



Distr.: General
31 July 2025

Original: English
English and French Only

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment Twentieth Session

Ministerial Segment
Nairobi, Kenya 16 and 17 July
2025

Decision AMCEN/20/Dec.6: Africa's participation at the fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat

We, the African Ministers of Environment,

Having met in Nairobi on 16 and 17 July 2025 at the twentieth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment,

Recalling the Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration, which underscores the urgent need for collective action to restore degraded ecosystems, especially wetlands and freshwater systems, threatened by pollution, unsustainable land use, invasive species, and climate change, and calls for bold, coordinated action to conserve, protect, manage and rehabilitate these critical natural assets,

Acknowledging that wetlands provide vital ecosystem goods and services, including flood control, freshwater provision and purification, biodiversity support, carbon sequestration, livelihood support, and cultural value, and their continued loss threatens species habitat, climate resilience, water security, biodiversity conservation, and the livelihoods of millions.,

Aware of the alarming rate of wetland degradation in Africa due to unchecked agricultural expansion, increasing urbanization, pollution, climate-induced water stress, inadequate management capacity, invasive alien species, and the over-harvesting of wetland resources, among others,

Underscoring the urgent need for coordinated action for the wise use of wetlands, restoration of degraded wetlands and strengthening their governance systems in accordance with the objectives of the African Union Agenda 2063, the African Union's Climate Change and Green Growth Strategy, and the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, 2023-2030,

Desirous of seizing the opportunities presented by the forthcoming fifteenth session of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as a Waterfowl Habitat under its theme, "Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future," scheduled to take place in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 23 to 31 July 2025, to elevate Africa's priorities on wetlands resources,

Decide:

1. To encourage member States to intensify efforts to halt any further degradation of wetlands, promote sustainable use, increase awareness and scientific research, address policy and institution gaps in wetland

- management and strengthen regional cooperation and synergies for transboundary wetlands management.
2. To encourage member states to actively participate in the forthcoming fifteenth session of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as a Waterfowl Habitat scheduled to take place in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 23 to 31 July 2025 to articulate Africa's priorities on wetlands resources, including the key policy messages annexed to this decision.
 3. To agree to speak with one coordinated African voice in the negotiations and outcomes of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as a Waterfowl Habitat, and in this regard agree to the key policy messages annexed to this decision.
 4. To agree to effectively support Zimbabwe's chairship of the Convention's Standing Committee for the period 2025 to 2028, and to ensure advancement of wise use of wetlands globally, while also strengthening Africa's wetlands management efforts and amplifying its voice in global wetland policy discussions.
 5. To establish the African group of negotiators on wetlands, to represent and coordinate African interests in engagements under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as a Waterfowl Habitat and under other forums of multilateral environmental agreements.
 6. To mandate the African group of negotiators on wetlands to develop operational modalities, including engagement mechanisms with relevant other Africa groups of negotiators.
 7. To encourage the African Development Bank, the Global Environment Facility, and the Green Climate Fund to collaborate with the Secretariat of the Convention in identifying and investing in opportunities for ecosystem-based restoration, nature-based solutions, low carbon investments, wise use, technical cooperation, knowledge exchange, and monitoring systems to support the implementation of national and transboundary wetlands restoration programmes and action plans across the continent.
 8. To request the United Nations Environment Programme, the African Development Bank, Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility and African Union Development Agency-NEPAD and other partners to collaborate with the Secretariat of the Convention to establish an African wetlands investment catalyst, with the aim of mobilising and de-risking public and private investments through blended finance, green and resilience bonds, and guarantee instruments.

Annex

African regional key policy messages on the fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat and Implementation of the Convention in Africa

- (a) We recognise the responsibility of all countries to establish and strengthen inter-ministerial Wetlands Committees that promote the integration of wetlands priorities into national development planning, climate adaptation frameworks, biodiversity strategies, and water security programmes.
- (b) We also recognise the need to strengthen national coordination by establishing or enhancing multi-ministerial Wetlands Committees that include representatives from environment, wildlife, forestry, water, agriculture, energy, culture, and finance sectors, honouring past institutional innovations and imagining new governance models for the future.
- (c) We acknowledge the role of indigenous and local knowledge systems in national wetlands governance and commit to promoting community engagement and public awareness through regional communication, education, participation and awareness campaigns; cultural heritage initiatives that celebrate the traditional values of wetlands; and the strengthening of the Africa Waterbird Count as a flagship regional initiative for science-policy cooperation.
- (d) We request the African group of negotiators on Wetlands to support the chairship of Zimbabwe in shaping the work programme and outcomes of the Convention's Standing Committee, and to provide regular updates to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment.
- (e) We call upon member States to strengthen regional initiatives, as coordination mechanism, to better implement the Convention especially through mobilisation of resources, education and awareness raising and harmonisation of policies.
- (f) We request the African Union Commission to convene ministerial roundtables during the thirty ninth Ordinary Session of the Africa Union Summit to elevate the profile of wetlands as critical assets for climate mitigation and adaptation, sustainable livelihoods, and cultural heritage, and to foster high-level political commitment for their protection and restoration.
- (g) We reaffirm that strategic partnerships with regional financial institutions, multilateral trust funds, and technical agencies are essential to mobilize predictable financing, spur innovation, and sustain progress over the next forty years.
- (h) We reaffirm the importance of ecosystem-based restoration of freshwater and coastal wetlands through the designation of regional flagship initiatives, river basin re-wetting, peatland restoration, and urban wetland greening, aligned with past restoration lessons and future ambitions.
- (i) We recognise the responsibility of all countries to review and revise national wetlands strategies, wetland inventories, policies and legislation in accordance with the Convention's obligations, incorporating fifteenth session of the Conference of Parties priorities such as peatland restoration and the resilience of urban wetlands. We further recognize the need to integrate wetlands priorities into nationally determined contributions, national biodiversity strategies and action plans, voluntary land degradation neutrality plans, and national climate and sustainable development frameworks.
- (j) We recognise the responsibility of all countries to submit national reports on progress towards the implementation of the fifth Strategic Plan of the Convention on Wetlands, including policy development, restoration initiatives, and financing mechanisms, to the Secretariat of the Convention, to support the Global Implementation Report of the Convention for submission to the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention.
- (k) We recall the important role of technological innovation, data-driven planning, and risk-informed decision-making through harmonised updates of Ramsar Information Sheets using relevant earth observation technologies, drone-based mapping technologies; deployment of citizen science tools and low-cost sensors

for real-time monitoring of wetland ecosystem health; and the development of risk-mapping protocols to identify areas of degradation, pollution, and hydrological threats.

- (l) We request the Convention's Secretariat, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme and the African Union Commission, to prepare and submit a consolidated report on wetlands in Africa, reflecting its contributions to the fifth Strategic Plan 2026–2031 of the Convention, and demonstrating alignment with continental priorities under Agenda 2063.
- (m) We reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the proposed Victoria Falls Declaration on Protecting Wetlands for our Common Future and request the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the African Union Commission to integrate the declaration's commitments into existing continental environmental strategies and programmes.

UNEDITED