

Decision 4/SS6: Action for combating desertification, drought, floods and restoring degraded land to achieve a land-degradation-neutral world

We, African Ministers of the Environment,

Having met in Cairo from 18 to 19 April 2016 at the sixth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

Recalling decisions 479 and 492 from the 21st and 22nd Ordinary Sessions of the AU Summit¹ from 25-26th May 2013 and 30-31st January 2014 on the need to strengthen African Leadership in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) process

Recognizing that Africa has the largest number of Parties to the UNCCD severely hit by desertification, land degradation, effects of drought, and the largest effected areas.

Welcoming the Geneva Declaration outcomes on the High Level Meeting on National Drought Policies (HMNDP) that was held in Geneva in 2013,

Recalling the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 22 December 2015, decision 70/206, Implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those countries experiencing Serious Drought and Desertification, Particularly in Africa,

Recalling the Sustainable Development Goals on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in particular Goal 15 on the protection, restoration and promotion of sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss, and Target 15.3 by 2020, combat desertification, and restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world

Alarmed by the ongoing 2015/2016 El Nino as one of the most severe in recent decades and extreme drought and acute water shortages across Southern Africa, the Horn of Africa and other affected African countries;

Welcoming the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/1, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in particular its goal 15, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for the third International Conference on Financing for Development in particular paragraph 17, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction;

Recalling that the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in those countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, acknowledges that desertification and drought are problems of global dimension and that joint action of the international community is needed to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought;

Recalling Decision 3/COP.12 of the UNCCD, which defined land degradation neutrality as “a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems”;

Recalling the Rio + 20 outcomes to monitor land degradation and restore degraded lands in accordance with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification,

Decide,

1. To call for the building a global partnership that would promote a shared vision of resilient landscapes for resilient people and support integration of sustainable land management, desertification, land degradation and drought into national development policies, strategies and programmes.
2. To call upon member states, through the policy and technical guidance and coordination of the UNCCD Secretariat, to develop appropriate indicators for monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and targets related to land degradation neutrality."
3. To request UNEP to cooperate with the UNCCD on the implementation of the mandate given to the UNCCD, regarding target 15.3 of the sustainable development goals on land degradation neutrality and report to the next sessions of UNEA on the related progress.

¹ DOC. Assembly/AU/12(XXI) Add.2 and Doc. Assembly/AU/8(XXII)

4. To support the ongoing programme on land degradation neutrality target setting already initiated by the UNCCD Secretariat in the context of achieving land degradation neutrality, and encourages UNEP to provide required technical support to African countries in this programme.
5. To welcome “The Economics of Land Degradation in Africa (2015)” report developed through UNEP and use its outcomes as a vehicle for creating new data and generation of policy relevant information that links the biophysical aspects of land degradation with the economic drivers of change.
6. To requests member States to develop a Strategic Framework for Drought Management and Actions to Enhance Resilience to Drought and develop Early Warning Systems for African Countries, through support and technical guidance of the UNCCD and other relevant partners.
7. To call upon the international community and other stakeholders to support the implementation of regional initiatives towards combating desertification and land degradation, such as the Great Green Wall Initiative in Africa.