

## **African Ministers Adopt a Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan for the Marine and Coastal Environment of West, Central and Southern Africa**

### ***The 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the Abidjan Convention takes bold decisions to revitalize the Convention***

**Accra (Ghana)/Nairobi (Kenya), 03 April 2011**—Ministers and Government delegates from 19 of the 22 countries sharing the West, Central and Southern African coast of the Atlantic Ocean have committed to effectively protect the Marine and Coastal environment from oil spills emanating from offshore and coastal oil exploration and exploitation.

The decision is one of the major outcomes of five day the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention for Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central and Southern African Region (known as Abidjan Convention), which was organized by UNEP, in close collaboration with the Government of Ghana from 28 March April 2011 in Accra, with financial support from the Abidjan Convention Trust Funds, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) the European Union and the African Union Commission through its EU funded ACP-MEAs Project.

Parties have agreed to create of a regional center for cooperation in case of emergency and develop a regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan that will complement national plans and allow countries to report without delay any event involving a discharge or probable discharge of oil. Countries are urged to cooperate among themselves in exchanging information on combating oil pollution and in facilitating prompt assistance in the event of a major oil pollution incident.

Governments will, as a priority, build national capacity in oil and gas development to manage the sector, adopt appropriate national policies, and conduct strategic environmental and social impact Assessments. They have also decided to enact national legislation to address liability, compensation, safety and security-related matters for offshore platforms.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties was the first meeting organized after the adoption of the Convention revitalization plan at the first Meeting of the Parties which took place in 2008 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Abidjan Convention approved a total of sixteen decisions which will lead to the reactivation of this inter-Governmental Marine Agreement and confirm the role of the Convention as the umbrella organization for marine and coastal activities in the region with a central role in the marine and coastal environmental governance debate in the region.

COP9 approved the 2012-2015 programme of work and budget for the 2011-2012 biennium. It is worth noting that the Parties also agreed to pay their contributions and arrears to the Abidjan Convention Trust Fund, now increased by 3% of the current level of contributions.

COP9 also endorsed the creation of an *ad hoc* “Committee on Science and Technology” to provide scientific, technical and technological advice, relating to the implementation of the Convention. In this regard, the Secretariat of the Convention was requested to make appropriate recommendations including a focused and budgeted two-year Work Plan for the Committee following a result-based approach for consideration by the Contracting Parties at their next conference.

Parties also agreed to submit the Draft Protocol concerning Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment from Land-based Sources and Activities (LBSA) in the Western, Central and Southern African Region for internal review and approval by countries to enable its adoption at the conference of plenipotentiaries to be organized by the end of 2011.

COP9 called for the operationalization of Articles 10 and 11 of the Convention dealing with coastal erosion and marine protected areas respectively. The Conference agreed to initiate the development of a Marine Protected Areas Protocol for the effective implementation these articles in line with the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, to which all Parties to the Abidjan Convention have adhered.

With regards to the governance of the Convention, the COP requested UNEP to study ways and means for the transformation of the Regional Coordination Unit into an Executive Secretariat for consideration at the next Conference of the Parties that will take place in Congo in 2012.

**Note to Editors:**

The Convention for the Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central and Southern African Region (Abidjan Convention) is one of the African regional Seas conventions administered by UNEP.

The COP9 of the Abidjan Convention brought together 19 of the 22 countries bordering the Atlantic coast of Africa along with several organizations that are active in the field of marine and coastal environment in the region. These include UNDP, IMO, FAO, UNEP, UNIDO, IUCN, WWF, FIBA, PRCM and regional organizations such as the Africa Union Commission, the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Commission of Central Africa States (ECCAS).

The Decisions and full report of the COP9 of the Abidjan Convention will be available soon on:  
<http://www.unep.org/abidjanconvention/>

**For more information, please contact**

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**The Abidjan Convention**

The Convention for Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central and Southern African Region (also known as the Abidjan Convention), and its protocol concerning cooperating in combating pollution in cases of emergency -came into force in 1984. The area is endowed with abundant fish and petroleum resources, and it covers the 22 coastal states on the West Africa side of the Atlantic Ocean from Mauritania to South Africa.-

It is a comprehensive umbrella agreement for the protection and management of the marine and coastal area, and aims to address -pollution, - from ships, dumping, land-based sources, exploration and exploitation of the sea-bed, and pollution from or through the atmosphere. It also makes provision for liability and compensation in case of pollution.

The Convention is the basis for co-operative efforts to address other issues such as --overfishing, control of the fish stocks, coastal-based tourism, coastal erosion, specially protected areas, and environmental impact assessment in the region.