

UNITED
NATIONS

EP



United Nations
Environment
Programme



ADVANCED COPY
NOT TO BE CITED

SPECIAL SESSION OF MEETING OF THE AFRICAN
MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT
Maputo, 9-10 June 2003

BACKGROUND INFORMATION NOTE (synopsis)
Draft Action Plan of the Environmental Initiative of NEPAD

BACKGROUND INFORMATION NOTE (synopsis)
Draft Action Plan of the Environmental Initiative of NEPAD

At the beginning of the new millennium Africa is characterized by two interrelated features: rising poverty levels and deepening environmental degradation. Africa has a wealth of natural resources, including minerals, land, biological diversity, wildlife, forests, fisheries, and water. It has the largest tropical rain forests and the second largest freshwater lake in the world.

The region offers significant potential for human, social and economic development but is facing enormous challenges. Rapid population growth, rising levels of poverty and inappropriate development practices are the main factors influencing the state of the environment in Africa. Other factors that have led to continued environmental degradation include the impact of drought and other natural disasters, disease, ineffective development policies, unfavorable terms of international trade and the debt burden.

In adopting the United Nations Millennium Declaration in New York in September 2000, the Heads of States representing the international community, committed themselves to “support the consolidation of democracy in Africa and assist Africans in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development, thereby bringing Africa into the mainstream of the world economy”. More specifically they agreed to “take special measures to address the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development in Africa, including debt cancellation, improved market access, enhanced Official Development Assistance and increased flows of Foreign Direct Investment, as well as transfers of technology.”

The New Partnership for Africa's Development adopted by the African Heads of State and Government is an initiative in which the leaders pledged “based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction, that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development, and at the same time to participate actively in the world economy and body politic.” NEPAD recognizes that the range of issues necessary to nurture the region's environmental base and sustainable use of natural resources is vast and complex, and that a systematic combination of initiatives is necessary in order to develop a coherent environmental programme.

The New Partnership for Africa's development recommends the development and adoption of an environment initiative - a coherent action plan and strategies - to address the region's environmental challenges while at the same time combating poverty and promoting socio-economic development. This Environmental Action Plan for the first decade of the 21st century is a response to address such challenges. It is prepared through a consultative and participatory process under the leadership of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN).

The plan is about Africa's common and shared sustainable development problems and concerns. It is a body of collective and individual responsibilities and actions that African countries adopt and will implement to maintain the integrity of the environment and ensure the sustainable use of their natural resources through partnerships with the international community. It provides an appropriate framework for the establishment of a strong partnership for the protection of the environment between Africa and its partners based on the commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 26 August to 4 September 2002 provides that "The New Partnership for Africa's Development is a commitment by African leaders to the people of Africa. It recognizes that partnerships among African countries themselves and between them and with the international community are key elements of a shared and common vision to eradicate poverty, and furthermore it aims to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustained economic growth and sustainable development, while participating actively in the world economy and body politic. It provides a framework for sustainable development on the continent to be shared by all Africa's people". The Johannesburg Plan of Action contains 47 recommendations aimed at ensuring the promotion of sustainable development in Africa in the framework of NEPAD.

Under the leadership of AMCEN and in close cooperation with the Secretariat of NEPAD and the African Union as well as the support of UNEP and the Global Environment Facility, the Action Plan for the Environment Initiative of the New Partnership For Africa's Development has been prepared in two phases; namely (i) A Framework of an Action Plan of the UNEP/GEF Medium sized Project; and (ii) the conduct of the eight thematic workshops to finalize the Action plan.

The reports of the eight thematic workshops as well as the revised Action Plan were reviewed by the Steering Committee held in Maputo, Mozambique on 23-24 April 2003 at the level of Experts. The Action Plan is being submitted to the special session of AMCEN to be held in Maputo, Mozambique from 9-10 June.

ENVIRONMENT ACTION PLAN FOR THE FIRST DECADE OF THE 21ST CENTURY

A coherent, strategic and long-term programme of action is required to promote Africa's sustainable development. This is explicit in NEPAD's emphasis about measures that will ensure that the continent is able to confront its short-term economic growth challenges without losing site of the long-run environmental, poverty eradication and social development imperatives. Sustainable development is about the long-term. It can only be achieved through investments in the future. Thus the proposed NEPAD environment programme of action takes a long-term approach. It is about processes, projects and

related activities that are aimed at enlarging Africa's economic prospects through sustained environmental management.

The proposed action plan is integrated in the sense that it takes full consideration of economic growth, income distribution, poverty eradication, social equity and better governance as part and parcel of Africa's environmental sustainability agenda. Chapter 8 of NEPAD on the Environment Initiative cannot be implemented in isolation from the overall objectives of NEPAD. It will be implemented in harmony with the other components of NEPAD.

The Action Plan takes fully into account the relevant recommendations on NEPAD contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation adopted by the World Summit of Sustainable Development as well as the recommendations agreed upon during the discussion on the environment component of NEPAD held in Nairobi on 5th February 2003 at the Global Ministerial Environment Forum . The Action plan is organized in clusters of programmatic and project activities to be implemented over an initial period of ten years.

The programmatic areas cover the following priority sectors and cross-cutting issues as identified in Environment Initiative of NEPAD: Combating land degradation, drought and desertification; Wetlands; Invasive species; Marine and coastal resources; Cross-border conservation of natural resources; climate change; and, Cross-cutting issues. The action is building upon the related problems of pollution, forests and plant genetic resources, wetlands, invasive alien species, coastal and marine resources, capacity building and technology transfer.

Projects listed under the programmatic areas and their number(in brackets) are categorised as follows:

1. *Combating land degradation* :**Arab Maghreb Union** (14); **CILSS/ECOWAS** (32); **ECCAS Region** (9); **IGAD Region** (14); and **SADC Region** (18).
2. *Conserving Africa's wetlands* (9).
3. *Prevention, Control and Management of Invasive Alien Species* (14).
4. *Conservation and sustainable use of marine, coastal and freshwater resources* (42).
5. *Combating climate change in Africa*: **ongoing** (7); **proposed** (7); and **energy** (20).
6. *Cross-border Natural Resource Management*: **forests** (8).
7. *Cross-cutting Issues*: **health and environment –existing projects** (14), **proposed projects** (8); **waste management** (5); **support infrastructure** (3); **sustainable production and consumption** (6); **networking and information dissemination** (3); **atmospheric pollution** (3).
8. *Poverty and Environment* (11).

A Steering Committee Meeting held in Maputo from 23-24 April, 2003 reviewed the draft action plan of the environment initiative of NEPAD. Notable among the achievements at this meeting was the prioritisation of the projects (as category 1 and others) under the programme areas. The special session of AMCEN to be held from 9-10 June,2003 will, inter alia, consider the document with the view to endorsing the draft

action plan of the environment initiative of NEPAD and submitting it to the Summit of African Union scheduled to be held in early July 2003. Furthermore, the endorsed draft action plan of the environment initiative of NEPAD will be the subject of a Donors Conference in December 2003 which the Algerian Government has graciously agreed to host in Algiers.