

47273



Distr.: LIMITED

E/ECA/CAMSDE/CE/4
15 January 1996

Original: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

First Conference of African Ministers
responsible for Sustainable
Development and the Environment

Meeting of the Committee of Experts

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
4 - 7 March 1996

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

First Conference of African Ministers
responsible for Sustainable
Development and the Environment

Ministerial meeting

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
8 - 9 March 1996

**FACING THE CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND
ENVIRONMENT IN AFRICA:**

ISSUES PAPER

I: GENERAL SETTING

1. Most societies want to achieve economic development in order to secure higher standards of living, now and for future generations. They also seek to protect and enhance their environment to achieve these goals. Sustainable development, therefore, tries to reconcile these two objectives. As it involves the complex interaction of social, economic, institutional and environmental factors, policies for sustainable development must reflect and incorporate these interactive forces if they are to be meaningful, reliable and implementable.
2. Introduced by the World Commission on Environment and Development in its report, the concept of environment and sustainable development was crystallized in the process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and programmed in Agenda 21. It is now accepted that the conventional approaches to economic growth and development do not take into account the impact of that growth on the environment and the loss of some natural resources.¹
3. Sustainable development depends on a rational combination of the outputs from the activities of the key economic sectors to achieve social and economic development; in other words a progressively higher standard of living. This implies a cross-departmental/ministerial approach to programme formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Opportunity must be given to these actors to discuss a common strategy for this rational combination of the outputs from the activities of the key economic sectors to achieve these goals.
4. For governments to achieve these development goals, it is necessary to start with an understanding of what economic development and sustainability implies. This understanding is important because conventional measures of economic growth do not take into account the impact of that growth on the environment and the loss of some natural resources.
5. The Conferences of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment (CAMSDE) is the forum for this inter-Ministerial dialogue. Its aim is to bring together all the key cross-sectoral actors at the national level to deliberate on regional sustainable development programmes in the spirit of UNCED.
6. It is in this light that by resolution 757 (XXVIII) of 4 May 1993, the ECA Conference of Ministers restructured the intergovernmental machinery of the Commission. Among the thematic Conferences of African Ministers was the Conference of Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment (CAMSDE). A committee of experts was also created for the Conference. The Conference's mandate falls within the purview of the implementation of Agenda 21. It is to promote environment and sustainable development strategies and programmes based on the interrelationship between agriculture with emphasis on food supply, rural development and water resources, population, the environment and human settlements.
7. The Conference convenes its first session under the theme: "Facing the challenges of sustainable development and environment in Africa".
8. Also resolution 757(XXVIII) dissolved the Joint Regional Intergovernmental Committee on Environment and Human Settlements and the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and had their mandates absorbed by the new organ. In other words, while this resolution can be implemented with regard to the former, it is not possible with the latter.

¹ / Our Common Future: the report of the World Commission on Environment And Development, (1987)

9. It will be recalled that the Joint Regional Intergovernmental Committee on Environment and Human Settlements was established by resolution 408(XVI) of 1981. Its mandate was to:

(a) formulate policies, priorities and strategies for regional, subregional and transnational environmental management in the African region;

(b) promote the exchange of information and experience on national environmental policies, legislation, programme and problems;

(c) review the work programme and priorities on the environment in the Commission, appraisal of progress made in their implementation and assistance in mobilizing financial and other resources for programming in priority environmental areas in the African region;

(d) assist in assembling information on national environmental problems for the preparation of the state of the environment report on the African region;

(e) promote programmes on environmental education for the public through the mass media and for the training of nationals as specialists to monitor, assess, manage and carry out research on environmental problems; and

(f) promote close inter-organizational cooperation on environmental matters between the Commission and the United Nations Environment Programme, and all other United Nations intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations working within and outside the African region.

10. The Joint Committee met every two years at the Ministerial level to review the activities of the Commission on the environment and human settlements. Related recommendations were then made to the ECA Conference of Ministers responsible for Economic Development and Planning.

11. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), on the other hand, was an initiative of UNEP in response to the severe droughts of 1982-1985. These droughts added up to be a major contributor to the economic crisis. In close collaboration with ECA and the OAU, it was established in 1985. UNEP Regional Office for Africa, the ECA and the OAU have been serving as its Joint Secretariat which is based in the UNEP Regional Office for Africa.

12. At the request of its African members the UNEP Governing Council, in May 1983 invited the Governments of Africa to convene an African Environmental Conference to discuss national environmental priorities to identify common problems worthy of a Regional Programme of Action to address them. In preparation for the Conference, UNEP, in cooperation with OAU and ECA and in consultation with other UN agencies and African Governments, organized six subregional meetings of African experts that identified the major environmental problems in each subregion.

13. The first session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in December 1985, adopted the Cairo Programme aimed at mobilizing national, subregional and regional cooperation on the environment. The Programme comprised of organizational and operational aspects. The former aimed at mobilizing available national and international capabilities towards the effective implementation and follow-up of the programme.

14. The institutionalization of the Conference was meant to ensure that African governments and participating agencies would effectively keep track on development of the programme. Its Bureau, Secretariat, Networks and Committees were expected to facilitate co-ordination and cohesion highly necessary in a Programme of this magnitude. With the above expected co-ordination machinery, it was expected that effective assessment and monitoring would be possible.

15. With this arrangement, the Programme was, therefore, expected to provide a sound approach to development because it coherently links sustainable natural resources utilization, broad environmental protection, and economic development issues with locally available resources. It was also expected that since Donor countries have specific areas of interest, their support would be attracted because the Programme consists of a variety of components. Thus, the Programme components offered a wide choice to the international community to assist.

16. Since 1990 a series of reviews was carried out to assess and address the problems that have faced the Conference since its institutionalization in 1985. These reviews revealed the need for a renewed political commitment.² The Session came out with a revitalized conference to respond, through a refocused programme, to the environment and sustainable development challenges of the region.

17. Under the new policy orientation, AMCEN is expected to provide leadership and guidance in respect of major African environmental issues and programmes. This includes the initiatives envisaged within the framework of the African Common Position and the African Strategies for Agenda 21. This is fundamental if concerted and harmonized programme is to be achieved for the region. It is expected that this political and policy orientation will be the guiding instruments for the programmes of African intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as well as other agencies active in the region.

18. AMCEN is called upon by the new policy orientation to provide leadership and guidance in respect of major African environmental issues programmes, including the initiatives envisaged within the framework of the African Common Position and Agenda 21.

19. It can now be seen that, while the mandate of the Joint Regional Intergovernmental Committee on Environment and Human Settlements could easily be absorbed by the new Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Development and Environment, the situation is different for AMCEN. AMCEN was not established by the ECA conference of Ministers. As an initiative of UNEP, it features regularly on the agenda of the UNEP Governing Council and its programme budget. To implement resolution 757 (XXVIII) of 4 May 1993, consultations should be held with AMCEN to decide on the modus operandi. Furthermore, the mandate of the new Conference of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment cuts across those of other existing legislative bodies on agriculture, water resources and population.

20. By implementing programmes in these cross-sectoral areas, major steps would have been taken towards poverty eradication and promoting sound environmental management for sustainable development. The issue of interrelations, the recognition of which will facilitate integrated programme development and implementation, particularly at the national level, becomes of paramount importance.

II. OPERATIONALIZING THE CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT (CAMSDE)

21. Institutionalized in the wake of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the establishment of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), the Conference of Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment is to be seen as Africa's regional arm of the Commission on Sustainable Development in the implementation of Agenda 21 in Africa.

² The latest review was in November 1993.

22. Operationalizing CAMSDE falls within the context of the various efforts by African countries to promote regional cooperation among themselves as enshrined in the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). It underscores the need to pool their resources in order to achieve regional economic and political integration. In this way they will participate more effectively and be more competitive in the international setting. These ideas are underscored in the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community and explicit in the Cairo Agenda for Action for relaunching Africa's Economic and Social Development.³

A. The Conference and its terms of reference

23. Consistent with the activities of AMCEN and, by implication the UNEP Governing Council, the Conference of Ministers responsible for Social and Economic Development and Planning and the CSD, the Conference should act as the "African Commission on Sustainable Development." It will review, among other things, sustainable developmental issues, the status of the implementation of the regional aspects of Agenda 21 and will provide comprehensive reports to the CSD. In that capacity and within the framework of the African Strategies for Agenda 21, it will:

- (a) monitor progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and activities related to the integration of environmental and developmental goals in the region through analysis and evaluation of reports from all relevant organs, organizations, programmes and institutions of the United Nations system dealing with various issues of environment and development in Africa;
- (b) consider information provided by Governments on the activities they undertake to implement Agenda 21, the problems they face, such as problems related to financial resources and technology transfer, and other environment and development issues they find relevant;
- (c) receive and analyze relevant input from competent non-governmental organizations, including the scientific and the private sector, in the context of the overall implementation of Agenda 21;
- (d) enhance the dialogue within the framework of the regional intergovernmental institutions, non-governmental organizations and the independent sector as well as other entities outside the United Nations system;
- (e) consider, where appropriate, information regarding the progress made in the implementation of environmental conventions which could be made available by the relevant Convention Conferences;
- (f) provide appropriate recommendations to the UN General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the basis of an integrated consideration of the reports and issues related to the implementation of Agenda 21; and
- (g) consider, or request the Ministerial Follow-up Committee to do so, the reports and other studies conducted by the UNECA on sustainable development as well as the environmental dimensions.

³ / See OAU document ECM/2(XVII) Rev.4 (28 March 1995).

B. Institutional relationships

24. The CAMSDE is a broad-based inter-ministerial review and policy guiding legislative body. It is, therefore, important that there be a clear understanding of the relationships and processes dealing with the interaction between its constituent bodies from the national to the regional levels. Being one of the legislative organs of the ECA, it must relate to the major regional developmental intergovernmental organizations. This should be reflected in mandates of these organizations.

25. The relationship with the other bodies should be worked out to achieve maximum benefits from its multi-sectoral nature. It should provide policy guidance on the multi-sectoral approach to sustainable development programme formulation and implementation. It should also facilitate interaction between the ECA Conference of Ministers responsible for Social and Economic Development and Planning, the OAU Council of Ministers and the OAU Summit, AMCEN and, by implication, the UNEP Governing Council.

26. As a multi-sectoral Conference, the CAMSDE should have mandates that will promote the harmonization of activities in the sectors it covers. Its institutional linkages should facilitate the sharing of responsibilities in the effort to achieve sustainable development in the region. Its relationship with the major regional intergovernmental institutions of the United Nations system must be clear. These regional bodies include the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Commission for Africa, the UNEP Regional Office for Africa and the African Development Bank.

27. Working in concert, these intergovernmental bodies must be complementary as they are composed of the same governments joining efforts to address, at the regional as well as the global level, the same developmental problems. The Conference should therefore relate with the others as follows:

(i) ECA Conference on Ministers responsible for Social and Economic Development and Planning

28. The recommendations of CAMSDE should be used as guidelines for programme decisions by the Conference of Ministers responsible for Economic Development and Planning and the UNEP Governing Council. For decisions and positions of a political nature, the OAU Council of Ministers and the Summit would provide the forum. It would further endorse the Africa regional report to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. Details of these processes are outlined in the draft Conference mandates and rule of procedure.

(ii) African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN)

29. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) focuses its activities on the implementation of the regional aspects of Agenda 21 on environment and sustainable development. It will, therefore, be a key player in the CAMSDE. It is understood that the national coordinating mechanisms established under AMCEN will continue to function as before. The CAMSDE will, therefore, be drawing on AMCEN's national focal points.

30. The review of the programme activities and budget are an integral part of the agenda of the Governing Council of UNEP. It goes without saying that AMCEN's relationship with the CAMSDE will enrich its participation in the deliberations of the Governing Council. CAMSDE will, by implications, have access to this global body through AMCEN as its arm. This will be of particular benefit to the environment and sustainable development programmes of the region as regards the global mobilization of resources and joint programme implementation.

(iii) OAU Economic and Social Council, Council of Ministers and Summit

31. The fact that the OAU is a member of the Joint UNEP-ROA/ECA/OAU Secretariat of AMCEN, simplifies the linkages between the CAMSDE and the regional intergovernmental bodies of the OAU. Preparations for the Conference should be done in consultation with the ESCAS and EDECO Divisions of the OAU Secretariat. As the need arises, they should bring the conclusions of the Conference to the relevant legislative bodies of the OAU.

32. This will ensure that matters which the Conference would like to bring to the attention of the Summit for it to note or give guidance on, can be done with the ECA and OAU Secretariats working together during the discussions at sessions of CAMSDE on the relevant agenda items.

(iv) United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

33. The CAMSDE will be the region's channel to the CSD on matters of common consensus and its regional focal point. In this light it provides the general framework of discussion and approach to the deliberations of the CSD on matters of particular interest to Africa. Fulfilling this role should be greatly facilitated by its interactions with the other IGOs referred to above.

34. Between sessions of the CAMSDE, AMCEN will perform these functions with the CSD. In other words, since CAMSDE meets every four years and AMCEN biennially, the President of AMCEN will follow-up the decisions of CAMSDE at the sessions of the CSD.

III. WORK OF THE FIRST SESSION

35. As earlier pointed out, the theme of this first Conference which seeks to address the issues involved in "Facing the challenges of sustainable development and environment in Africa" will underscore the intimate interrelations between the sectors of its mandate in promoting sustainable development in the region. Orientations on the different priority areas contained in the African Strategies for Agenda 21 as enhanced by the AMCEN new policy orientation will provide the guidelines for the deliberations of the Session.

36. It will be recalled that in adopting the African Strategies for Agenda 21 the Conference of Ministers responsible for Social and Economic Development and Planning emphasized the need to intensify activities to address the problems of eradicating poverty through sustainable development. They highlighted the priority problem areas of each of the major sectors, the development objectives of the sector and a programme of action for their realization.

37. Two sets of documents will be discussed.

(i) Institutional documents: Terms of reference and rules of procedure

38. The Conference shall adopt its terms of reference consistent with the resolution establishing it and the institutional relationships outlined above. It will also adopt the rules of procedure for its deliberations.

(ii) Programme related document will include:

(a) Progress made in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes in Africa.

(b) Promotion of non-conventional food as a sustained source of food for the poor vulnerable populations.

- (c) Measures to provide conservation of edifice closed forests and biodiversity under sustainable criteria in selected coastal African countries.
- (d)
 - (i) An assessment of the implementation of Agenda 21 within the framework of the African Common Position and guidelines for in-depth reviews;
 - (ii) Implementation of Agenda 21 in Africa: Guidelines for monitoring the progress made in building critical management capacities for sustainable development; and
 - (iii) Report on the implementation of the Environment and Development in Africa programme of work, 1994-1995.
- (e) Implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development.
- (f) Formulation and implementation of human settlement policies towards mitigating rural/urban imbalances in African countries.
- (g) Implementation of the plan of action contained in the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000.

39. Recommendations and related programmes that will promote and enhance the effective implementation of activities in those areas will be made for the attention and necessary action by the ECA Conference of Ministers. It is hoped that, with this exercise, the cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary research and development activities for achieving sustainable development would be encouraged.

40. The Conference will also adopt resolutions as the need arises and adopt is calendar of meetings.