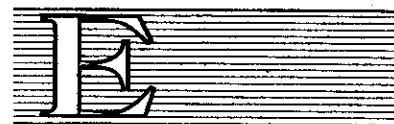




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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

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

Conference of Ministers

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
8-9 March 1996

**REPORT OF THE
FIRST CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS
RESPONSIBLE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Table of Contents

	Page
A. Attendance and Organization of Work.....	1
B. Agenda.....	2
C. Account of Proceedings.....	3
Opening addresses	3
Consideration of the report of the meeting of the Committee of Experts including their recommendations.....	6
Statements by Heads of Delegations.....	7
Any other matters	7
Dates and venue of the second session.....	8
Adoption of the report of the first session.....	8
Closing of the session	8
Resolutions adopted by the First Conference of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and the Environment.....	9
Resolution on the Justification and Scope of Action of CAMSDE.....	10
Resolution on the Implementation of Agenda. 21.....	11
Resolution on Human Settlements.....	13
Resolution on Assistance to African countries of Asylum experiencing Environmental Degradation being caused by the Influx of Refugees.	14
 Annex I - Report of the First meeting of the Committee of Experts	
 Annex II - List of Participants	

**FIRST CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

A. Attendance and organization of work

1. The first session of the Conference of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and the Environment (CAMSDE) was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 8 to 9 March 1996. The meeting was formally opened by H.E. Dr. Teketel Forssido, Minister of Agriculture of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. H.E. Ambassador Pascal Gayama, Assistant Secretary-General, gave an address on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa also delivered a statement at the opening ceremony of the meeting.
2. The meeting was attended by the following member States of the Commission: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tchad, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
3. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were represented: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Telecommunications Union (ITU), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), UNSO/UNDP, World Health Organization (WHO) and World Food Programme (WFP).
4. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was represented.
5. Observers from the following member States of the United Nations were present: Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Finland, France, India, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation and the United States of America.
6. Observers were present from the following intergovernmental organizations: African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD) and Arab League Mission to OAU.
7. An observer was also present from a non-governmental organization: Hope for Women.

8. The Conference elected the following officers:

Chairman:	Senegal
First Vice-Chairman:	Egypt
Second Vice-Chairman:	Ethiopia
Third Vice-Chairman:	Rwanda
Rapporteur:	Malawi

9. Since the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment holds its sessions every four years, resolution 757 makes provision for a Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Fifteen which will meet every two years to monitor the implementation of the decisions of the Conference. It may also include in its agenda any other items of emerging issues that are related to the theme of the Conference.

10. It is the tradition that such regional committees have a subregional representation as is the case with the Bureau of the Conference and West Africa usually has one more than the others and two more than North Africa. Following that criterion, the subregional distribution for the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Fifteen of the Conference was proposed, and the Conference agreed:

North Africa:	Egypt	+	1
Western Africa:	Senegal	+	3
Central Africa:	Rwanda	+	2
Eastern Africa:	Ethiopia	+	2
Southern Africa:	Malawi	+	2
Total:			15

11. The complete composition of the Committee would be addressed following the outcome of the consultations to be undertaken by the Executive Secretary of the ECA in compliance with the resolution of the Conference on the Justification and Scope of Action of CAMSDE as well as the decision of the ECA Conference of Ministers at its session in May 1996.

B. Agenda

12. On 8 March 1996, the Conference adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the Conference
2. Election of Conference Officers
3. Adoption of the Agenda and organization of work
4. Consideration of the report of the meeting of the Committee of Experts including their recommendations
5. Any other matters
6. Dates and venue of the second session
7. Adoption of the report of the first session
8. Closing of the session.

Development, the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, and in response to Resolution 757 of ECA's Conference of Ministers to restructure the intergovernmental machinery of the Commission. This thematic conference was to review progress in achieving sustainable growth and development in Africa and to decide on appropriate policies and strategies at national and regional levels.

14. The ECA Executive Secretary emphasized that, in the midst of Africa's crisis, hopeful signs for Africa's recovery were now emerging. This was, therefore, the moment to muster all resources from within Africa and its global partners and realize the vision for eliminating poverty within the next generation. Within a broader context of democratic experiments, the opening of markets and the growth of civil society, and especially the empowerment of women, this required the devising of relevant strategies for socio-economic development without jeopardizing the physical resource base. Intertwined strategies for food security, population, human settlements, environment and poverty alleviation were thus needed.

15. He stressed ECA's readiness to contribute to the realization of a generational vision for an Africa liberated from poverty: its new programme focus on food security and sustainable environment was one of its five major areas of concentration, extolling on its comparative advantage as a policy integrator and networker for member states and as a promoter of increasing policy coordination between them and relevant sub-regional, regional and international bodies, such as the African Ministers Conference on the Environment (AMCEN). He called on the Ministers to consider the cost-effectiveness of respective programmes when rationalising the work of various groups and initiatives concerned with sustainable development.

16. The Executive Secretary then reviewed the issues contained in the report of the Committee of experts, in particular the preparation for the 1997 special session of the UN General Assembly reviewing the implementation of Agenda 21. He urged the Conference to consider specific proposals for enhancing the region's participation in the GA's special session, such as identifying issues and priorities of regional rather than global nature; establishing, where it does not exist, an inventory of all regional activities in the area of sustainable development, carried out under the auspices of UN organizations; considering recommendations for future actions and priorities, such as financial commitments at Rio, and access to the Global Environment Facility (GEF); and finally, considering recommendations on the future role of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD). These activities should be done jointly with AMCEN and other sister and affiliated UN organizations.

17. His Excellency Ambassador Pascal Gayama, Assistant Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), representing the Secretary-General, conveyed the special greetings of his organization to the first session of the Conference. In instituting this Conference, ECA had expressed the need to define a real harmony between human beings, their activities and nature, that is the challenge as contained, inter alia, in the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. The current condition of Africa did not guarantee that development, the eradication of poverty and the safeguarding of the interests of future generations would be achieved. There was a need for political systems ensuring real popular participation in identifying and carrying out common endeavour; economic systems generating surplus; and know-how allowing basic needs to be taken care of and a degree of self-sufficiency to be attained. At the same time, there should be a degree of justice and solidarity within the international system concerning trade, financial flows, respect of law and global responsibility of all actors.

18. He called attention to OAU's mandate as a catalyst for integrated development in Africa as reinforced by the 1991 Treaty establishing the African Economic Community and the 1995 Cairo Agenda. Efforts of the joint AMCEN Secretariat of UNEP, ECA and OAU should serve this goal.

Moreover, sustainable development referred to political and socio-economic sectors within OAU and this had strategic implications. Concerning the institutional structures, this Conference needed to clarify its role in relation to AMCEN.

19. In addition, bearing in mind its commitments, he drew attention to Article 25 of the Abuja Treaty which foresees a technical committee for the coordination of environmental questions in Africa. The danger of duplication needed to be avoided so as to optimize the use of human and material resources.

20. The representative of the OAU Secretary-General urging member States to heed the appeal by the recent OAU Council of Ministers to ratify, without delay, important conventions to guard against degradation and to optimize the sustained utilization of Africa's rich resources. He referred in particular to the conventions of Bamako on transboundary movements of toxic waste in Africa and the one on the fight against desertification.

21. The Council of Ministers had adopted the Declaration of Johannesburg on the African common position concerning Habitat II in Istanbul in June 1996, as well as urged countries to draw maximum benefit from the Food Summit in Rome at the end of 1996. In order to improve institutional mechanisms under the Abuja Treaty, OAU and ECA had agreed to convene the first session of the Pan-African Economic and Social Council to which all sectoral conferences including AMCEN and CAMSDE, would report. In this vein, he expressed the hope that the Conference would situate itself in the context of rationalization and enhance collaboration among African institutions.

22. The representative of the OAU Secretary-General made specific reference to the need to increase the role of women in Africa's development and conveyed his organization's special greetings on this 8th of March, International Women's Day.

23. H.E. Dr. Teketel Forssido, Minister of Agriculture of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, extended a warm welcome to all participants who had come to Addis Ababa at the historical time when the people of Ethiopia had just celebrated the centenary of the Battle of Adwa, a symbol of national integrity demonstrating the spirit of Africa in the cause of independence.

24. Recalling the objective of sustainable development, and the diversity of opinions on how to achieve it, the Minister urged for concerted efforts to consolidate the position of African countries, and strengthen their negotiating ability on social, economic, institutional factors on this matter. He called for assistance to member States in the formulation of relevant policies and strategies based on the cross-departmental or cluster approach to the nexus of food security, population, human settlements and environment.

25. The Minister recalled the ECA resolution of 1993 which established the Conference of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and the Environment, which had contributed to the current process of restructuring and revitalization of ECA. The Conference brought a new dimension to the process of reform, as it was well conceived and should be further developed. This Conference, an African inter-ministerial forum for dialogue for key sectoral issues at the national and regional levels, was well suited to deliberate on sustainable development programmes in the spirit of UNCED. He added that the Conference should be complementary to AMCEN to avoid overlapping and duplication.

26. The Minister touched on the 1997 special session of the United Nations General Assembly and expressed reservations about the speed and completeness of the implementation of decisions taken at Rio in 1992. He noted that Ethiopia and all African countries were making great efforts in the implementation of Agenda 21 and were facing the challenges in this endeavour. Given the limited resources, he urged ECA to focus on the most crucial problems of sustainable development in assisting African countries. In concluding, the Minister expressed his sincere thanks to the Executive Secretary of ECA for organizing this Conference.

Consideration of the report of the meeting of the Committee of Experts including their recommendations (agenda item 4)

27. The Chairman of the Committee of Experts, in his presentation of the report of the Committee, related to the various basic documents, agenda items and topics discussed. He drew the attention of the Conference to the views reached by the experts on each separate item. A consensus had been reached on all issues, except the one pertaining to the institutional establishment of CAMSDE raised in the agenda item on the rationale and scope of the Conference. He elaborated on the various positions and options submitted by the experts for the consideration of the Ministers, as indicated in paragraph 22 of the report.

28. Paragraph 6 should include the Arab League Mission to OAU, while it should be deleted from paragraph 7.

29. In the ensuing discussions, the Conference referred to the terms of ECA resolution 757 establishing CAMSDE as a subsidiary body of the ECA Conference of African Ministers responsible for Social and Economic Development and Planning. It was noted that CAMSDE had been established in the general spirit of rationalizing and streamlining the intergovernmental machinery of the ECA. However, the clause pertaining to the abolition of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) had proven to be non-implementable.

30. After considering the views expressed by many delegates and by the representatives of OAU, UNEP/Regional Office for Africa, and ECA the Conference agreed unanimously to entrust the Sub-Committee on resolution to prepare a draft resolution for the consideration of the Ministers.

31. Paragraph 23: the French text should be aligned with the English.

32. Paragraphs 28 to 30: the need to stress the issues discussed in these paragraphs, notably the constraint of national resources due to economic crisis and poverty, as well as insufficient international flows, should be underscored in a resolution by the Conference.

33. Paragraphs 40 to 45 of the Agenda item 5(a) (iii) of the Committee of experts: the ECA secretariat responded to a query by OAU stating that the programme 1994-1995 referred to ECA's programmes as CAMSDE was one of its bodies.

34. Paragraph 45 should be deleted.

35. Paragraph 62: the English text needed to be aligned with the French.

36. Paragraph 80: the content should be emphasized through a resolution of the Conference.

37. Paragraph 88: the first sentence from "As with UNCED ... Beijing," should be deleted so that the sentence starts with: The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements...

38. Paragraph 97 should be deleted.

39. Paragraph 103 should be deleted as there was no other business.

Statements by Heads of Delegations

40. Heads of several delegations wished to make presentations on their environment programmes, and, in particular, on their respective efforts to implement Agenda 21. In the interest of optimising the time available to the Conference delegations accepted the Chairperson's proposal to forward their prepared statements on country experiences to the Secretariat for compilation and subsequent distribution, along with the final report, to member States.

Any other matters (Agenda item 5)

41. The Conference agreed to the proposal of the delegation of Tanzania which had highlighted the severe stresses caused by the massive influx of refugees on resources, among them natural resources, to prepare a resolution of the Conference on this matter.

Dates and venue of the second session (Agenda item 6)

42. The Conference felt that the issue should await the outcome of the consultations to be undertaken by the Executive Secretary of ECA, in the follow-up to its resolution on the Justification and Scope of action of CAMSDE.

Adoption of the Report of the first session (Agenda item 7)

43. The Report was adopted as amended.

Closing of the session (Agenda item 8)

44. The Chairman, in closing the session, expressed his appreciation to the participants for the informed and lively debate and their spirit of cooperation. He also expressed his appreciation to all concerned in the preparation and servicing of the meeting.

**RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF
AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

RESOLUTION ON THE JUSTIFICATION AND SCOPE OF ACTION OF CAMSDE

The first Conference of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment meeting in Addis Ababa on 8 and 9 March 1996 at the initiative of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA),

Having taken note and extensively discussed the report of the Committee of experts which met from 4 to 7 March 1996, in particular paragraphs 16 to 23 of that report,

Noting that the provisions of ECA resolution 757(XXVIII) abolishing the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) cannot be implemented in view of AMCEN's institutional status as an independent regional intergovernmental institution,

Conscious of the need:

- (a) To encourage the widest possible consultation before the establishment of intergovernmental bodies,
- (b) To encourage those organs which operate on the principles of proven rationality,
- (c) To avoid, as much as possible, duplication of effort among bodies to achieve sustainable development,

1. Requests the Executive Secretary of ECA to initiate, as quickly as possible, consultations with the secretariats of AMCEN, the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations Environment Programme in order to reach a lasting agreement on the issue of the scope of activity of AMCEN and CAMSDE;
2. Also requests ECA secretariat to report to its Conference of Ministers, at its next session in May 1996, on the situation observed;
3. Further requests ECA secretariat to inform all the parties concerned of the solution arrived at, well before the next session of AMCEN scheduled to be held in Dakar in 1997.

RESOLUTION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

The first Conference of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment meeting in Addis Ababa on 8 and 9 March 1996 at the initiative of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA),

Recalling resolution 757(XXVIII) of the ECA Conference of Ministers responsible for Social and Economic Development and Planning, restructuring the legislative organs of the Commission and establishing the Conference of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment as one of the thematic Ministerial Conferences;

Having examined the report on the assessment of the implementation of Agenda 21 within the framework of the African Common Position;

Also having examined the Draft Guidelines for monitoring the progress made in building critical environmental management capacities for sustainable development in Africa;

Aware of the various exercises being carried out by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development to monitor the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national and regional levels, including the development of sustainable development indicators;

Recognizing the need for instruments, including indicators to monitor and assess the impact and progress made in the various areas of the implementation of Agenda 21 within the regional context;

Aware of the various constraints that member States have been facing in their programmes, including financial resources, natural disasters and inadequate human and institutional capacities;

Also recognizing the need to maintain an updated regional database on activities for environment and sustainable development in the region so as to facilitate access to relevant data by member States and Africa's development partners;

1. Decides to adopt the Guidelines for monitoring the progress made in building critical management capacities for sustainable development in Africa as a framework instrument for harmonizing relevant activities in the region;
2. Urges member States to carry out continuous monitoring and evaluation as an integral part of the activities of their national Agenda 21 programmes and establish a national database for such a purpose;
3. Encourages member States to develop a Geographic Information System (GIS) to enhance national data collection and environmental monitoring as well as contribution to a regional database when that is established;
4. Calls on UNDP, UNEP, FAO as well as all other UN agencies active in Africa, the Secretariats of the various UNCED-related Conventions and the international community to support the establishment of these database and other mechanisms for monitoring and assessing the environment in Africa;
5. Also urges the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) to continue to promote all activities related to capacity building and environmental monitoring, particularly the establishment of national Geographic Information Systems for that purpose;

6. Requests the Executive Secretary of ECA in collaboration with the Secretary General of the OAU, the Executive Director of UNEP and the Secretariat of AMCEN to assist member States in the implementation of this resolution, including the mobilization of the required resources;
7. Also requests the Executive Secretary of ECA to report to the first meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Fifteen on the implementation of this resolution.

RESOLUTION ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

The first Conference of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment meeting in Addis Ababa on 8 and 9 March 1996 at the initiative of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA),

Considering that human settlements constitute an important element of sustainable development,

Further considering the imbalances in quality of life and living conditions between the rural and urban areas in African countries,

Aware that only an improvement of living conditions in the rural areas can reduce the drift to urban centres and mitigate the adverse effects of such rural - urban drift on the environment,

Recalling the United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/191 on the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II),

Recalling also resolution 772(XXIX) of the ECA Conference of Ministers on the preparation of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II),

1. Requests ECA member States to make human settlements a development priority and to mobilize resources for the formulation and pursuit of human settlement policies with a view to reducing the imbalance between rural and urban areas;
2. Invites ECA to approach international institutions in order to secure assistance for member States with a view to formulating and implementing a coherent physical planning policy in the human settlements sector;
3. Urges African countries to reflect the African common position adopted at Johannesburg in October 1995 on the draft Habitat agenda in the major documentation of the Istanbul Conference,
4. Recommends to the Executive Secretary of ECA to facilitate discussions with other Regional Commissions on questions still suspended after PrepCom III for Habitat II.

**RESOLUTION ON ASSISTANCE TO AFRICAN COUNTRIES OF ASYLUM
EXPERIENCING ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION BEING
CAUSED BY THE INFLUX OF REFUGEES**

The first Conference of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment meeting in Addis Ababa on 8 and 9 March 1996 at the initiative of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA),

Recalling the relevant chapters of Agenda 21 especially those on the management of demographic change and pressures, preventing and reversing desertification and management of the ecosystem,

Having considered the refugee situation in the countries of asylum,

Having considered further the consequences of environmental degradation being caused by the human needs of the refugees,

Noting with appreciation the humanitarian assistance being extended to the refugees by the International Community,

Considering the Special Memorandum on the Mid-Term Global Review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) which noted the deteriorating situation in African LDCs,

Considering further the fact that due to the extensive nature of the problem, Planning for Sustainable Development and the Environment in areas occupied by the refugees is beyond the means of the countries of asylum:

1. Appeals to the international community to continue to extend humanitarian assistance to the refugees;
2. Requests that international humanitarian emergency and development assistance be provided also to local communities neighbouring the refugee camps;
3. Requests further that additional international financial and technical assistance be given to countries of asylum for the rehabilitation of the areas suffering from environmental degradation, and economic and social infrastructure due to the influx and presence of refugees; and
4. Calls upon the international community to accord special consideration to African countries whose economic and social conditions are aggravated by the influx of refugees.

ANNEX I

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS OF THE
FIRST CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS
RESPONSIBLE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT**

**REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS
OF THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT**

A. Attendance and organization of work

1. The first meeting of the Committee of Experts of the First Conference of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment (CAMSDE) was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 4 to 7 March 1996. The meeting was formally opened by H.E. Mr. Haile Assegidie, Minister of Works and Urban Development of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, also delivered a statement at the opening ceremony of the meeting.
2. The meeting was attended by the following member States of the Commission: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Chad, Tunisia, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
3. Observers from the following member States of the United Nations were present: Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, India and the Russian Federation.
4. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were represented: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Telecommunications Union (ITU), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), UNSO/UNDP, World Health Organization (WHO) and World Food Programme (WFP).
5. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was represented.
6. Observers were present from the following intergovernmental organizations: African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD) and the Arab League Mission to OAU.
7. Observers were also present from the following non-governmental organization: Hope for Women.
8. The Committee unanimously elected the following officers:

Chairman:	Senegal
First Vice-Chairman:	Egypt
Second Vice-Chairman:	Ethiopia
Third Vice-Chairman:	Rwanda
Rapporteur:	Malawi
9. The Committee established one open-ended sub-committee entrusted with the task of drafting resolutions for the Conference of Ministers. This sub-committee was chaired by Rwanda.

B. Agenda

10. On 4 March 1996, the Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Election of officers
3. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
4. Briefing by the ECA secretariat on the rationale and scope of the Conference
5. Facing the Challenges of Sustainable Development and Environment in Africa
 - (a)(i) An assessment of the implementation of Agenda 21 within the framework of the African Common Position
 - (ii) Guidelines for the in-depth review of the implementation of Agenda 21 in Africa
 - (iii) Report on the implementation of the Environment and Development in Africa programme of work, 1994-1995
- (b) Implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development
- (c) Progress made in the implementation of poverty alleviation programme in Africa
- (d) Promotion of non-conventional food as a sustained source of food for the poor vulnerable populations
- (e) Formulation and implementation of human settlement policies towards mitigating rural/urban imbalances in African countries
- (f) Implementation of the plan of action contained in the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000.
6. Preparation for the 1997 Special Session of the General Assembly on the overall review and appraisal of Agenda 21
7. Any other business
8. Adoption of the Report of the meeting
9. Closing of the meeting

C. Account of proceedings

Opening addresses

11. Mr. K.Y. Amoako, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ECA, welcomed all participants from member States, international organizations and other institutions. He observed that the Conference was held in pursuance to ECA resolution 757 (XXVIII) of May 1993, establishing thematic conferences. He pointed out that the objective was to develop the nexus approach to policy orientation to achieve sustainable development by addressing problems of poverty and food insecurity. He noted that this first session choosing as its theme "Facing the challenges of sustainable development and environment in Africa", aimed at fostering a team approach focusing on interrelations between Agriculture, Population, Environment and Human Settlements.

12. The Executive Secretary drew the attention to the ECA renewal process which was refining and strengthening guidelines for new programme directions. The strategic importance assigned to the theme of the Conference could be gauged by the fact that one of the five programme areas of ECA was to be dedicated to "Ensuring Food Security and Sustainable Development". He underlined the specific issues before the conference as: (a) programming for sustainable development through the nexus between food security, environment, population, and human settlements; (b) preparing for two important global meetings, namely Habitat II in Istanbul in June 1996; and the 1997 special session of the United Nations General Assembly on overall review and appraisal of Agenda 21 in New York; and (c) discussing institutional issues, and coordinating activities and time-tables of the various bodies represented at the conference.

13. Mr. Amoako observed that the Conference provided a forum which played a great role in promoting cooperation within and among African States, and one that will contribute to harmonizing relationship between the various existing organisms such as the ECA annual Conference of Ministers, the OAU Council of Ministers and Summit, and the African Ministerial Conference on Environment. He concluded by expressing the hope that the deliberations would result in clear strategies for ECA and its partners for promoting the cluster approach to planning and carrying out policies and programmes in the crucial area of sustainable development and environment.

14. H.E. Mr. Haile Assegidie, Minister of Works and Urban Development of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, in his opening address, recognized the important objective of the Conference of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment, with the theme "Facing the challenges of sustainable development and environment in Africa".

15. He noted the various accomplishments made by Africa and pointed out that the economic crisis in the region was a symptom of a long-term development crisis the challenges have led to the formulation and implementation of programmes which have sustainable development as their top-most priority. He encouraged African countries to work diligently on the achievement of this long-term objective. He further advised that ECA, being a cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary institution, should be a focal point for formulating development policies in Africa, and play a central role in assisting member States.

Briefing on the rationale and scope of the Conference [Agenda item 4]

16. The Committee considered document E/ECA/CAMSDE/CE/4 on the theme of the Conference, Facing the Challenges of Sustainable Development and Environment in Africa. It noted that the Conference was established by resolution 757 (XXVIII) of 4 May 1993 of the ECA Conference of Ministers which restructured the intergovernmental machinery of the Commission and made this Conference of African Ministers responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment (CAMSDE) one of its thematic Conferences. A Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Fifteen was also set up. The mandate of the Conference was within the purview of activities to address the problems of eradicating poverty through sustainable development. It was to foster the implementation of Agenda 21, promoting the cluster approach in forging 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. The Conference shall be meeting every four years and the Ministerial follow-up Committee of Fifteen every two years.

17. 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). By pooling their resources in an integrated approach in order to achieve sustainable development at the national level and enhance regional economic and political integration, African countries will be in a position to participate more effectively and competitively in the international setting. These ideas

are underscored in the **Abuja Treaty** establishing the **African Economic Community** and made explicit in the **Cairo Agenda for Action for relaunching Africa's Economic and Social Development**.

18. As a broad-based inter-ministerial review and policy guiding legislative body, CAMSDE need to be based on 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, among them in particular the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN). It was noted that since AMCEN focused its activities on the implementation of the regional aspects of Agenda 21 as they contribute to sustainable development, it would be a key player in the context of CAMSDE. Modalities should therefore be worked out for joint activities, including joint meetings to review the respective programmes with a view to strengthen the nexus approach to programme development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

19. In the course of the ensuing debate, some delegations remarked that the mandate of the Conference should be very clear within the context of the rationalization of institutions in the region with a view to being cost-effective and maximizing the use of scarce resources for optimum impact. The cross-sectoral nature of the Conference was appreciated, a situation which made it able to review issues not only limited to the environmental dimension, since sustainable development was all-encompassing on all development sectors whose mutations must be in unison.

20. These delegations pointed out, moreover, that as a ministerial legislative body set up by the ECA Conference of Ministers and being concerned with forging the cluster approach in the UNCED spirit, CAMSDE should fulfil complementary functions to existing institutions.

21. Other concerns were also expressed referring to the fact that CAMSDE was an organ established by an ECA Ministerial resolution and that a merger without the prior decision of the body that set it up in the first place was out of the question. However, it was agreed that since environmental considerations were an integral component of sustainable development, the word "environment" could be dropped from the name of the Conference. This would also clear any confusion concerning AMCEN.

22. In this context, several options were proposed by the delegations in the framework of rationalizing the functions of the two bodies, namely; (a) to merge AMCEN and CAMSDE; (b) to work out the modalities of collaboration between the two organs, including guidelines to avoid duplication; (c) to enlarge the mandate of AMCEN so that it encompasses issues of sustainable development and, as a result, that its composition, its name and its legal status shall be reviewed; (d) to drop the environment label from CAMSDE so that the Conference would focus on sustainable development; or, (e) to ensure that in the future the secretariat of AMCEN works in close collaboration with the ECA secretariat in the context of a joint secretariat on the questions of environment and sustainable development. Given the lack of consensus in the debate and also considering the fact that these organs had been created at ministerial levels in the context of institutions with different status, the Committee has finally concluded to submit this question to be examined by the Ministers for decision.

23. In the light of the divergent views the sub-committee established by the Committee of experts was not in a position to submit a draft decision to the plenary with suggestions as to the resolution of the problem.

An assessment of the implementation of Agenda 21 within the framework of the African Common Position [Agenda item 5 (a) (i)]

24. Document E/ECA/CAMSDE/CE/9 on An assessment of the implementation of Agenda 21 within the framework of the African Common Position, was considered by the Committee. It was noted that the assessment provided an insight into the impact which the African Strategies and the new policy orientation of AMCEN have had on the different environmental activities at the national, regional and global levels, with emphasis on capacity building and environmental awareness. It was representative of not only of the activities of ECA alone but also joint activities with other agencies of the UN system and AMCEN.

25. Three years after Rio there may not be a reliable quantifiable basis for the exercise. However, it provides a starting point of a stock taking exercise that was necessary for measuring the impact of programmes. It also provided an insight into the various aspects of African environmental awareness.

26. A three-stage evolution in the progress made in implementing Agenda 21 in Africa could be identified. The first began in May 1993 with the adoption of the African Strategies for Agenda 21 to reconcile the pre-Rio African Common Position on Environment and Development with the Rio outcomes, particularly Agenda 21. Twenty-four priority areas of The African Common Position were grouped around seven key areas, taking into account the forty Chapters of Agenda 21. The second began with the adoption of the new policy orientation of the programme of work of the African Ministers responsible for the Environment at the fifth session of AMCEN in November 1993 building strongly on the priority areas identified in the African Strategies for Agenda 21. By this new policy orientation, AMCEN would provide the leadership and guidance in respect of major African environmental issues programmes, including the initiatives envisaged within the framework of the African Common Position and the African Strategies for Agenda 21. The third stage was the integration of the African Strategies and the AMCEN new policy orientation ideas into the **Framework for building and utilizing critical capacities in Africa**, an exercise being undertaken by ECA in member States. The focus of this exercise was driven by the fact that, besides analytical convenience, for this exercise to have the necessary impacts in the appropriate sectors of African development, a sequencing of priorities from those indicated in the Common Position was imperative. This sequencing was understood to mean the implementation, a priori, of those priority programmes that enhance mutation, growth and development in the other sectors.

27. Built on the above, economic integration in Africa would be fostered between and among countries to build strong collective bargaining power and overcome the small market constraint. A peaceful and enabling environment and an effective management of the economy under democratic governance should be established. National population programmes should be formulated and implemented simultaneously with programmes aimed at addressing environmental degradation and other social concerns such as health and education.

28. There were serious constraints on the part of member States in carrying out the programmes. These arose from the situation where most of the funding of programmes was supposed to be within national financial resources. Technical assistance and the transferring and sharing of science and technology between the North and the South would be carried out within that context. This would depend on the level of bilateral and multilateral interests in the different programmes and their willingness to invest in them. Economic crisis and poverty at the national level made it difficult to meet the investment requirements for implementing many programmes. It also made it difficult to develop man power and institutional capacities and maintain an infrastructure that would make the majority of the population benefit from the programmes.

29. In light of paragraph 105 of the report presented by the secretariat which made recommendations on four innovative methods aimed to promote the mobilization of financial resources for sustainable development in Africa, the Committee recommended the need to take into consideration the structures and forces of production whose activities are intimately related with the environment and sustainable development.

30. In further discussions the Committee pointed out that the report did not adequately bring out the various constraints encountered by member States, such as institutional weaknesses, financial constraints. More details on national actions such as the national environmental action plans and national agenda 21 should be highlighted.

Guidelines for monitoring the progress made in building critical management capacities for sustainable development [Agenda item 5 (a) (ii)]

31. The Committee examined document E/ECA/CAMSDE/CE/7 on the review of the implementation of Agenda 21 in Africa: Draft Guidelines for monitoring the progress made in building critical management capacities for sustainable development. The document was prepared within the framework of the global exercise for monitoring the implementation of Agenda 21 and, more specifically, the Framework Agenda for building and utilizing critical capacities in Africa. The initiative to focus on capacity-building was borne out of the realization that the missing link and, therefore, the major reason for the generally observed failure in the efforts deployed during the past two decades to put Africa on the path of accelerated growth and sustainable development has been the lack of systematic action on building and enhancing the critical capacities needed to sustain growth and development.

32. It was noted that, in keeping with the spirit and purpose of the Conference which is the cluster approach to programme development, a holistic approach was the answer. Capacity building, therefore, was conceived in its interrelated and interlocking human, institutional and infrastructural dimensions. Action must be taken in each of these three areas simultaneously, reflecting the inter-dependencies and inter-linkages between the critical development issues and priorities facing African countries.

33. The objective of the initiative taken by the Economic Commission for Africa in response to the request of member States was to build a comprehensive consensus framework to serve as a basis for action on all the critical aspects of capacity-building at country, subregional and regional levels.

34. The proposed guidelines for the review of the implementation of Agenda 21 in Africa were intended to provide a framework for appraising particularly regional aspects of the Agenda at the macro-economic level. It was based on the adaptation of Agenda 21, as adopted by different intergovernmental instances in consultation with non-governmental organizations, notably on the African Common Position, the African Strategies for the implementation of Agenda 21 and the New Policy Orientations of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment.

35. The exercise also benefitted from the on-going work of the development of indicators for sustainable development being coordinated by the United Nations Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD) and that on environmental impact assessment underway by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It also drew from other relevant activities undertaken or being undertaken by agencies within and outside the United Nations system. The guidelines were important in reemphasizing the critical role of the environmental dimension in achieving sustainable development.

36. There were three major components to sustainable environmental management, namely the building and strengthening of man-power capacity, institutional capacity and the capacity for the mobilization of financial resources. Africa had to learn from past experiences in respect of the mobilization and utilization of resources in support of the region's development. Indicators were essential and developing them was a challenging task from a scientific as well as national and international policy perspectives. These were the issues that the draft document attempted to address.

37. In the discussion that followed delegates underscored the importance of the guidelines in the evaluation of development activities. It was noteworthy that the draft attempted to arrive at a common understanding of the issues so as to facilitate inter-ministerial actions as well as cooperation among African countries. However, there were a number of issues that were not sufficiently addressed or needed clarification such as the allocation of resources and the measurement of poverty through cross-sectoral indicators as well as means of evaluation. It would also have been useful for the document to give an indication of some relevant global indicators as well as African initiatives in this area. The work of other agencies doing work on indicators, such as FAO should be covered.

38. It was also pointed out that, while the title indicated that the document was to cover management capacities for sustainable development, the content dwelt more on the environmental dimension. This limitation should be rectified either by changing the title or by revising the document in accordance with the title.

39. In endorsing the draft, the meeting agreed that the document should be revised to reflect the suggested amendments, particularly: (a) list of relevant global indicators; (b) means of evaluation; (c) indicators for impact assessment; and (d) a short write-up on African initiatives.

Report on the implementation of the ECA Programme on Environment and Development in Africa (1994-1995) [Agenda item 5 (a) (iii)]

40. Document E/ECA/CAMSDE.1/95/10, Report on the implementation of the ECA Environment and Development in Africa programme (1994-1995), was examined by the Committee. The report arose from the need for the Commission to consult on and review the implementation of the environment and development in Africa programme with member States to ensure consistency and complementarity with the mandate of the on-going programmes at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. This would facilitate the coordination and harmonization of actions for environment and sustainable development in member States and the collaboration with other actors within and outside the UN system, particularly UNEP.

41. The Committee noted that the activities were based on the Medium-Term Plan, 1992-1997 and the required follow-up to UNCED. They focused, therefore, on capacity-building for activities toward poverty alleviation through sustainable development as well as on the implementation of the UNCED outcomes, particularly Agenda 21 within the framework of Africa's specificities.

42. It was also noted that during the period under review, there was increased coordination and harmonization of programme activities within the Secretariat in order to promote and enhance interaction between the secretariat and member States, the major regional organizations and bodies of the United Nations system involved in the follow-up of UNCED.

43. Building on the current situation, the secretariat was implementing the programme of work of the biennium, 1996-1997, including, among other things, the following activities promoting the implementation of the African approach to global conventions on environment and development, particularly those on climate change, desertification and biological diversity; continuation of the promotion of capacity-building, human

resource and institutional development in the area of environmental legislation; development of economic instruments and related guidelines for environmental impact assessment and monitoring of sub-regional and regional programmes and activities of related institutions; monitoring, assessing and reporting on the impact of policies and programmes relating to agriculture and rural development, population, human settlements, water resources, environment and development; and promoting environmental awareness at the governmental and non-governmental levels.

44. In the discussion that followed attention was drawn to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Urgent Action for Africa. It was pointed out that these urgent measures were to ensure that Africa should start to benefit from the Convention even before it was ratified. Delegations were requested to encourage their countries to ratify the Convention.

Implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development
[Agenda item 5 (b)]

45. The Committee considered the document entitled "Implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development" (E/ECA/CAMSDE.1/95/11). The document reviewed the efforts that had been made by African Governments to implement the recommendations of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration (DND) in the areas of Population, Sustained Economic Growth and Sustainable Development. The issues addressed in the document were based on the analysis of the working papers presented by the three UNFPA regional technical support teams based in Addis Ababa, Dakar and Harare, and by CERPOD at the Experts/NGOs Workshop on the Implementation of the DND and the ICPD Programme of Action at a workshop organized by the ECA/OAU/ADB Joint Secretariat in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 6-9 June 1995. It was noted that African countries were becoming increasingly aware of the interplay between population, environment and development and that on-going population and development activities in most African countries do reflect their readiness to apply one the most important recommendations of the DND and Agenda 21 - the incorporation of population policies and programmes into national socio-economic development plans.

46. It was further noted that constraints in implementing population policies and programmes adopted in Africa had been identified, such as a low degree of commitment by political and religious leaders, impact of structural adjustment programmes in member States, insufficient financial resources, inadequate cooperation with international organizations and poor coordination of activities with foreign partners. Prospects for the implementation of the recommendations of the DND were, however, improving. Contrary to the Kilimanjaro Programme of Action, the DND will indeed be followed up regionally according to the recommendations of the follow-up committee established to that effect. The Committee accordingly requested ECA to prepare, every other year, an analytical report reviewing those factors which militate against the DND and proposing solutions to those constraints and problems.

47. The Committee further noted that as a follow-up to the deliberations of the Joint Expert and NGO Working Group on the implementation of the DND and the ICPD programme of action, ECA had produced a framework document for the implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration. The framework document proposed to member States practical modalities for speeding up the implementation of the DND and the ICPD programme of action, taking into account the lessons learned from the implementation of the KPA.

48. In the ensuing discussion, the Committee observed the relatively limited number of African countries cited in the document. It was explained that, in order to keep with the theme of this Conference, the scope of the document was limited to the implementation of the recommendations of the DND in the area of population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The Committee requested that a more comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of the DND should be undertaken by the secretariat soon

after the second meeting of the Follow-up Committee on the implementation of the DND, scheduled to take place in the last quarter of 1996. The evaluation should be based on the analysis of a detailed questionnaire which will be sent to all member States of the Commission.

49. The Committee further observed that the "Green Paper" on population that was debated in South Africa was a good example of an integrative approach to population policies. It would guarantee the success of a better formulation, adoption and implementation of a population policy, compatible with sustainable development. The Committee then endorsed the various recommendations in the document addressed to member States and the international community with a view to speeding up the implementation of the DND.

Progress made in the implementation of the programmes on alleviation of poverty in Africa - [Agenda item 5 (c)]

50. The Committee considered document E/ECA/CAMSDE/CE/6 on progress made in the implementation of the programmes on alleviation of poverty in Africa. The Committee recalled that in Resolution 757 (XXVIII), the Conference of Ministers responsible for Social and Economic Development and Planning had provided to CAMSDE flexibility of addressing emerging challenges and priorities of the region effectively, especially as they relate to poverty and the nexus issues.

51. The Committee also recalled that the report under consideration was in conformity with the Terms of Reference of CAMSDE in which it was stated that with the view of adopting a holistic approach to economic growth and sustainable development with poverty alleviation as its major focus, and to this end, recognizing the need to strengthen linkages and relationships between critical areas such as agricultural and rural development and water resources, population, social development, the environment and human settlements. The Committee noted that different reports prepared for the Conference are all interrelated and focusing on enhancing the self-help and self-reliant capacity of the population with the views to eradicating absolute and reducing overall poverty with particular attention to meeting their food security and shelter needs subject to achieving sustainable development in both economic and environmental sense and within the environmental limits or carrying capacities of natural resources.

52. The Committee, also, noted that the paper on poverty was prepared in line with the mandate of the Conference to undertake a periodic review of rural and urban poverty, including its interaction with economic growth, population dynamics, the environmental factors and human settlements, and suggest development policy towards substantial progress in the alleviation of poverty. It, further, noted that the report was particularly meant to provoke productive discussions on the need to develop and effectively implement anti-poverty strategies and programmes within subregional and regional frameworks and to engage in an exchange of experiences.

53. The Committee stated that today an increasing number of African households in both urban and rural areas are simply preoccupied with the problem of meeting their minimum food needs on a **day to day basis** and that more households in the rural areas are finding themselves in food insecurity as conflicts (political or economic), drought, and other man-made and natural calamities are **increasingly weakening their food security base**. If the present trends are allowed to continue, more than 265 million African will enter into the 21st century in a state of poverty and Africa would account for 30 percent of the world's poor.

54. The Committee took note of the commitment of the international community to provide a forum for sensitizing the world at large and publicizing the food and poverty crisis that humanity is likely to face when entering the 21st century by organizing a series of World Summits including those on Social issues, Earth matters, Women affairs and the forthcoming one on Food Security issues.

55. The Committee has asked, however, itself the fundamental question that is how can we do business differently so that all these World Summits, High level meetings, technical gatherings including ours can serve not only to raise awareness world wide but can result in measurable impacts in reducing absolute poverty and chronic food insecurity through translating into concrete activities with time bound goals the numerous Policy Statements, Resolutions and Action Programmes related to poverty and food insecurity.

56. To this end, the Committee recognized its own challenge as being one of ensuring the effective translation of Action Programmes and Policy Statements into implementable time bound goals for reducing absolute poverty, alleviating overall poverty, helping food insecure to graduate and limiting the lapsing of marginal food secure into food insecurity, and all these within the environmental limits. In tackling that challenge, the Committee felt that interventions should be directed towards developing and maintaining the environment enabling for those households, who are food insecure or are vulnerable to food insecurity, to develop their self-help and self-reliant capacity for solving their own food security problems sustainably subject to achieving set goals in terms of sustainable development and within environmental limits and the framework of the African Economic Community.

57. The Committee then took note of the initiatives of the new leadership of ECA in its efforts of renewal to better serve Africa to have selected as one of the five strategic areas of its interventions in support of Africa's development the challenging domain of ensuring food security and sustainable development. This choice is considered to be timely and opportune. This with CAMSDE would equip better ECA to help meet the demand at national or subregional levels of member states for operationalizing the poverty and food security related Action Programmes into concrete actions while providing an ideal forum to review progress.

58. The Committee appreciated the steps taken by ECA to develop the nexus concept of food security-population-environment. This would, in the views of the Committee, help to properly guide the interventions in support of food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable development of African governments, individually and collectively, and within the environmental limits.

59. The Committee has discussed the pertinence and particularities of the Broadened Concept of Food Security as Specified for Africa (BCFSA) and developed by ECA, under which, it was recalled, that the goal of food security is "to ensure that **all people** have physical, economic and sustained access to the food they need based on increased measures of self-reliance at individual household and national levels and within the framework of the major sub regional economic groupings and the African Economic Community". It has appreciated that the notion of increased self-reliance at household, national, subregional and regional levels and that of sustainability were given greater emphasis in this re-specified version for Africa especially in a period when the international socio-economic environment is not, indeed, very supportive.

60. The Committee, in particular, referred to the potential impacts of recent concluded Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations that are likely to be negative on the food security situation in Africa and to increase the food vulnerability of the population as the cost of food import will increase substantially while the earnings from the export of agricultural products will diminish. Indeed, the Committee noted that food prices will increase in world market due to the reduction in subsidies at both production and export levels in major food exporting countries and African exports revenues will be reduced because of changes in preferential treatment in support of African agricultural commodities. This, it had pointed out, has a direct bearing on the **validity and effectiveness of the strategy** in force in many African countries that is to promote the production of cash or export crops and using the export proceeds for import of cheap food from the world market. In addition, the Committee referred to the contradiction which countries faced when implementing their policies on macro-economic reforms (SAP) and of their policies on agricultural development which guarantee food security, especially for rural households. Especially challenging was the facilitating of access to modern inputs (subsidies).

61. The Committee expressed concerns that the pursuit of policies and programmes to reduce absolute poverty might be at the cost of sustainable development and the environment. It was noted that every effort should be made to develop safety nets for those segments of the poor to whom society preferred to give food instead of assisting them in developing self-help and self-reliant capacity for meeting their food security needs. Also, it was underlined that rules and regulations should be enacted to minimize the risk of over exploitation of the natural resources by the poor who, in some countries, derive more than 80 percent of their food from these sources and to develop community based technologies for ensuring an optimal exploitation of the natural resources and within the environmental limits.

62. The Committee has discussed the dilemma that most African policy advisors are facing that is how to allocate scarce resources (example was taken for US\$200) between competing activities (meeting the basic food needs, managing the population, operating within environmental limits, planning adequately for human settlements) that all have bearing on the overriding objective of reducing absolute poverty or chronic food insecurity especially in a national and international socio-economic environments that are not so much enabling and perhaps conducive to sustainable and self-reliant development and economic cooperation.

63. The Committee appreciated the steps taken at ECA to develop strategic framework (with five pillars related to conceptual, institutional, organizational, logical, analytical) and strategic planning and management tools with the view of improving the locally-based capacities of member states at national and subregional levels for analyzing and managing the policies necessary to address the nexus issues. This would help enhance, in the view of the Committee, the capacity of African policy analysts in developing productive trade-offs between competing and some times conflicting objectives and in adopting a holistic approach to the nexus issues within an appropriate institutional and organizational frameworks at national and subregional levels.

64. The Committee, has, cautioned that, although, rapid population growth constitutes a serious constraint to achieving the objectives of food security and poverty reduction and the preservation of environment and natural resources, reduction of the population should not be privileged as a means for solving our poverty, food insecurity and environmental problems, rather steps should be taken to transform our young and potential population into a valuable and productive asset for ensuring sustainable and self-reliant development. To this end, the need for furthering the services sectors especially education, health, developing science and technology, broadening and consolidating subregional and regional cooperation and improving the status of women in development was particularly underlined by the Committee.

65. After a fruitful exchange of best and worst practices that their countries have embarked upon to tackle the problems of poverty, food insecurity and environment, the Committee further appreciated the complexity of the issues of sustainable development and environment with poverty alleviation as its focus. It, further, appreciated the implications of sustainable development challenges for policy management and analysis and it has recognized the urgent need for appropriate management system or methods of analysis.

66. The Committee then recommended that ECA should forge strategic alliances with other partners and take urgent measures for enhancing the analytical capacities of African economic and policy analysts taking the holistic approach embedded in the nexus linking food security-population-environment as the analytical framework so that African decision makers, individually and collectively, could make learned decision for developing and maintaining the enabling environment and for utilizing optimally the vast human and natural resources with the overriding objective of ensuring that an increasing number of African population enter the 21st century with more hope than despair.

Promotion of traditional non-conventional foods as a sustainable source of food for poor vulnerable people [Agenda item 5d]

67. An executive summary of the report on this item bearing the Document number E/ECA/CAMSDE/CE/8 was presented to the Committee. The importance of traditional non-conventional food to the achievement of food security objectives, particularly for the rural poor, as well as the adverse consequences of their wanton exploitation on the environment was emphasized. It was indicated that the concept of non-conventional food used in the study generally referred to habitual or normal foods that were known and accepted as such within the dietary habits of a country or specific community.

68. The report briefly reviewed in Chapter 2 some non-conventional foods placing particular emphasis on their nutritional value and their role as supplements to conventional foods in the achievement of food security goals in rural households especially. The major constraints to their optimum use were also analyzed in the report as well as the research work done in some countries to promote their use. Generally, non-conventional food resources were excluded from food statistics because they escaped control, located as they were in a circuit that was hard to quantify and were considered to be marginal.

69. Given the potential importance of traditional non-conventional foods to the diversification and expansion of the food base in Africa, particular stress has been laid on the promotion of research into such foods. It was accordingly recommended that an information and research network on such foods should be set up on the one hand to ensure that they were rationally exploited within the limits of the environment and to secure their optimum contribution to the attainment of food security objectives and poverty alleviation in the rural areas especially.

70. The Committee was informed that ECA would finance the organization of a technical experts meeting on this issue in November 1996 during which the Status of the network would be considered and approved. For the network to be inaugurated officially, an appeal was made to member States concerned to attend the November meeting.

71. During the discussion, the Committee stressed the importance of non-conventional foods in the household economy of rural and urban areas alike. The Committee took note of the intention of Mali to share its experience in the use of traditional foods gathered from the forest reserves of Sikasso and Bamako under a project implemented with FAO assistance.

72. The concept of non-conventional food was debated and some participants wondered whether the idea of under-utilized resources would not be more appropriate than that of non-conventional foods. Accordingly, the Committee considered the mandate of the proposed network given the size and variation of the people who lived on traditional and non-conventional food resources.

73. The Committee postponed the discussion until November when the appropriate experts would meet to consider the network.

74. The Committee expressed its appreciation for ECA's initiative in proposing the establishment of this information and research network. At the same time, it stressed the need to optimize the use and to improve technologies available to local communities which would benefit from the research findings.

Formulation and implementation of human settlements policies towards mitigating rural/urban imbalances in African countries [Agenda item 5 (e)]

75. Under this agenda item the Committee considered document E/ECA/CAMSDE/CE/12 which focused on policies towards mitigating rural/urban imbalances in African countries in the context of Agenda 21 of the UNCED.

76. The Committee noted that most African countries lacked an integrated approach to human settlements planning within the framework of overall socio-economic development as well as the administrative authority to formulate and co-ordinate intersectoral projects. Development plans without adequate sectoral and urban/rural linkages have resulted in serious shortcomings in rural settlements development in some African countries. The problems of human settlements are aggravated or accelerated by high population growth and the magnitude of rural-to-urban migration.

77. The Committee felt that in order to achieve human settlements sustainability, rural settlements needed to be valued and supported. African countries should adopt an integrated urban and rural system of planning whereby economic opportunities and services were provided to both urban and rural areas. This will help in checking rural to urban migration. Policies and programmes for the sustainable development of rural areas that integrated rural regions into the national economy required strong local and national institutions for the planning and management of human settlements that placed an emphasis on rural-urban linkages and treated villages and cities as two ends of a human settlements continuum.

78. The Committee observed that to promote the sustainable development of rural settlements and to reduce rural-to-urban migration, governments at the appropriate levels, including local authorities, should:

- (a) Promote the active participation of all stakeholder in ensuring the integrated consideration of the environmental, social and economic objectives of rural development efforts;
- (b) Take appropriate measures to improve the living and working conditions in regional urban centres, small towns and rural service centres;
- (c) Provide infrastructure, services and incentives for investment in rural areas;
- (d) Foster a sustainable and diversified agricultural system in order to have vibrant rural communities; and
- (e) Promote education and training in rural areas to facilitate employment and the use of appropriate technology.

79. It was recommended that action should be focused on mobilization of resources internally and externally, and this should be incorporated in the overall programme of action of the governments at various levels to promote sustainable human settlements.

80. The Committee noted that the best practices from Senegal were not included at the time the report was written.

Implementation of the plan of action contained in the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 [Agenda item 5 (f)]

81. The Committee considered document E/ECA/CAMSDE/CE/13 approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 42/191 which reviewed the global situation and provided guidelines for assisting all countries to formulate new policies. The objectives were to provide adequate shelter to all by the year 2000; to effect concerted action by the public and private sectors responsible; and to provide the facilitating method through strategic planning. The strategy posed the global problem of shelter and, in view of the different solutions presented, proposed that measures should be taken at three levels, political, socio-economic and technical.

82. The Committee noted that in the last years of the 20th century, many countries were still far from being able to meet housing and service needs, in spite of the efforts made by Governments and international organizations as indicated in the report.

83. The Committee observed that the guidelines for national action as defined by the Global Strategy for Shelter centred on reorganizing the housing sector, mobilizing and allocating financial resources for the construction of houses and improvement of real estates. African countries have all established housing policies, but the gap between the supply and the demand remained wide in spite of the many efforts.

84. In reviewing the problems encountered in the implementation of the global housing strategy, the Committee noted the main problems related to difficulties in applying territorial development policies; land management policies; difficulties in promoting local construction materials; difficulties in mobilizing financial resources for the housing programmes; and legal and institutional problems.

85. The Committee also noted that the guidelines for formulating policies and programmes for improving the housing situation centred on demographic planning; increase of national productivity and income; increase of capital formation in the field of housing; credit facilities for the housing sector; and reduction of house construction costs.

86. The Committee further noted various countries' experiences on shelter policies; actions undertaken in implementing the Global Strategy for Shelter; on housing finance; on promoting locally produced building materials and measures for protecting the environment. As some information was not available when the secretariat drafted the report some country experiences were not reflected in the document. It was stated that the housing finance in Rwanda was important for the reconstruction of the country as well as for those affected by the natural calamities. Funding agencies should, therefore, keep the housing finance as a priority.

United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II - the City Summit)

87. The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, (Habitat II) will be expected to address pressing human settlements issues and problems within the overall context of sustainable development and its objectives. In the long term, these issues are to arrest the deterioration of global human settlements conditions and ultimately create the conditions for achieving improvements in the living environment of all people on a sustainable basis, with special attention to the needs and contributions of women and vulnerable social groups, whose quality of life and participation in development have been hampered by exclusion and inequality, affecting the poor in general.

88. The Conference will adopt a general statement of principles and commitments and formulate a related global plan of action capable of guiding national and international efforts through the first two decades of the next century.

89. In addition, the General Assembly affirmed that the Conference should review trends in human settlements policies and programmes undertaken to implement the recommendations adopted at the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, held at Vancouver, Canada, in 1976 and conduct a mid-term review of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000.

90. The General Assembly requested the Conference to review the implementation of Agenda 21 with respect to human settlements and also to review current global trends in economic and social development as they relate to human settlements, and to include recommendations for future actions at the national and international levels.

91. In accordance with the decision of the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II (April 1994, Geneva) the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was given a mandate to play a key role at the regional level in the preparatory process during the conference and in the follow-up to the Conference. In this regard, ECA has coordinated and facilitated regional activities, including regional meetings; and enabled Member States with limited institutional and financial capacity to participate effectively in the preparatory process. Within this mandate, advisory missions were undertaken to ten African countries to assist their national steering committees in drafting national reports for Habitat II. All the above efforts were made in order to prepare the ground-work for a continent-wide position on human settlement for Istanbul.

92. Furthermore, like other regional economic commissions, ECA will present a Regional Report on the State of Human Settlement in Africa and the Continental Shelter Report/Atlas as a contribution to Habitat II. The above reports will describe the main challenges, concerns and constraints and build a vision of sustainable human settlements and adequate shelter for all in Africa.

93. Parallel to the coordination of the regional activities, ECA is coordinating the preparations of all the other regional commissions before, during and after Habitat II. ECA has prepared in consultation with ECE, ESCAP, ECLAC and ESCWA: (i) " Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Regional Commissions on the preparations for the Conference at the regional level" and (ii) " Comments on Interim Draft Global Plan of Action". These comments are the common regional position, which envisages a role for the regional commissions in promoting the implementation of the outcomes of the Conference at national and regional levels and in monitoring the national and regional plans of action and reporting to ECOSOC. It also proposes that the regional commissions will play, within their mandates, a vital catalytic role in international cooperation and coordination aimed at strengthening regional human settlements activities which offer the possibility of better use of resources and have the potential to promote accelerate and sustainable economic and social development.

94. ECA's Habitat Agenda is to play vital catalytic role in the improvement of the social, economic and environmental quality of human settlements and the living and working environments of all people, in particular, the urban and rural poor in Africa.

95. The Regional Plan of Action (RPA) should be the major mechanism by which ECA should seek to attain the above objective. The RPA shall be based on the common African position and National Plans of Action (NPA) to be prepared for guiding national and regional efforts through the first two decades of the next century within the Global Plan of Action.

Preparation of the 1997 special session of the UN General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21 (Agenda item 6)

96. The Committee considered the agenda item on the preparations for the 1997 special session of the UN General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda.21 of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was entrusted with the responsibility of the preparations. The forthcoming session of the CSD will be dedicated to issues to be included in the agenda, dealing with: (a) a comprehensive review assessment of the progress achieved at all levels in the implementation agenda 21 and other outcomes of UNCED; (b) a concise assessment of progress achieved in specific sectoral and cross-sectoral areas; (c) country profiles providing concise presentations of progress made and constraints encountered at the national level; (d) recommendations for future actions and priorities; (e) major and emerging trends and issues, including the environmental impact of activities that are gravely hazardous to the environment; (f) recommendations on the future role of the CSD.

97. The initial substantive intergovernmental discussions on the possible outcome of the special session will take place during the Ministerial Segment of CSD in May 1996. A comprehensive report is being prepared by the Secretary-General of the UN for this session of the CSD in which ECA is participating.

98. In addition, it is the feeling that there is the need to go beyond establishing closer links and cooperation with the UN Regional Commissions, regional offices of UNEP and regional development banks. Cooperation with regional entities operating under the aegis of various UN agencies should also be sought. In this context, the appropriate regional institutions and coordinating mechanisms are being requested to: (a) establish, where it does not exist, an inventory of all regional activities in the area of sustainable development carried out under the auspices or with the involvement of UN organizations; (b) try to identify, particularly in the context of the 1997 review, sustainable development issues and priorities that could be better addressed at the regional rather than at the global or national levels.

99. For Africa, this Conference may wish to consider the strategies for enhancing the region's participation by: (i) trying to identify, particularly in the context of the 1997 review, sustainable development issues and priorities that could be better addressed at the regional rather than at the global or national levels; (ii) establishing, where it does not exist, an inventory of all regional activities in the area of sustainable development carried out under the auspices or with the involvement of UN organizations; (iii) identifying major and emerging trends and issues, including the environmental impact of activities that are gravely hazardous to the environment; (iv) considering recommendations for future actions and priorities, including the issue of financial commitments at Rio, access to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) ; and (v) considering recommendations on the future role of the CSD. These considerations should be on the agenda of the proposed joint meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Fifteen and AMCEN in Dakar in 1997.

100. A delegate requested that the issue of financial mechanisms under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) be discussed for inclusion on the agenda on the regional preparations for Africa. Background information was given of the situation and it was agreed that it should be part of the agenda.

Any other Business (Agenda item 7)

101. There was no other business.

Adoption of the Report of the meeting (Agenda item 8)

102. The Report was adopted as amended.

Closing of the meeting (Agenda item 9)

103. The Chairman, in closing the meeting, expressed his appreciation for the informed and lively debate which had characterised the Meeting of Experts and his hope that countries would be forcefully pursuing the implementation of policies for sustainable development and achieve decisive progress in the elimination of poverty. He thanked all participants for their contributions and acknowledged the services of the secretariat in ensuring effective procedures.

ANNEX II
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

**List of Participants/
Liste des participants**

ALGERIA/ALGERIE

Mr. Boudjemaa Delmi, Ambassador, Algerian Embassy, P.O. Box 5740, Tel 65 23 00, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Benaouda Ibrahim Hacı, Conseiller, Algerian Embassy, P.O. Box 5740, Tel 65 23 00, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Zineddine Birouk, Conseiller, Algerian Embassy, P.O. Box 5740, Tel 65 23 00, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ANGOLA/ANGOLA

Mr. Toko Serao, Ambassador, Embassy of Angola, P.O. Box 2962, Tel 51 00 85, Fax 51 49 22, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Tete Antonio, Second Secretary, Embassy of Angola, P.O. Box 2962, Tel 51 00 85, FAX 51 49 22, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

BENIN/BENIN

Mr. Damien Kodjo, Chef Division Etude et Normalisation Technique, Direction de l'Environnement, B.P. 01-3621 Cotonou

BOTSWANA/BOTSWANA

Hon. M.N. Nasha, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing, P/Bag 006, Tel (267) 35 41 00, FAX (267) 30 20 51, Gaborone

Mr. C.T. Ntwaagae, Executive Secretary, National Conservation Strategy Coordinating Agency, P/Bag 0068, Tel (267) 302050, FAX (267) 30 20 51, Gaborone

Mr. Ntshabele Josiah Manamela, Principal Food Strategy Coordinator, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, P/Bag 008, Gaborone

Mr. Inyatseng Mandevu, Principal Agric. Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, P/Bag 003, Gaborone

BURKINA FASO/BURKINA FASO

Hon. Jean-Baptiste Kambou, Conseiller du Ministre Environnement, Burkina Faso

BURKINA FASO/BURKINA FASO

Hon. Jean-Baptiste Kambou, Conseiller du Ministre Environnement, Burkina Faso

Mr. Michel Jérôme Tankoano, Coordonnateur au SP/Conagese, SP/Conagese, Tel 312464 ou 313166, Ouagadougou

Mr. Oumarou Pare, Directeur de l'Urbanisme et de l'aménagement, 01 B.P. 18, Tel 33 21 24, 30 23 69, Ouagadougou

BURUNDI/BURUNDI

Mr. Salvator Kadobeye, Premier Conseiller, Ambassade du Burundi, Addis Ababa, Tel 65 13 00

CAMEROON/CAMEROUN

Mr. Joseph Essombe Edimo, Chargé d'Affaires a.i., Cameroon Embassy, Tel. 514844, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Edward Ma'a Ole, Second Secretary, Cameroon Embassy, Tel. 514844, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Charles Mengalle, Cameroon Embassy, Tel. 514844, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

CONGO/CONGO

H.E. Mr. Dieudonné Antoine Ganga, Ambassadeur, Ambassade du Congo

Mme Marie Mboundzi, Conseiller, Ambassade du Congo, B.P. 5639, Tel. 514188, Addis Abeba, Ethiopie

M. Jean Prosper Miamona, Secrétaire d'Ambassade, Ambassade du Congo B.P. 5639, Tel. 514188, Addis Abeba, Ethiopie

COTE D'IVOIRE/COTE D'IVOIRE

H.E. Mr. Daouda Diabaté, Ambassadeur, Ambassade de Côte d'Ivoire, B.P. 3668, Tel 71 12 13, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Christophe Kouakou, Conseiller, Ambassade de Côte d'Ivoire, B.P. 3668, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Zenika Sanogho Touré, Premier Secrétaire, Ambassade de Côte d'Ivoire, B.P. 3668, Tel 71 12 13, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

DJIBOUTI/DJIBOUTI

H.E. Mr. Djibril Djama Elabe, Ambassadeur, Ambassade de Djibouti, B.P. 1022, Tel 61 32 00, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Ahmed Yacin, Conseiller, Ambassade de Djibouti, B.P. 1022, Tel 61 32 00, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

EGYPT/EGYPTE

H.E. Ambassador Mohammed Assem Ibrahim, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Ethiopia, Addis Ababa

Mr. Salah Hafez, President of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency of the Arab Republic of Egypt

H.E. Amb. Nahad Zekri, Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cairo, Egypt

Mr. Reda H. Zaki, Second Secretary, Environment & Sustainable Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cairo, Egypt

Mr. Alaa El Elsheikh, Third Secretary, Egypt Embassy, Addis Ababa

EQUATORIAL GUINEA/GUINEE EQUATORIALE

H.E. Mr. Nseng Salvador Ela, Ambassador, Embassy of Equatorial Guinea, Tel. 61 00 34, B.P. 246, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Abeso Oyana Narciso Ntugu, First Secretary, Embassy of Equatorial Guinea, Tel. 61 00 34, B.P. 246, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ERITREA/ERITREE

Mr. Saleh Omar, First Secretary, Embassy of the State of Eritrea, Tel. 512844, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ETHIOPIA/ETHIOPIE

H.E. Mr. Haile Asegidie, Minister, Ministry of Works and Urban Development, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

H.E. Dr. Teketel Forsido, Minister of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture, P.O. Box 62347, Tel 152816, Addis Ababa

H.E. Mr. Mekonnen Manyazewal, Vice Minister of Economic Development and Cooperation

H.E. Mr. Berhanu Tamrat, Vice Minister,

Mr. Getahun Tafesse, Head, Welfare Monitoring Unit, Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation, P.O. Box 1037, Tel 12 89 62, Addis Ababa

Mr. Amare G-Egziabher, Coordinator, Population & Environment, P.O. Box 40302, Tel 11 16 22, Addis Ababa

Mr. Abuye Aneley, Ministry of Works and Urban Development (MWUD), Tel 15 52 80 (office), Addis Ababa

Mr. Mesfin Alebachew, Third Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel 51 16 83, Addis Ababa

Mr. Girma Hailu, Team Leader, Environment Protection Authority, P.O. Box 12760, Addis Ababa

Mr. Taye Tesfaye, United Nations Directorate Head, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel 15 29 25 or 51 32 01 (office), 18 31 68 (residence), Addis Ababa

Mr. Dereje Legesse, Third Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel 51 16 83, Addis Ababa

Ms. Lulabesha Retta, Project Manager, IHA-UDP, Addis Ababa

Ms. Hadera Gebru, A/Head of Animal & Fishery Resources Development Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Addis Ababa

Mr. Mathewos Hunde, Agronomist, Ministry of Agriculture, Tel 15 70 67, Addis Ababa

Mr. Assefa Workie Kassa, Senior Socio-Economist, Ministry of Agriculture, P.O. Box 33839, Tel 15 13 25 (office), 15 94 71 (residence), Addis Ababa

Mr. Netsere Gebreyes, TLDP/Ministry of Agriculture (MOA)/Agro-Economist, Tel 65 14 00, Addis Ababa

Mr. Deribey Mamo, Public Relation, Tel. 151669, Addis Ababa

Ms. Tsedale Waktola, Acting Department Head, EPA, Addis Ababa

Mr. Tewolde Berhan Grebre Egziabher, General Manager, EPA, Tel. 181658, Addis Ababa

GABON/GABON

S.E. Emmanuel Mendoume-Nze, Ambassadeur, Ambassade du Gabon, B.P. 1256, Addis Ababa, Tel. 61 10 75, 61 03 32

Mr. Jean Baptiste Mebiame, Conseiller du Ministre, Ministère des Eaux et Forêts et de l'Environnement, Tel. 76 55 48, Fax. (241)76 10 73, B.P. 8224, Libreville, Gabon

Mr. Alfred MOUNGARA MOUSSOTSI, B.P. 1256, Ambassade du Gabon, Addis Ababa, Tel. 61 10 75

Mr. Désiré Nguema Nzue, Premier Conseiller, Ambassade du Gabon, Tel. 61 10 75, B.P. 1256, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Pierre MOUNANGA, Ambassade du Gabon, Tel. 61 10 75, B.P. 1256, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

GHANA/GHANA

H.E. Mr. Sam Pee Yalley, Deputy Minister for Environment, Science and Technology, P.O. Box M232, Tel. (233-21) 662533, Accra (Leader)

H.E. Benjamin G. Godwyll, Ambassador, Embassy of Ghana, Tel. 711402, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Edwin Barnes, Director, Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology, Box M-232, Tel. (233-21) 666710, Accra

Mr. Kobina Wudu, Embassy of Ghana, Tel. 71 14 02, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

GUINEA/GUINEE

Mr. Soumah Ibrahim Sory, Ambassade de Guinée

Ms. Diallo Marly, Directrice, Division Population, Ministère du Plan et de la Coopération, B.P. 221, Tel. 411867, Conakry

Mr. Ibrahima Sory Sangare, Conseiller Socio-économique, Ministère du Plan, B.P. 221, Tel. 415082, Conakry

KENYA/KENYA

H.E. Mr. G.K. Muriithi, Ambassador, Kenya Embassy, P.O. Box 3301, Tel. 610033, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Ms. Fliziya Mohamed, Second Secretary, Kenya Embassy, P.O. Box 3301, Tel. 610033, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

LESOTHO/LESOTHO

H.E. Mr. Julius Metsing, Ambassador, Lesotho Embassy, Tel. 61 43 68, B.P. 7483, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Thabo Makhakhe, Director, Dept. of Environment, P/Bag A23, Maseru, Lesotho

Mr. Thabang Lekhela, Lesotho Embassy, Tel. 61 43 68, B.P. 7483, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

LIBERIA/LIBERIA

H.E. Mr. Francis M. Carbah, Minister of Plan & Ec. Affs., Ministry of Plan & Ec. Affairs, Randall Street, Monrovia

H.E. Mr. Marcus M. Kofa, Ambassador, Embassy of Liberia, Addis Ababa

Mr. Melville F. Harris, Director, Ministry of Planning/Economic Affairs, P.O. Box 9016, Monrovia

Mr. David J. Saryee, Minister Counsellor, Embassy of Liberia, P.O. Box 3116, Tel. 513655, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA/JAMAHIRIYA ARABE LIBYENNE

Mr. Sadik M. Ben Sadik, Counsellor, Libyan Embassy, P.O. Box 5728, Tel. 511077, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Farag Lamushi, Counsellor, Libyan Embassy, P.O. Box 5728, Tel. 511077, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

MADAGASCAR/MADAGASCAR

Mr. Jean Delacroix Bakoniarivo, Ambassadeur, Ambassade de la République de Madagascar, B.P. 60004, Tel. 61 25 55, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Jean David Auguste Raveloson, Premier Conseiller, Ambassade de Madagascar, B.P. 60004, Tel. 61 25 55, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

MALAWI/MALAWI

Hon. Mr. Bitwell H. Kawonga, M.P., Minister of Research and Environmental Affairs, Ministry of Research and Environmental Affairs, Box 30745, Lilongwe 3, Malawi

Hon. Mrs. Lizzy Lossa, M.P., Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Livestock Development

H.E. Mrs. Sophie Kalimde, Ambassador, Malawi Embassy, Tel. 71 24 40, B.P. 2316, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Lucius Chikuni, Commissioner for Disaster Preparedness, Relief and Rehabilitation, P/B 336, Lilongwe 3

Mr. Humphrey Titus Nthala, Deputy Secretary of Disaster Preparedness and Rehabilitation

Mrs. Janet Kathyola, Principal Administrative Officer, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, P.O. Box 30134, Malawi

Mrs. Etta M'mangisa, Principal Environmental Officer, Ministry of Research & Environmental Affairs, Box 30745, Lilongwe, Malawi

Mr. Lawrence Chipembere, Councillor, Malawi Embassy, Tel. 712440, B.P. 2316, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Dr. Soviet Pair Kamwendo, Controller of Agricultural Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, P.O. Box 30134, Lilongwe

Mr. D.R. Ezala, First Secretary, Malawi Embassy, Tel. 712440, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

MALI/MALI

H.E. Mr. Modibo Traoré, Ministre du Développement Rural et de l'Environnement, B.P. 61, Tel (223) 223436/222785, Bamako

H.E. Mr. Souleymane Sidibé, Ambassadeur du Mali, Addis Abeba

Mr. Denis Traoré, Commissaire au Plan, Commissariat au Plan, B.P. E791, Bamako

Mr. Mohamed Lamine Kalle, Conseiller Technique, MDRF, B.P. 61, Bamako

Mr. Zoumana Camara, Chargé de Mission, Commissariat au Plan, B.P. E791, Tel. 232908, Bamako

Mr. Acherif Ag Mohamed, Premier Conseiller, Ambassade du Mali, Tel. 61 20 81, Addis Abeba

MOZAMBIQUE/MOZAMBIQUE

Mr. Alexandre Herculamo Manjate, Second Secretary, Mozambique Embassy, P.O. Box 5671, Addis Ababa

Ms. Carla Elis Mucavi, Second Secretary, Mozambique Embassy, P.O. Box 5671, Addis Ababa

NAMIBIA/NAMIBIE

H.E. Mr. Hinyangerwa P. Asheeke, Ambassador, Namibia Embassy, P.O. Box 1443, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mrs. Ingrid Tjizo, Minister Counsellor, Namibia Embassy, P.O. Box 1443, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Linus Mukasa, First Secretary, Namibia Embassy, P.O. Box 1443, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

NIGER/NIGER

H.E. Mr. Assane Igodoe, Ambassadeur, Ambassade du Niger, B.P. 5791, Addis Abéba, Ethiopie

Mr. Laoualy Ada, Directeur de l'environnement, B.P. 578, Niamey, Niger

Mr. O. Sanda Mahaman, Conseiller, Ambassade du Niger, B.P. 5791, Addis Abéba, Ethiopie

Mr. Aboubacar-Ibrahim Abani, Premier Secrétaire, Ambassade du Niger, B.P. 5791, Addis Abéba, Ethiopie

NIGERIA/NIGERIA

Hon. Alhaji Abdullahi Adamu, Minister of State for Works and Housing, Ministry of Works & Housing, HQ, T.B.S, Lagos

Mr. Alh Saleh Balami, Special Assistant, Ministry of Works & Housing, HQ, T.B.S, Lagos

Dr. Nkem G. Ekeh, Assistant Director, Federal Ministry of Works & Housing, Federal Secretariat, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria

Mr. Yacoob Abiodun, Secretary, Housing Policy Council, Federal Ministry of Works & Housing, Housing Policy Council, 33 ONIKOYI ROAD, P.M.B. 40011, Falomo, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria

Mrs. F.A. Ukonga, Deputy Chief of Mission, Nigeria Embassy, Tel. 55 06 44

Mr. E.A. Ukeh, Counsellor, Nigeria Embassy, Tel. 55 06 44, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

RWANDA/RWANDA

Mr. Jean N. Nayinzira, Ministre de l'Environnement et du Tourisme, Ministère de l'Environnement et du Tourisme,

M. Drocella Mugorewera, Directeur de cabinet, Ministère de l'environnement et du Tourisme, B.P. 2378, Kigali, Rwanda

M. Remy Mugunga, Directeur de la Planification, Présidence de la République, B.P. 15, Kigali

M. Augustin Mutijima, Chef de Service Planification et Aménagement du Territoire, Services du Premier Ministre, B.P. 1334, Kigali

M. Vincent Ntambabazi, Deuxième Conseiller, Ambassade du Rwanda, P.O. Box 5618, Tel. 610300, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

SENEGAL/SENEGAL

H.E. Mr. Abdoulaye Bathily, Minstre de l'Environnement et de la Protection de la Nature, Building Administratif 7ème étage, B.P. 4055, Dakar

H.E. Mr. Fall Papa Louis, Ambassadeur, Ambassade du Sénégal, Tel. 61 13 76, Addis Abeba, Ethiopie

M. Sekou Sonko, Conseiller Technique au Ministère de l'Urbanisme et de l'Habitat, Ministère de l'Urbanisme et de l'Habitat ex camp Lat-Dior, 68, Cité Elisabeth Diouf Hann, Tel. 225979/239127, Dakar

M. Boubacar Niane, Conseiller Technique, Ministère Environnement et Protection Nature, Tel. 223849, Dakar

M. Diallo Abdoussalam, Conseiller, Ambassade du Sénégal, Tel. 61 13 76, Addis Abeba, Ethiopie

Mr. Mbaye Ndao, Deuxième Secrétaire, Ambassade du Sénégal, Tel. 61 13 76, Addis Abeba, Ethiopie

SIERRA LEONE/SIERRA LEONE

H.E. Mr. Malcolm O. Cole, Ambassador, Embassy of Sierra Leone, Tel. 710033, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mrs. N. Bakie Remoe-Doherty, Second Secretary, Embassy of Sierra Leone, Tel. 710033, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

SOUTH AFRICA/AFRIQUE DU SUD

H.E. Mr. Welile Nhlapo, Ambassador, South African Embassy, Addis Ababa

Dr. F.M. Orkin, Head, Statistical Service

Mr. Mishack Molope, Chief Director, National Ministry of Agriculture, Private Bag X250, Pretoria

Ms. Ena Van Rensburg, Deputy Director, International Population Liaison, Department of Welfare, Private Bag X901, Pretoria

Ms. Annette Hugo, Assistant Director, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Private Bag X447, Pretoria

Mr. A. Bramdeo, First Secretary, South African Embassy, Tel. 713034, Addis Ababa

SUDAN/SOUDAN

H. E. Dr. Mohamed Khair Elzubier, Minister, Ministry of Finance and Economy, Khartoum

Mr. Nadir Mohamed Awad, Higher Council for Environment, P.O. Box 10488, Khartoum

Mr. Elfatih Ali Mohamed, Deputy under-secretary, Ministry of Finance, P.O. Box 2092, Khartoum

SWAZILAND/SWAZILAND

Mr. Lolo Mkhabela, Senior Physical Planning Officer, Ministry of Housing & Urban Development, P.O. Box 1832, Mbabane

TANZANIA/TANZANIE

H.E. Mr. Christopher Liundi, Ambassador, Embassy of Tanzania, P.O. Box 1077, Tel. 518155, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Antony Cheche, Minister Plenipotentiary, Embassy of Tanzania, P.O. Box 1077, Tel. 518155, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Hon. Daniel Yona, Minister, Embassy of Tanzania, P.O. Box 1077, Tel. 518155, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Miss. Zuhura Bundala, Counselor, Embassy of Tanzania, P.O. Box 1077, Tel. 518155, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Francis Mwaipaja, First Secretary, Embassy of Tanzania, P.O. Box 1077, Tel. 518155, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Kassim Khamis, Second Secretary, Embassy of Tanzania, P.O. Box 1077, Tel. 518155, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Dimas Kajogoo, Embassy of Tanzania, P.O. Box 1077, Tel. 518155, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

TCHAD/CHAD

H.E. Mr. Kette Nodji Moise, Ministre de l'Environnement et du Tourisme

H.E. Mr. Hahamat Abdelkerim, Ambassadeur, Ambassade du Tchad, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Ali Ngaram, Directeur général, Environnement et Tourisme, B.P. 4205, Ndjamen

Mme Djimasbeye née Djimtebaye Ndade Mandagua, Directrice Adjointe de la Coopération Internationale, Ministère du Plan et Coopération, B.P. 286, Ndjamen

Mr. Ahamat Hamid, Directeur de la Planification, Ministère du Plan et de la Coopération, B.P. 286, Ndjamen

TUNISIA/TUNISIE

H.E. Mr. Bechir Ben Aissa, Ambassadeur, Ambassade de Tunisie, Tel. 653818, Addis Abeba, Ethiopie

Mr. Ezzeddine Zayani, Premier Conseiller de l'Ambassade de Tunisie, Addis Abeba

UGANDA/UGANDA

Mr. Geoffrey Kabushewga, Counsellor, Uganda Embassy, Tel. 513088, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ZAIRE/ZAIRE

Mr. T. Mulumba, First Counsellor, Embassy of Zaire, P.O. Box 2723, Tel. 710111/20, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ZAMBIA/ZAMBIE

H.E. Mrs. Sinataa Akapelwa, Ambassador, Zambia Embassy, P.O. Box 1909, Tel. 711302, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Ms. Ireene Fundafunda, Counsellor, Zambia Embassy, P.O. Box 1909, Tel. 711302, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Boldwin Njovu, First Secretary, Zambia Embassy, P.O.Box 1909, Tel. 711302, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ZIMBABWE/ZIMBABWE

Mr. Tafadzwa Roda Ngarande, First Secretary, Embassy of Zimbabwe, Tel. 613877, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

OBSERVERS

AUSTRIA EMBASSY

Mr. Christian Fellner, First Secretary, Austria Embassy, Tel. 71 00 12, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

BELGIUM EMBASSY

Mr. Jean-Paul Charlier, First Secretary, P.O. Box 1231, Tel. 61 18 13, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

CANADIAN EMBASSY

Mr. Paul Hitschfeld, Counsellor, P.O. Box 1130, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

CHINA EMBASSY

H. E. Mr. Jin Sen, Ambassador, P.O. Box 5643, Tel. 71 19 60, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Yang Tong, Diplomat, Foreign Affairs Ministry, P.O. Box 100701, Beijing

Mr. Guijin Fan, Counsellor, Chinese Foreign Ministry, Tel. 71 19 60

EMBASSY OF ITALY

Mr. Dino Danesi Visconti, Deputy Chief of Mission, Tel. 553044, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

EMBASSY OF JAPAN

Mr. Kenji Miyata, Chargé d'Affaires a.i., P.O. Box 5650, Tel. 511088, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Zewdie Tibebe, Economic Adviser, P.O. Box 5650, Tel. 511088, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Minoru Kiriwara, Third Secretary, P.O. Box 5650, Tel. 511088, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Takeshi Murazawa, Third Secretary, P.O. Box 5650, Tel. 511088, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

FINLAND EMBASSY

Mr. Lauri Kangas, Chargé d'Affaires, Tel. 513900, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

FRENCH EMBASSY/AMBASSADE DE FRANCE

Mr. Michel Prom, Premier Secrétaire, Tel. 550066, Addis Abeba, Ethiopie

INDIAN EMBASSY

Mr. Om Prakash Bhola, First Secretary, P.O. Box 528, Tel. 552100, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

RUSSIAN FEDERATION EMBASSY

H.E. Mr. Volkov A. Vladimir, Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, P.O. Box 1500, Tel. 613594, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Mizin V. Konstantin, Attaché of the Russian Embassy, P.O. Box 1500, Tel. 613594, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Youri Vinogradov, Counsellor, Tel. 613594, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Riashin N. Dmitry, Third Secretary of the Russian Embassy, P.O. Box 1500, Tel. 613594, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

UNITED STATES EMBASSY/AMBASSADE DES ETATS UNIS

Mr. Herbert Thomas, P.O. Box 1014, Tel. 550666 ext. 289, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ORGANIZATION FOR AFRICAN UNITY/ORGANISATION DE L'UNITE AFRICAINE (OAU/OUA)

Mr. Pascal Gayama, Assistant Secretary General, P.O. Box 3243, Tel. 517700 ext. 253, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Edward Clinton, Head of Environment Division, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

AFRICAN CENTRE OF METEOROLOGICAL APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT (ACMAD)

Mr. Tsegaye Tadesse, Team Leader, Met. Com. NMSA, P.O. Box 1090, Tel. 51 22 99 Ext. 240, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ARAB LEAGUE MISSION TO OAU

Mr. Shamsa H.M. Farah, P.O. Box 5768, Tel. 552687, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO)

Mr. Gana Diagne, FAO Representative to the OAU and ECA in Ethiopia, P.O. Box 5536, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. A.V. Obeng, Special Adviser to the FAO Representative and Liaison Officer to OAU and ECA, P.O. Box 5536, Tel. 51 30 93, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

HOPE FOR WOMAN

Ms. Kelly S. Yohannes, Tel. 16 26 40, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO)

Mr. Martine Guilio, Programme Officer, P.O. Box 2788, Tel. 51 73 20, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Dr. B.O. Alli, Senior Specialist, P.O. Box 2532, Tel. 51 73 20/ 51 16 96, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. G. Ruigu, Senior Specialist, Employment Strategies, P.O. Box 2788, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF)

Mr. Thomas Gibsen, Resident Representative, Tel. 51 14 11, Ethiopia, Addis Ababa

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION (ITU)

Mr. Alexander Fergousson-Nicol, Representative, 49 Quorn Av., Harare, Zimbabwe

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)/RLO

Mr. Ahouanmenou Jerome, UNDP Rep. to the OAU and Chief, Liaison Office with ECA, P.O. Box 5580, Fax. 251-1-515919, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Nyambi Samuel, Director, P.O. Box 5580, Fax. 251-1-515919, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Ndiang'ui Ndegna, Acting Chief, P.O. Box 5580, Fax. 251-1-515919, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Caleb Tamwesigire, Programme Officer, P.O. Box 5580, Fax. 251-1-515919, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP)

Mr. James Kamara, Programme Officer, P.O. Box 30552, Tel. (2542) 624288, Fax (254 2) 62 39 28, Nairobi, Kenya

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)

Mr. M.M. Musa, Director, P.O. Box 1177, Tel. 51 39 53, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Ms. Mavis Amonoo, Program Assistant, P.O. Box 1177, Tel. 51 39 53, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)

Mr. R. R.N. Tuluhungwa, Representative to Ethiopia, P.O. Box 1169, Addis Ababa, Tel. 51 51 55

Mrs. Matima Bahri, Liaison Officer, P.O. Box 1169, Addis Ababa, Tel. 51 51 55

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)

Mr. Jerome Ahouanmenou, UNDP Rep. to the OAU & Chief, Liaison Officer with ECA

UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (UNIDO)

Mr. Mohamed Eisa, Industrial Officer, UNIDO, ISED/ENV, P.O. Box 400, 1400 Vienna, Austria

UNSO/UNDP

Mr. Samuel Nayambi, Director, UNSO, New York, USA

Mr. Ndegwa Ndiangui, Programme Officer, Tel. 254 2 622013, Fax (254 2)622069, P.O. Box 30552, Nairobi, Kenya

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)

Mr. Justin Bagrishya, Deputy Country Director, B.P. 8055, Tel. 513717, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Tadesse Tegegne, Programme Officer, P.O. Box 5500, Tel 515188, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)

Mr. Alexandre Nunes Correia, Représentant de l'OMS auprès de l'OUA et Coordonnateur de l'OMS avec la CEA, B.P. 3050, Tel. 515178, Addis Abeba, Ethiopie

Dr. Brigitte Toure, Programme Officer, P.O. Box 3050, Addis Ababa, Tel. 51 76 00

SECRETARIAT

Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa

Mr. M.D. Sarr, Deputy Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa

Mr. Y. Pashkov, Officer-in-Charge, Natural Resources Division

Mr. Lucas Tandap, Chief, Environment Unit, Natural Resources Division

Mr. Azm Fazlul Hoque, Chief of Water and Marine Affairs Section, Natural Resources Division

Mr. P.A. Traoré, Chief of Mineral Resources Unit, Natural Resources Division

Mr. Sarim Kol, EAO, Environment Unit, Natural Resources Division

Mr. S. Konda, EAO, Environment Unit, Natural Resources Division

Mr. Albert N. Yama, EAO, Mineral Resources Unit, Natural Resources Division

Mr. Abdishakour Gulaid, EAO, Cartography and Remote Sensing Unit, Natural Resources Division

Ms. Christine Zumkeller, EAO, Energy Unit, Natural Resources Unit

Mr. S.K. Imbamba, UNECA, Lusaka MULPOC, Box. 30647, Lusaka, Zambia

Mr. Abdulaye Niang, Officer-in-Charge, Agriculture Division

Mr. Maurice Tankou, EAO, Agriculture Division

Mr. De Pedro José, EAO, Agriculture Division

Mrs. A. Andrianasolo, EAO, Agriculture Division

Mr. Y. Tekolla, EAO, Agriculture Division

Mr. Jean Marin, EAO, Agriculture Division

Mr. Amare Bekele, Research Assistant, Agriculture Division

Mr. A. Bahri, Chief, Population Division

Mr. Amadou Lamine Gueye, EAO, Population Division

Mr. K.A. Banda, EAO, Population Division

Mr. P.K. Bugembe, Officer-in-Charge, Industry and Human Settlement Division

Mr. A.T. Zakharov, OIC, Human Settlements Section

Mr. Ousman Laye, EAO, IHSD

Mt. Fatmao Moma, EAO, Industry and Human Settlement Division

Mr. S.D. Akande, Chief, Transport Operation, Transport Division

Mr. Bakary Simaga, MRAG

Ms Wanjiku Mwagiru, MRAG

Ms. Victoire Tankou, Statistics Division

Mr. Daniel R.W. Faux, Regional Adviser, Transport Division

Mr. John Foday, OIC, LDCs/LLd/Isld countries Section

Mrs. D.C. Iwuji

Ms. Hafida Khelladi, Interpreter

Ms. Oalmide Adedeji, Interpreter

Mr. Momar K. Diagne, Interpreter

Mr. M. Lucas Amuri, Interpreter

Mr. Pierre King-Ondoua, Interpreter

Mr. Belkacem Guertar, Interpreter

Mr. M. Larbi Bennacer, Interpreter

Mr. Hosni Tammam Kilany, Interpreter

Ms. Zeinab Abdel Mousef, Interpreter