



PRESS RELEASE

Celebrating 30 Years, High Level Segment of 15TH Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment Opens in Cairo

Continent to Define Vision for the Future on Climate, Investment in Natural Capital, Economic Transitions and Development as Deadlines for Culmination of Key Global Agreements Approaches

Presidential Audience for African Ministers and Top UN Environment Chief

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- New UN Studies show Climate Adaptation Cost for Africa Could Soar and Outlines Solutions, while Continent — including Egypt— Stands to Reap Billions, Create Jobs by Transitioning to Green Economy
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Cairo, 4 March 2015 – The high-level segment of the 15th Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) opened in Cairo, Wednesday, with delegations from 54 African nations in attendance as well as over 300 participants from around the continent representing policy makers, experts, civil society, businesses and major groups. Also attending the meeting are partner organizations, UN agencies and representatives from the donor community.

President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, H.E. Abdel Fattah El Sisi, received an AMCEN ministerial delegation and UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), Achim Steiner, hours ahead of the Opening of the Conference. Egypt presides over the 15th Session of the AMCEN for a period of two years, while UNEP acts as the Secretariat of the AMCEN.

The meeting comes at a crucial moment as the coming months will determine how Africa's development and climate change priorities are articulated and reflected in the context of global negotiations, including the UN Climate Change Conference, COP21 and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

This is the first time the meeting is held in Cairo – the birth place of the AMCEN – in thirty years since the inception of the Conference in 1985.

New AMCEN President, Dr. Khaled Fahmy, Minister of the Environment of Egypt, said, "Egypt is proud to host the 15th Session of the AMCEN in Cairo at this important moment in time. The continent stands to

determine its development priorities in the context of global negotiations. It is crucial for us to clearly define common priorities and the means to achieve our objectives at the regional and national levels.”

New UNEP studies, launched at the event, show that climate adaptation costs for Africa could soar to reach US \$50 billion annually by mid-century. The continent is looking at a combination of internal mechanisms supported by international cooperation to meet the cost and implement sound adaptation policies at the national and regional levels.

At the same time, Africa could reap billions of dollars and lower its carbon footprint through the transition to Green Economy. Case studies from 10 African countries will be presented, including Egypt, which the UN says could save over US \$2.4 Billion annually, Cut CO2 emissions by 13 per cent, water consumption by 40 per cent and create 8 million new Jobs if it adopts such a transition across diverse sectors.

UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director, said, “On the its 30th Anniversary, I extend my warmest congratulations to AMCEN and to Africa’s leadership for having ably steered environmental governance across the continent for the last three decades; inspiring action, pioneering reform and charting a durable path towards sustainability and better lives and livelihoods for all.”

“But there is still work to be done. We need to create the policies and mechanisms that will integrate natural capital valuation and ecosystem approaches in all aspects of decision making across diverse sectors, if we are to harness the full potential of Africa’s rich natural endowments and to employ the competitive advantage offered as an engine for inclusive and equitable economic growth,” he added.

One of the main objectives of the 15th Session of the AMCEN meeting is to provide a platform for African ministers of the environment to deliberate on how to harness Africa’s natural capital to help the region achieve sustainable development, create jobs for the increasing number of young people and contribute to the eradication of poverty.

The meeting will also offer an opportunity to deliberate on substantive follow up actions related to the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), which took place in June 2014 in Nairobi.

Deliberations will take place on priorities including: the post 2015 development agenda and the proposed sustainable development goals; the illegal trade in wildlife and timber; and a roadmap that define what is at stake for Africa in preparation for the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which will be held in Paris, later this year, and which aim at forging an ambitious international agreement on climate change.

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