

***Fifteenth Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the
Environment (AMCEN)***

Dr. Khaled Fahmy
Minister of Environment
Egypt

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**Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen**

1. Let me begin by welcoming you to Cairo, Egypt and more importantly to this 15th session of AMCEN. As the host of this important meeting, we have put at your disposal, all the necessary facilities, which no doubt, we believe will contribute immensely to the success of this meeting.
2. May I also thank you all the experts, negotiators, partners as well as other participants from the civil society for sparing time, out of your busy schedules to join us here in Cairo for the 15th session of AMCEN.
3. Our focus during this week will be to deliberate on how to manage and sustainably use our natural capital, taking into consideration the region's diverse biodiversity and ecosystems and how this could help the region to achieve sustainable development and contribute to the eradication of poverty.
4. The issue of climate change remains on top of our agenda this year and we need to be ready as we prepare for COP21 in Paris, which will be a defining moment in the climate change negotiation process. And we must not forget that in September, the UN General assembly is expected to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals (SDGs). And these issues are part of our agenda this week.

Ladies and gentlemen,

5. I am aware that there are other pertinent environment and sustainable development issues that we must also address during our deliberations. Biodiversity, as you know is important for our continent but continues to be lost at alarming rates. Enhancing the implementation and effectiveness of environmental law in Africa and issues related to coastal and marine ecosystems are among other critical topics before us.
6. For the last two days, there have been pre-session meetings looking at the issue of green economy and the Africa Ecological Futures as well as discussions by the civil society. I had the opportunity of participating in the green economy workshop where participants discussed and shared experiences and lessons learned in bringing a green economy focus and policies into the medium-/long-term development plans of our countries.
7. On the other hand, the Africa Ecological Futures scenario workshop considered how best to reconcile and integrate the preservation of ecological resources with the rapid development being witnessed in the region. My friends from the civil society, of whom I was associated with for a long time, yesterday looked at most of the issues on the AMCEN agenda. All these pre-sessions have been organized with the view to providing inputs during your expert group discussions.
8. I am informed that several working documents have been prepared by the AMCEN Secretariat for consideration by this expert group meeting and will form the basis for your discussions. These working documents are not only inspired by the challenges and problems facing the region, but also the opportunities that we should explore and the need for

AMCEN to play more effectively its leadership role on the environment in Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen,

9. I believe, as experts you are ready to do what must be done to ensure a better environment for the region and this is precisely your mission here for the next few days. It may not be easy, but I believe that your commitment to the environmental cause will guide your deliberations and that the recommendations you make to the Ministers will bear the fruits you want for the region, and that is, a better environment.

10. I and my team as the host of this session, together with the AMCEN Secretariat, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and other partners stand ready to assist and facilitate you as you ponder on your related decisions and actions to better meet the environmental and sustainable development challenges and opportunities in Africa.

11. With those few remarks, I would like to wish you fruitful discussions over the next three days. I therefore declare this expert group meeting of the 15th session of AMCEN officially open.

I thank you all.