

**First Inter-Ministerial Conference on Health and Conference in Africa**  
**Health Security through Healthy Environments**

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**ADVANCE COPY**  
**LIBREVILLE DECLARATION ON HEALTH AND**  
**ENVIRONMENT IN AFRICA**

We, African ministers responsible for health and the environment, meeting from 28 to 29 August 2008 in Libreville, Gabon:

*Reaffirming* our commitment to implement all conventions and declarations that bear on health and environment linkages, in particular the:

- Stockholm Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (1972);
- Alma-Ata Declaration on primary health care (1978);
- Bamako Convention on hazardous wastes (1991);
- Declaration of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro (1992);
- Millennium Declaration and the subsequent Millennium Development Goals (2000);
- Johannesburg Plan of Implementation adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002);
- Health Strategy of the African Union (2007);
- Algiers Declaration on desertification (2006);
- Algiers Declaration on health research in Africa (2008);
- Ouagadougou Declaration on primary health care and health systems (2008);
- The Ethekwini Declaration on hygiene and sanitation (2008);
- Bali Declaration on waste management for human health and livelihood (2008);

*Concerned that:*

- Over 23% of deaths in Africa, estimated at more than 2.4 million each year, are attributable to avoidable environmental risk factors, with particular impacts on the poorest and the most vulnerable groups (children, women, rural poor, people with disabilities, displaced populations and the elderly);
- 60% of the vital ecosystem services of the planet are being degraded, or are being subjected to excessive pressures, and that it is these services that maintain the quality of air, land and water resources;
- The Bamako Convention on hazardous wastes adopted in 1991 is not being implemented;
- Africa is increasingly being affected by natural disasters caused by climate change.

*Recognizing that:*

- There is a need for further research to increase understanding of the vulnerability of humans to environmental risk factors, particularly in Africa;

- It is necessary and urgent to implement in our countries the imperative of sustainable development in efforts to achieve economic growth;
- There are constraints on accelerated implementation of the necessary integrated strategies to protect populations against risks resulting from environmental degradation, including risks related to unsafe water supply, sanitation, air quality, vector-borne diseases, chemicals, waste management, new toxic substances, desertification, industrial and domestic risks, and natural disasters.

*Convinced that:*

- The emergence of new environmental risks (e.g. climate change, industrial expansion, and new technologies) presents new threats to public health;
- Africa is, of all the world's geographic regions, the most vulnerable in the face of these challenges;
- Well-managed health and environmental risks impact positively on national economies, including through increased foreign direct investments and tourism;
- The involvement and commitment of all actors is necessary for concerted and coherent action;
- Health security can be achieved through a healthy environment.

Therefore *declare* that we African countries commit ourselves to:

1. Establishing a health-and-environment strategic alliance, as the basis for plans of joint action;
2. Developing or updating our national, subregional and regional frameworks in order to address more effectively the issue of environmental impacts on health, through integration of these links in policies, strategies, regulations and national development plans;
3. Ensuring integration of agreed objectives in the areas of health and environment in national poverty reduction strategies by implementing priority intersectoral programmes at all levels, aimed at accelerating achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;
4. Building national, subregional and regional capacities to better prevent environment-related health problems, through the establishment or strengthening of health and environment institutions;
5. Supporting knowledge acquisition and management on health and environment, particularly through applied research at local, subregional and regional levels, while ensuring coordination of scientific and technical publications so as to identify knowledge gaps and research priorities and to support education and training at all levels;
6. Establishing or strengthening systems for health and environment surveillance to allow measurement of interlinked health and environment impacts and to identify emerging risks, in order to manage them better;
7. Implementing effectively national, subregional and regional mechanisms for enforcing compliance with international conventions and national regulations to protect populations from health threats related to the environment, including accession to and implementation of the Bamako Convention by those countries that have not done so;

8. Setting up national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess performance in implementing priority programmes and peer review mechanisms to learn from each other's experience;
9. Instituting the practice of systematic assessment of health and environment risks, in particular through the development of procedures to assess impacts on health, and to produce national environment outlook reports;
10. Developing partnerships for targeted and specific advocacy on health and environment issues towards institutions and communities including the youth, parliamentarians, local government, education ministries, civil society and the private sector;
11. Achieving a balance in the allocation of national budgetary resources for intersectoral health-and-environment programmes.

*Call upon:*

The World Health Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme to:

1. Support, along with other partners and donors, including the African development banks and African subregional economic communities, the implementation of this Declaration, and to increase their efforts in advocacy, in resource mobilization and in obtaining new and additional investments in order to strengthen the strategic alliance between health and environment;
2. Help African countries in sharing experiences, developing capacity, and establishing a mechanism to monitor progress towards the fulfillment of the commitments made at this Conference, through peer review, and to organize a second Inter-Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Africa before the end of 2010, and
3. Support the implementation of health and environment conventions and agreements and the establishment of an African network for surveillance of communicable and non-communicable diseases, in particular those with environment determinants.

We call on his Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon, host country, to present this declaration to the African Union.

Signed in Libreville; 29 August 2008.