assessment report. These guidelines will guide countries in implementing circular solutions such as sustainable product design, recycling industries, and value chains that turn waste into inputs.

2.8 Climate Adaptation and Resilience

AMCEN's achievements in climate adaptation and resilience lie in institutionalizing adaptation as a top priority and Africa's negotiating power in climate talks.

a) The Road to the Paris Agreement:

AMCEN played a pivotal role in shaping Africa's negotiating position in the lead-up to the UNFCCC COP21 in Paris, 2015. At AMCEN-15 in Cairo, in December 2013, ministers adopted Decision 15/3 on Climate Change which called for a legally binding agreement under the UNFCCC that equally prioritized mitigation and adaptation, and for the creation of a dedicated Global Goal on Adaptation. This decision instructed the African Group of Negotiators to consolidate national positions into a unified continental submission, emphasizing Africa's special needs and circumstances—language that was reflected in the eventual Paris text (Articles 2.1(b) and 7). Additionally, AMCEN decision 15/3 explicitly referenced the need for an operational Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund mechanisms. Following the historic adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, AMCEN has maintained



a continuous and proactive engagement through successive COPs and ministerial sessions. Recently at its nineteenth session, it explicitly called for swift operationalization of that Global Goal and for setting clear adaptation targets/indicators. It further urged developed countries to double adaptation finance.

b) Climate finance:

In 2015 the AGN climate was tasked to create the Africa Adaptation Initiative that was launched at COP21 in Paris as a unified African response to adaptation needs. AMCEN decisions since then have continued to endorse AAI and other flagship funds. Under AMCEN Decision 19/5 on Climate Change, ministers called for scaling up adaptation finance, operationalizing the Global Goal on Adaptation, advancing loss & damage funding, and addressing Africa's special needs and circumstances in the international financial architecture. Building on this the tenth Special-Session Urged adoption of an ambitious New Collective Quantified Goal of no less than USD 1.3 trillion per year, called for reforms of global financial mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund, Climate Investment Funds, Adaptation Fund and the Global Environment Facility, so that Africa can more easily access grants and loans to address the adverse impacts of climate change and stressed the urgent need to operationalize the Global Goal on Adaptation and to scale up adaptation finance under the UNFCCC architecture. This AMCEN aspirations led to key outcomes in COP29 on climate finance such as a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) of at least US \$300 billion per year by 2035 to support developing countries.

As both AMCEN and the Paris Agreement enter new chapters, AMCEN's fifth decade and the Paris Agreement's second, the continent is poised to leverage its cohesiveness to drive implementation, scale up restoration, mobilize climate finance and uphold climate

justice across Africa.

2.9 Nature Action

AMCEN has consistently upheld the Nature Action pillar by steering Africa's engagement with biodiversity, Ocean governance, blue economy and desertification, ensuring continental priorities are embedded in global and regional frameworks.

a) Enhanced Engagement with the CBD and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

At its Fifth Session in Addis Ababa, November 1993, AMCEN adopted Decision 5/3, in which ministers committed accelerate Africa's signature and ratification to the UNCBD helping secure early continental momentum for the world's first comprehensive biodiversity treaty. Through its CBD-focused decisions AMCEN has repeatedly urged Member States to ratify and implement the Nagoya Protocol, strengthening continental frameworks for fair and equitable benefit sharing of genetic resources. In preparation for COP15 in Montreal, December 2022, the African Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity, mandated by AMCEN at its eighteenth Session reaffirmed Africa's common positions on GBF elements such as benefit-sharing including digital sequence information and ecosystem-restoration targets. This consolidated Africa's voice in the negotiations, ensuring that the final text enshrined key African priorities. The nineteenth session of AMCEN in the Addis Ababa Declaration reaffirmed the need for regional collaboration with the CBD Secretariat to support Member States in translating GBF targets into national policies and programmes. 43 African countries have been supported to revise or update National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, including national targets. Additionally, preparatory work for COP16 of the CBD that was held in Cali, by the AGN



AMCEN's

Sustainable blue economy featured prominently in decisions, reflecting a shared consensus that economic expansion and ocean health are inseparable.



on Biodiversity, as mandated by AMCEN, reaffirmed the continental common position endorsed at both the Tenth Special Session and the Nineteenth Session and pressed for fair and equitable benefit-sharing including digital sequence information within the GBF negotiations.

b) Africa's Ocean Space:

AMCEN's leadership on oceans has evolved into a coherent suite of continental, regional and national initiatives that together define Africa's Blue Economy and Ocean Governance architecture. Building on AMCEN ministers' 2015 Cairo Declaration on Managing Africa's Natural Capital for Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication that called for an Africa Ocean Governance Strategy AMCEN provided the policy groundwork and high-level advocacy that underpinned the African Union Blue Economy Strategy adopted in 2019, a roadmap for harnessing ocean and coastal resources in ways that drive growth, create jobs and safeguard marine ecosystems.

At the seventeenth session of AMCEN sustainable blue economy featured prominently in decisions, reflecting a shared consensus that economic expansion and ocean health are inseparable. Today, the finalized Africa Ocean Governance Strategy will be launched at AMCEN's 40th anniversary and will serve as the unifying framework for harmonizing continental, regional and national actions on sustainable ocean management. AMCEN has also continuously championed the two

long-standing Regional Seas Conventions, the Abidjan Convention and the Nairobi Convention. AMCEN has urged their peers to ratify protocols, implement action plans and inject new momentum into these platforms. Under AMCEN's mandate in the eighteenth session, the Nairobi Convention Secretariat convened developed the Western Indian Ocean Regional Ocean Governance Strategy, a concerted plan for managing shared marine spaces, coordinating surveillance, pollution control and climate-resilient coastal development. In this way,

AMCEN's strategic vision links high-level policy AU Blue Economy and Africa Ocean Governance Strategies with strengthened regional fora, ensuring that Africa speaks with one voice across all scales of ocean governance. AMCEN has also addressed freshwater ecosystems as part of the blue economy. It has highlighted the need to protect Africa's great lakes and river basins – not only for water supply but also for their biodiversity and economic services. Through AMCEN decisions, environment ministers have supported the work of the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) in river basin management and called for integrating coastal zone management in national climate adaptation plans.

A significant achievement is AMCEN's role in tackling marine pollution, which directly links to the health of the blue economy. African nations, guided by AMCEN, took a leading role in global efforts to combat marine litter and plastic pollution. They co-sponsored the decisive UNEA resolution 5/14 to negotiate a plastics treaty, and within Africa. By pushing these initiatives, AMCEN





underscored that a thriving blue economy requires clean oceans.

c) Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction:

Building on its ocean governance mandate, AMCEN has laid the policy groundwork for Africa's effective engagement in the BBNJ Agreement. Through ministerial resolutions and preparatory consultations, AMCEN is supporting the establishment of an African Group of Negotiators on Oceans to develop and uphold a Common African Position on critical issues such as fair access to marine genetic resources, equitable benefit-sharing, and robust environmental safeguards in areas beyond national jurisdiction. In addition, AMCEN will support Member States by enhancing their institutional and technical capacities to ratify the BBNJ Agreement and implement its provisions in line with continental priorities.

d) One Health:

AMCEN has championed Libreville declaration on health and environment and related matters such as antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and health impacts. AMCEN positioned environment ministries as key players in a multi-sector response. This proactive broadening of

scope shows AMCEN's responsiveness to new scientific findings and its dedication to comprehensive solutions.

2.10 Minerals and Energy

a) On Minerals:

The African Mining Vision (AMV), adopted by African Heads of State in 2009, sets out a strategic framework for transforming Africa's extractive sector into a catalyst for inclusive growth and sustainable development, with explicit priorities on environmental stewardship, such as stringent safeguards, land-rehabilitation requirements and pollution control measures. It calls effective environmental management to ensure mining activities leave a lasting positive legacy for communities and ecosystems. The African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC), established by the African Union Commission in 2019, serves as the continent's technical arm for translating the African Mining Vision into practice, coordinating policy on mineral value chains, environmental safeguards and capacity-building. The African Green Minerals Strategy, endorsed by African Heads of State in 2022, lays out how critical minerals can power the clean-energy transition while embedding circular-economy principles and ecosystem protection.



Under Decision 19.1(b), Addis Ababa 2023, AMCEN ministers explicitly tasked UNEP, the AfDB, the ECA, the AMDC and other partners to convene a regional consultative workshop to weave these environmental priorities into both the Green Minerals Strategy and the broader African Mining Vision, ensuring that Africa's critical-mineral development advances in a sustainable, climate-resilient manner. Following the AMCEN mandate A regional stakeholder workshop on critical energy-transition minerals was held in November 2024 in Nairobi, which emphasized the integration of circular-economy principles, ecosystem restoration, pollution reduction, and climate-change mitigation into the African Green Minerals Strategy and the African Mining Vision, explicitly covering the environmental sustainability of extraction and processing activities.

An action plan arising from that workshop focusing on capacity building and environmental safeguards was developed to guide future implementation and align with regional and global sustainability goals. AMCEN has also addressed specific mining-related environmental issues, achieving notable progress. For example, recognizing the rampant use of mercury in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) and its grave health impacts, AMCEN pushed for African leadership in negotiating the Minamata Convention on Mercury. African negotiators, backed by AMCEN decisions, were among the strongest voices calling for a global ban on mercury in ASGM and financial support to help countries transition to safer alternatives.

b) On Energy Transition:

In the energy sector, AMCEN's achievements are seen in advancing Africa's clean energy transition and energy access agenda. AMCEN recognized early that Africa's abundant renewable energy potential – solar, wind, geothermal, hydro – is key to sustainable development and climate mitigation. Over the years, AMCEN ministerial conferences have increasingly focused on energy, often jointly with energy ministers. In 2017, at its 16th Session, AMCEN agreed to "scale up the development and use of clean renewable energy" to drive value addition of Africa's natural capital and expand energy access. The sixteenth session in Libreville also



decided to hold joint meetings of environment and energy ministers to provide strategic guidance on accelerating clean energy investments. This was a significant institutional step that broke silos between sectors and underscored that the environment ministry has a stake in energy planning. The sixteenth session also tasked the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative with mobilizing of energy renewables, while strengthening off-grid electrification, energy-efficiency and clean-energy business models. At the practical level, AMCEN's endorsement of innovative energy initiatives has led to on-the-ground programs. A shining example is the African Women Energy Entrepreneurs Framework (AWEEF). Responding to AMCEN's call in the Libreville Outcome (2017) to empower women in sustainable energy, UNEP and partners developed this framework.

Launched in 2017, AWEEF provides training, financing avenues, and policy support to women entrepreneurs in the clean energy sector. By catalysing such cross-cutting solutions, AMCEN addresses multiple goals at once: gender equality, energy access, and environmental sustainability. Additionally, the African Rift Geothermal Development Facility (ARGeo) directly supports AMCEN's priorities on renewable energy by accelerating the development of geothermal power - a low-carbon and reliable energy source.

c) Africa Green Stimulus Programme:

Responding to the COVID-19 economic downturn, AMCEN launched the Africa Green Stimulus Programme



in 2021 that exemplifies how environmental action can drive resilient economic recovery. By channelling over USD 1 billion in blended public–private finance into off-grid solar home systems, clean cookstove distribution and energy-efficiency retrofits, the Stimulus not only mitigated pandemic-induced energy insecurity but also cut greenhouse-gas emissions and reduced household reliance on biomass and kerosene. As a cross-cutting environmental solution, the Africa Green Stimulus Programme demonstrates AMCEN’s ability to translate high-level policy resolutions into tangible, multisectoral outcomes that bolster both livelihoods and ecological resilience.

2.11 Major Groups and Stakeholders:

a) AMCEN’s platform has also welcomed non-state partners.

Within Africa, the Major Groups and Stakeholders -Africa contribute to the advancement of the Agenda 2063. They have provided expert and technical resource to member states, inform and seek to influence policy through the representation of the grassroots voices drawn from the on-ground levels of the five subregions of Africa. Over the last two decades, MGS Africa have

been feeding into the processes of the AMCEN through the Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs), Africa. This inclusive approach ensures that the voices of youth groups, women’s organizations, Indigenous peoples, and NGOs are heard. In the spirit of fraternal, pan-African inclusivity, the RCMs are also open to other African Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) who are not accredited to the UNEP yet. This has led to a significant increase in the number of UNEP-accredited organizations from Africa to the second highest in 2025, from the second lowest in 2022. Further, the RCMs have continued to appeal to the interest of CSOs in Africa as demonstrated in the growth in numbers from about 70 participants representing about less than 25 organizations in and before Dakar in August 2022 to over 150 participants and close to 100 CSOs from all 5 subregions of Africa in Abidjan in 2024. Such partnerships have led to civil society being involved in monitoring the implementation of AMCEN decisions, and youth networks like the African Youth Initiative on Climate Change aligning their advocacy with AMCEN’s priorities. A notable achievement was at the seventeenth session of AMCEN in South Africa, where the Africa Environment Outlook for Youth (AEO-Youth) was launched, a concise, youth-oriented digest of UNEP’s flagship assessments. AEO-Youth synthesized key findings on climate, biodiversity and pollution into accessible language, reaching over 50,000 young readers through digital channels.



Group photo from Day 1 of the Regional Consultation Meeting of UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, held on 10 July 2025 in Nairobi, Kenya.



Chapter 3: Reimagining The Future -The Amcen We Want In 2063

As Africa marches towards the year 2063 – the horizon year of the African Union’s Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want – the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) is poised to evolve into a cornerstone institution driving the continent’s environmental destiny. This chapter casts a bold vision of AMCEN in 2063, identifying its defining strategic priorities and actions

AMCEN transcends its foundational role as a convening forum of ministers and emerges as a continental engine of environmental policy coherence, innovation, and delivery. This vision aligns squarely with Agenda 2063’s goal of “environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities,” which calls for sustainable natural resource management, water security, preparedness for climate disasters, and expansion of renewable energy across the continent.

Vision: by 2063 AMCEN is expected to ensure that environmental sustainability is ingrained in every facet of Africa’s development – from local communities to urban settlements, to governments, civil society and private sector, the youth and women - fulfilling the promise that Africa’s growth does not compromise its natural heritage and future generations’ well-being.

Realizing this vision means:

- AMCEN will champion the environmental aspirations of both Agenda 2063 and the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in unison.
- By 2063, Africa's environmental well-being should no longer be a side note to development – it will be a central pillar of prosperity and security.
- AMCEN's future role is imagined as proactive and visionary: guiding Africa to achieve key milestones such as climate-resilient agriculture and infrastructure, thriving blue and green economies, circular industries with minimal waste, and healthy ecosystems that underpin economic growth.
- AMCEN will harness Africa's greatest assets – its people, including youth and women, its traditional knowledge, and its innovative spirit – to safeguard the environment.

3.1 Leading Regional Voice on Environmental Matters

In the journey to 2063, AMCEN will solidify its stature as Africa's leading regional voice on environmental matters. This means AMCEN will serve as the principal

forum where Africa's environmental policies are not only discussed but unified into a coherent voice that resonates regionally and globally. By 2063, AMCEN is the go-to platform for articulating Africa's common position on environmental issues, ensuring that the continent speaks as one on the international stage. Already in recent years, African ministers have reiterated the importance of aligning AMCEN with global environmental efforts, particularly through the United Nations Environment Assembly. By leveraging UNEA and other global fora, AMCEN can project Africa's priorities – such as climate justice, equitable resource use, and sustainable development – more powerfully. The AMCEN of the future will build on this by consistently positioning Africa at the centre of global environmental negotiations, ensuring African perspectives and needs are heard and addressed.

Furthermore, AMCEN's role as a leading voice means it will facilitate regional solidarity and consensus on emerging challenges. Whether dealing with cross-border conservation areas, transboundary water management, or regional climate adaptation plans, AMCEN will provide the platform for countries to craft joint strategies. A united regional voice has practical significance – for example, African ministers acting through AMCEN have jointly committed to “strong, harmonised, coherent delivery” of environmental programs across nations. This harmonization implies that by 2063, policies from one country to another will be synergized, guided by



common standards and goals, thereby amplifying their impact. AMCEN will also amplify Africa's voice by engaging sub-regional bodies (RECs) and ensuring that continental initiatives like the African Green Stimulus Programme or the Great Green Wall receive political support and oversight at the highest levels.

On the global stage, the AMCEN of 2063 will be recognized as a leader in championing the Global South's environmental agenda. It will continue to forge alliances with other regional blocs, but importantly, it will have the credibility of a region that has taken charge of its own environmental narrative. By 2063, AMCEN's role must transcend beyond coordination of positions to proactively shaping the global environmental agenda. AMCEN needs to initiate new concepts, norms, and solutions that are deeply rooted in African realities and priorities, rather than primarily reacting to agendas set by other regions. This transformation would elevate Africa's diplomatic power, positioning the continent not just as a recipient of climate finance or a region vulnerable to climate change impacts, but as a thought leader and provider of innovative solutions in global environmental governance.

To support Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) implementation; AMCEN should champion an implementation Framework that supports robust implementation and verifiable compliance of MEAs. This framework will include developing standardized reporting mechanisms, facilitating peer-to-peer learning among member states on best practices, and establishing regional enforcement support mechanisms to ensure adherence to international environmental law. This strategic shift would move Africa beyond aspirational environmental governance to a system of tangible accountability, leading to measurable improvements in environmental quality and resource management.

3.2 Cultivating a Knowledge-Driven Environmental Future

AMCEN recognizes that sound environmental governance must be underpinned by science. Bridging the gap between scientific knowledge and policymaking

is thus a key priority. By 2063, science-to-policy integration will ensure that decisions are evidence-based, guided by the best available data and research on Africa's environment. Over the decades, AMCEN will nurture home-grown research capacity and knowledge networks, enabling African-led science to inform African policy. This evolution answers calls to increase investment in research and innovative solutions for sustainability, ensuring policies keep pace with emerging environmental challenges and technological advancements.

AMCEN has institutionalized a dynamic science-policy interface that translates research into actionable policy. A continent-wide network of environmental observation and research centres regularly feeds into AMCEN discussions. Through initiatives such as an African Environment Outlook platform and regional climate and biodiversity centres, ministers have real-time access to data on climate trends, deforestation rates, air and water quality, and more. African scientists and knowledge holders are active participants in AMCEN processes, ensuring policies are grounded in local evidence and



traditional knowledge. By 2063, this culture of evidence-based policymaking means African nations anticipate environmental risks and proactively craft policies and research. AMCEN's science-driven approach not only supports Agenda 2063's sustainability goals but also contributes to global scientific knowledge, with Africa generating solutions relevant worldwide.

By 2063, AMCEN must champion a comprehensive, continent-wide science-policy interface that systematically integrates cutting-edge scientific research with invaluable indigenous and local knowledge systems. AMCEN must not merely generate knowledge but ensure its systematic uptake by policymakers. This strategic approach would lead to more effective, evidence-based environmental policies that are not only scientifically sound but also culturally relevant and implementable, thereby accelerating Africa's sustainable development goals. This integrated approach involves establishing dedicated interdisciplinary research hubs across Africa, directly linked to policy-making bodies, to ensure that environmental decisions are evidence-based, culturally resonant, and responsive to local contexts.

Innovation has also been identified by AMCEN as a key accelerator for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063, with explicit calls for green technology, youth-led solutions, and local partnerships. AMCEN has actively encouraged investments in innovative environmental solutions, recognizing their potential for transformative change. AMCEN will play a central role in fostering a dynamic green technology and innovation ecosystem. This could entail establishing regional Green Innovation Hubs that prioritize solutions that are not only technologically advanced but also locally appropriate, affordable, and scalable across Africa's diverse geographical and socio-economic contexts. This decentralized and inclusive approach to innovation would unlock a vast, untapped potential for localized environmental solutions, fostering economic growth, creating green jobs, and building greater resilience at the grassroots level, while significantly enhancing the continent's overall capacity for sustainable development.

3.3 Finance and Investment Mobilization for Environmental Action:

Unlocking Africa's Green Capital Adequate financing is the cornerstone of environmental action. By 2063, AMCEN envisions a financial landscape where sustainable funding and innovative resource mobilization drive Africa's environmental sustainability agenda. In line with Agenda 2063's call for Africa to finance its own development, the goal is to reduce dependency on external aid by boosting domestic and continental funding mechanisms. A strong AMCEN Trust Fund, green investment frameworks, and partnerships with the private sector and international funds will underpin the continent's environmental initiatives.

By 2063, African countries widely use green bonds, payment for ecosystem services, and climate finance instruments to fund conservation and renewable energy projects. Continental initiatives integrated with the Africa development Bank and other finance institutions to provide low-cost financing for sustainable projects across countries. Additionally, Africa effectively accesses global funds to support AMCEN implementation of decisions. Overall, resource mobilization by 2063 is strategic, diversified, and domestically driven, fulfilling the aspiration that Africa takes full responsibility for financing her development, including environmental sustainability. This includes developing robust regional carbon markets, facilitating the issuance of green bonds, implementing debt-for-nature swaps, and leveraging climate insurance mechanisms. The focus will be on creating predictable, scalable, and accessible financial flows tailored to Africa's unique environmental challenges and opportunities. This transformation would significantly enhance Africa's financial sovereignty and resilience, enabling the continent to drive its own sustainable development agenda without being overly constrained by the priorities or conditionalities of external donors.



Another avenue is Public – Private partnerships which are crucial in environmental action. There is a widely acknowledged need to strengthen partnerships between governments, the private sector, and other stakeholders to promote investments in innovative environmental solutions. AMCEN future decisions need to champion development of clear regulatory frameworks, offer targeted fiscal incentives, and streamline administrative processes to attract both domestic and international private sector investment into critical sectors such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, circular economy initiatives among others. A core principle will be ensuring equitable benefit-sharing from these investments, fostering inclusive green growth.

AMCEN should advocate for strengthening of African financial institutions, including the AfDB, national development banks, and regional investment funds to become primary drivers of green finance. This involves strengthening their capacity to assess environmental risks and opportunities, develop innovative green financial products, and mobilize substantial capital for climate action and biodiversity conservation.

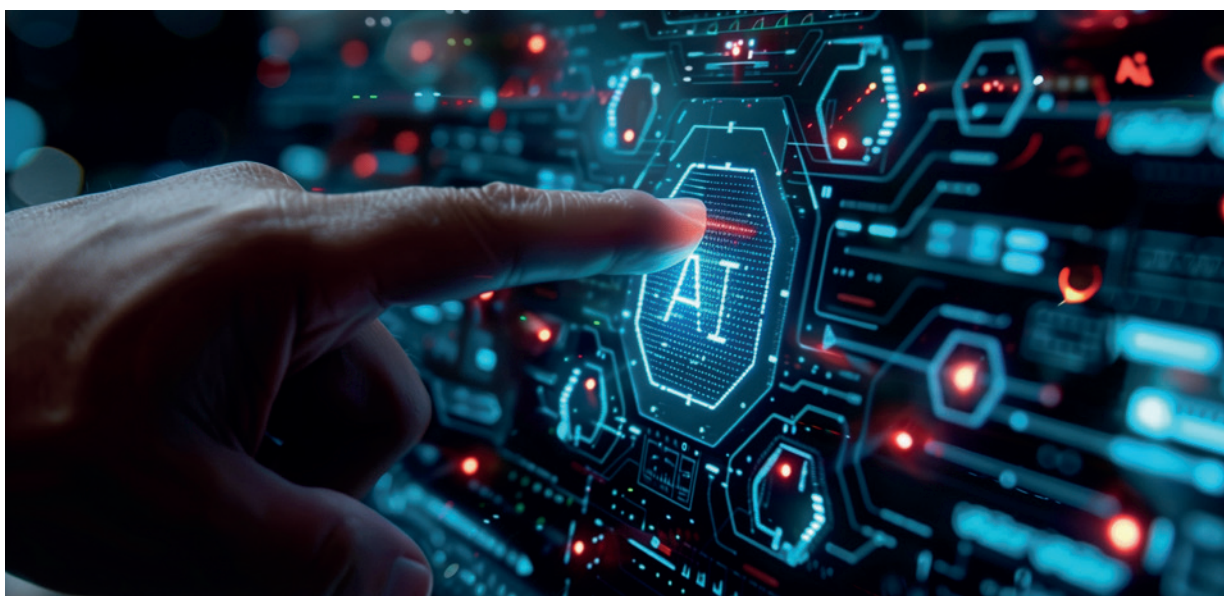
Lastly, the development of a comprehensive, continent-wide framework for valuing, protecting, and sustainably leveraging Africa's natural capital is crucial. This includes establishing robust, transparent, and African-owned

carbon markets that ensure fair and equitable returns for nature-based solutions and climate mitigation efforts. It also involves creating mechanisms to ensure that the extraction and processing of critical minerals for the global green transition contribute equitably to sustainable development and environmental protection across the continent. This approach would fundamentally alter Africa's economic development model, integrating environmental protection as a core driver of prosperity and attracting significant investment by demonstrating the tangible economic returns of nature-positive development.

3.4 Sustainable Digital Technologies, Artificial Intelligence, and Early Warning and Assessments

Achieving ambitious environmental goals by 2063 will require harnessing the power of emerging technologies and integrating them into every aspect of environmental management. The world is in the midst of a digital and technological revolution, and AMCEN is committed to ensuring that Africa rides this wave to bolster sustainability. In practice, this means





embracing innovations – from digital tools to biotech and clean energy technologies – as force multipliers for environmental action. The UNEP Digital Transformation subprogramme encapsulates this approach, aiming to “accelerate and scale environmental sustainability through the strategic application of data and digital technologies”.

One key area is the use of data and analytics for environmental decision-making. A robust digital ecosystem for the environment, forecasting systems providing early warnings for extreme weather and big data analytics are important to promote the development of open environmental data platforms that enable transparent monitoring of progress toward Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. Such platforms empower policymakers and the public with information. Leveraging remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS), and artificial intelligence, African countries can vastly improve the precision and impact of conservation and climate actions – identifying deforestation hotspots, tracking wildlife migrations, or pinpointing the most effective locations for renewable energy projects.

Another technological frontier is the application of emerging sciences and innovations in solving environmental problems. AMCEN’s role is to advocate and create enabling policies for rapid technology transfer and adoption. While promoting such innovations, AMCEN will also ensure that proper safeguards and ethical guidelines are in place so that these technologies do

not inadvertently harm ecosystems or communities. A particularly transformative domain is digital connectivity. Digital tools will allow the public to participate actively in environmental management. Digital education and literacy are crucial, to highlight the importance of guiding the digital revolution toward positive environmental outcomes.

However, integrating emerging technologies also means mitigating digital risks. E-waste management will be an important part of pollution control as electronic usage rises; cybersecurity will be needed to protect critical environmental data systems; and care must be taken that technologies do not widen inequalities. AMCEN’s stance by 2063 will be that technology must serve sustainability and people. It will advocate for policies that ensure open access to climate and environmental data, protect privacy, and promote equitable access to technological benefits across African nations. This aligns with the broader Sustainable Development Agenda, since many SDGs have technology components.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Early Warnings is increasingly recognized as an essential tool for building resilience and protecting development gains. AI’s potential to make early warnings cheaper, faster, and more accessible is widely acknowledged. Furthermore, AI applications are being explored for diverse environmental management tasks. By 2063, AMCEN will leverage AI for predictive environmental management, moving beyond reactive responses to proactive interventions. AI models



will analyse vast and complex datasets to forecast environmental risks with unprecedented accuracy. These models will also predict the likely impacts of various policy choices and optimize resource allocation for conservation and sustainable development.

Additionally, Early warning systems are critically important for mitigating the impacts of natural disasters. AMCEN actively advocates for mainstreaming climate considerations into early warning systems, recognizing their vital role in climate resilience. By 2063, AMCEN will have ensured universal access to comprehensive multi-hazard early warning systems across Africa, powered by advanced AI and real-time data. These systems will integrate diverse data streams, including climate, weather, hydrological, and ecological information, to provide timely and highly localized alerts for a wide range of hazards such as floods, droughts, heatwaves, pest outbreaks, and other environmental threats.

Conclusion: “The AMCEN We Want”

The journey to “The AMCEN We Want in 2063,” as envisioned at its 40th anniversary, represents a profound and necessary transformation for Africa’s environmental future. The ideas articulated converge

to create a powerful and cohesive vision. Ultimately, “The AMCEN We Want in 2063” is an AMCEN that is more agile, more influential, more financially self-reliant, more technologically adept, and more deeply integrated into the fabric of African development. It is an AMCEN that serves as the indispensable engine driving the environmental pillar of Agenda 2063, ensuring that Africa’s development is truly sustainable, inclusive, and resilient. Realizing this vision demands a renewed and unwavering collective commitment from African nations, international partners, and all stakeholders. It is a call to action for a new era of African environmental leadership, one that not only protects the continent’s invaluable natural heritage but also champions a new global paradigm for sustainable human-environment interaction, securing a prosperous and equitable future for generations to come.





Reflect.
Reimagine.
Rise.



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