


African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
Seventeenth session
 Durban, South Africa, 11 – 15 November 2019

Information note on the seventeenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

"Taking Action for Environmental Sustainability and Prosperity in Africa"

Introduction

1. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was created in 1985 to promote regional cooperation between African Governments in addressing environmental challenges confronting the region. The work of AMCEN has contributed significantly to the heightened policy responses of African Governments and the international community to Africa's environment and sustainable development opportunities and challenges.
2. Over the years, AMCEN has demonstrated strong leadership in advancing African causes and interests in environment and sustainable development matters. AMCEN through its meetings provides guidance with regard to key regional policies and initiatives related to the environment and sustainable development. Pursuant to paragraph 1 of article 9 of its Constitution, AMCEN holds its ordinary sessions once every two or three years.
3. In view of this, and in response to the kind offer by the Government of the Republic of South Africa at the sixteenth session, held in Libreville, Gabon from 12 to 16 June 2017, the seventeenth ordinary session of AMCEN will be held from 11 to 15 November 2019 in Durban, South Africa. The session will consist of a meeting of the expert group from 11 to 13 November, and a ministerial segment, on 14 and 15 November.
4. The focus of the seventeenth session of AMCEN is the need for African countries to take practical action, including implementation of policies, relevant regional and global frameworks, in order for the continent to attain environmental sustainability and prosperity and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Africa's Agenda 2063. The session will therefore be held under the following theme: **"Taking Action for Environmental Sustainability and Prosperity in Africa"**. The theme builds on the focus of the seventh special and sixteenth regular sessions of AMCEN on turning environmental policies into action, as well as the need to invest in Innovative Environmental Solutions for accelerating implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063.
5. The seventeenth session will help the region deliberate on the policy implications and financing opportunities for implementation of the Nationally Determined Contributions in Africa, as well as prepare for the 25th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC-COP25) to be held in Chile later in the year. Delegates will reflect on the outcomes of the 2019 Climate Action Summit that will be held on 23 September 2019 and which aims to boost ambition and accelerate actions to implement the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and address the climate challenge. The session will also be an opportunity for the Ministers to be updated on the implementation of the various African commissions and initiatives on climate change.
6. The session will provide an opportunity for countries to reflect on the outcomes of the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) that took place from 2-13 September 2019 and agree on the way forward. The conference of parties agreed to increase and further elaborate action on the ground to ensure that the Convention's

goals for 2018-2030 are achieved, especially to control and reverse further loss of productive land from desertification, land degradation and drought.

7. Due to the increasing and severity of environmental challenges that entail loss of biodiversity, AMCEN will deliberate on ways that the continent can address these challenges. Biodiversity issues are critical, especially as globally member states are working towards the post-2020 biodiversity framework and the development of a “New Global Deal for Nature and People” is gaining momentum.

8. The concept of a circular economy has gained traction in the global arena in recent years and will be a key area of discussion during the AMCEN meeting. The approach presents opportunities to promote higher levels of resource efficiency, thereby contributing to value-addition to the processing of Africa’s natural resources. In addition, the African Circular Economy Alliance was launched at the 23rd Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2017 in Bonn, Germany. The African Circular Economy Alliance aims to link and coordinate the various projects and programmes on the continent spurring momentum towards the transformation to a circular economy.

9. The session will offer an opportunity to discuss other pertinent issues, including AMCEN’s engagement with other sectors, especially ministries of finance, planning and economic development, contributions to the AMCEN Trust Fund, and the Fifth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5) of UNEP with the view to reaching an agreement on Africa’s common contribution to the theme. Ministers and experts will review progress made in the implementation of the decisions adopted at previous sessions of AMCEN, and consider other emerging issues of interest to the region, with the view to developing an AMCEN implementation follow-up framework.

10. Finally, ministers will adopt a declaration, decisions and a set of key messages reflecting the discussions during the session.

Associated meetings

11. The following associated meetings will be held:

- (a) 9 to 10 November 2019: Pre-AMCEN major groups and stakeholders (civil society) meeting;
- (b) 9 to 10 November 2019: Africa Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity
- (c) 15 November 2019: Breakfast meeting between African Ministers and European Union on Low Emissions Development strategies.

Side events

12. A number of side events will be held during the session. Details of these events will be published as soon as they become available.

Venue

13. The seventeenth session of AMCEN will be held at the Olive Convention Centre in Durban, South Africa, www.oliveconventioncentre.co.za.

14. The Olive Convention Centre is strategically positioned, being a 30-minute drive from Durban’s King Shaka International Airport, within walking distance from the Moses Mabhida Stadium, and metres away from Durban’s famous Golden Mile.

Services to delegates

15. Located in the heart of the vibrant multicultural city of Durban, the Olive Convention Centre offers a practical, user friendly and **technologically advanced meeting facilities**, with seating options ranging from cinema to classroom, banqueting to boardroom style. It has flexible and adaptable venues with 4 large conference halls, 7 meeting rooms and 2 executive suites with High Speed Internet(Wi-Fi) connectivity, Audio Visual Services, recording and streaming capabilities.

16. The Olive Convention Centre has implemented several green building initiatives that assist in reducing its carbon footprint. These include energy efficient lighting, the recycling of rain water for non-potable use and timers for high voltage operational equipment

Registration

17. All participants will be required to pre-register prior to the conference and on arrival at the Olive Convention Centre, Durban from Sunday, 10 November 2019, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
18. Badges will be issued to participants upon registration. For identification, security reasons, and to access the meeting rooms, participants are reminded that they should wear their badges at all times during the meeting.

Documents

19. The main pre-session documents for the meeting will be dispatched to AMCEN national focal points in advance of the meeting. The documents will also be available on the AMCEN website: <https://www.unenvironment.org/amcen>. Delegates are kindly reminded to bring the pre-session documents with them to the meeting, as the documents will be available at the Olive Convention Centre, Durban in very limited quantities as we are striving to reduce the carbon footprint of the meeting.

Greening the 17th Ordinary Session of AMCEN

20. *Paper Smart meeting:* AMCEN is the main regional environmental decision making body in Africa and therefore intends to lead by example in all its activities and interventions, by reducing its carbon footprint. Ideally, the 17th ordinary session of AMCEN will endeavour to service delegates with the varied methods of accessing documentation including all unrestricted, official documents and statements, while making efficient use of its resources by avoiding waste.
21. The information and documentation will be made available in digital platforms and formats. In addition to the distribution of information and background documents on the AMCEN website, in-session documents and statements will be shared by email. Official documents via flash drives will be available from a dedicated desk. Limited on-demand hard copy of official documents will be made available, only upon request in meeting rooms.

Hotel reservations, airport transfers and transport for delegates

22. Participants are kindly requested to make their own hotel bookings as soon as possible, since there are many large conferences taking place in Durban over the same period. A list of recommended hotels, with negotiated special rates and contact details will be made available on the AMCEN website: <https://www.unenvironment.org/amcen>. A conference specific reference code will be issued for each recommended hotel for use by participants to benefit from the negotiated conference rates.
23. The Government of South Africa will provide transport between King Shaka International Airport to the recommended hotels and to the venue of the Conference. A time schedule will be made available closer to the Conference. Transport will be made available from 06:00hrs on 10 November until 18:00hrs on 16 November 2019. No additional travel arrangements will be catered for. Please note that there will be no transport to the meeting venue for participants who opt to stay outside the recommended hotels.
24. On departure day, all participants travelling should be at the airport at least three (3) hours before the expected departure time. Should delegates wish to arrive early or remain in South Africa after the Conference, they should make their own transport arrangements.
25. With regard to logistical arrangements, participants should send information on flights, dates of arrival and departure and the name of the hotel where they intend to stay to Ms. Julie Kaibe (tel: +254 20 762 1354; e-mail: julie.kaibe@un.org; with a copies to unenvironment-amcen@un.org; Mr. David Ombisi (tel: +254 20 762 4221; e-mail: david.ombisi@un.org); Dr. Jenitha Badul, e-mail: jbadul@environment.gov.za; and Ms. Judie Combrink, e-mail: jcombrink@environment.gov.za.

General information on the Republic of South Africa

Visas

26. *Requirements for entry into South Africa when travelling on Diplomatic, Official or Private Passports differ from country to country, and are subject to change. Participants should always make enquiries before travelling to South Africa. Kindly use the link below for more information on visa requirements for your specific country:* <http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/applying-for-sa-visa>

27. For nationals of countries requiring visas, application of the visa must be made 3 weeks in advance of your departure: <http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/immigration-services/exempt-countries>. Visas will not be issued on arrival.

Health

28. Immunisation for yellow fever is an entry requirement if the journey starts or entails passing through the yellow fever belt. Travellers are required to be vaccinated at least ten days prior to entering the Republic of South Africa. Travellers without proof of vaccination will be refused entry into the Republic of South Africa.
29. Participants are advised to take adequate travel and health insurance before leaving their respective countries. The Government of South Africa or any of its partners organising the conference will not be held liable for any incidents that may arise due to a lack of adequate travel and health insurance.
30. Nevertheless, an on-site emergency medical service consisting of a medical facility with full resuscitation capability and advanced life support paramedic and a fully staffed ambulance will be extended to all participants and support staff on the days of the AMCEN conference. Hospitalisation at either a state or private healthcare facility will be on the account of the patient.

Some facts and figures

31. South Africa, officially the Republic of South Africa (RSA), is located at the southernmost region of Africa, with a long coastline that stretches more than 2,500 km and along two oceans (the Indian Ocean to the southeast and the Atlantic Ocean to the southwest). South Africa is bordered by Namibia to the northwest, by Botswana and Zimbabwe to the north, and by Mozambique and Eswatini (Swaziland) to the northeast and east. Lesotho, an independent country, is an enclave in the eastern part of the Republic. South Africa is the largest country in Southern Africa and the 25th largest country in the world by land area and, with over 57 million people, is the world's 24th most populous nation.
32. South Africa is a multi-ethnic society encompassing a wide variety of cultures, languages, and religions. South Africa has 11 official languages, namely Afrikaans, Southern Ndebele, Xhosa, Zulu, Swazi, Northern Sotho (Sepedi), Southern Sotho (Sesotho), Tswana, Tsonga, Venda and English. South Africa is often referred to as the "rainbow nation" to describe the country's multicultural diversity.
33. South Africa has three cities that serve as capitals: Pretoria (executive), Cape Town (legislative), and Bloemfontein (judicial). Johannesburg, the largest urban area in the country and a centre of commerce, lies at the heart of the populous Gauteng province. Durban, a port on the Indian Ocean, is a major industrial centre. East London and Port Elizabeth, both of which lie along the country's southern coast, are important commercial, industrial, and cultural centres.
34. South Africa has a generally temperate climate, due in part to being surrounded by the Atlantic and Indian Oceans on three sides. Due to this varied topography and oceanic influence, a great variety of climatic zones exist. The climate in South Africa ranges from desert and semi-desert in the north west of the country to sub-tropical on the eastern coastline. The rainy season for most of the country is in the summer, except in the Western Cape where the rains come in the winter. Winter temperatures hover around zero, summers can be very hot, more than 35° Celsius (95°F) in some places. The South African Weather Service provides up-to-date weather information, forecasts and satellite imaging.
35. The average temperature in Durban in November is warm at 26 °C (70.7 °F), however rain showers can be expected from time to time. The humidity factor in Durban is also important to note. Participants are encouraged to stay hydrated and to use sunscreen whenever out and about and it is advisable to bring an umbrella.

Durban city

36. Durban, situated within the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, is the capital city of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal and is located on the east coast of South Africa, looking out upon the Indian Ocean. The city lies at the mouth of the Umgeni river, which demarcates parts of Durban's north city limit, while other sections of the river flow through the city itself.
37. Durban (formerly **Port Natal**) is the third most populous city in South Africa-after Johannesburg and Cape Town and the busiest port in the country. It is also seen as one of the major centres of tourism because of the city's warm subtropical climate and extensive beaches.

38. Durban's numerous parks include the Botanic Gardens with its orchid house, Jameson Park and its rose gardens, and Snake Park with its collection of poisonous reptiles. The city is home to the University of KwaZulu-Natal, formed in 2004 through the merger of the University of Durban-Westville and the University of Natal. There are several museums and numerous markets. Cultural and sporting events are held in Moses Mabhida Stadium, part of the larger King's Park Sporting Precinct, a commercial, retail, and leisure district.

39. Durban is famous for its beaches, both in the city centre and the suburbs. Durban is South Africa's self-styled "playground" where year-round warm weather welcomes everyone to make the most of the area's natural outdoor lifestyle. Also known as "Surf City", Durban is renowned for its magnificent bathing and surfing beaches, which stretch along the city's beachfront from Durban harbour in the south to the upmarket suburb of Umhlanga in the north.

40. In 2015, Durban was recognized as one of the New 7 Wonders Cities (along with Vigan, Doha, La Paz, Havana, Beirut, and Kuala Lumpur).

41. King Shaka International Airport services both domestic and international flights, with regularly scheduled services to London Heathrow, Dubai, Istanbul, Doha, Mauritius, Lusaka, Windhoek and Gaborone, as well as eight domestic destinations.

Time zone

42. The time zone for South Africa is: GMT/UTC + 2 hours

Currency

43. The currency for South Africa is ZAR. Fluctuations in foreign exchange markets are reflected in new rates daily. The exchange rate is approximately: 1 US \$ = R 15. 00. For up to date exchange rates and currency converter please visit <http://www.xe.com/tools.php>

44. Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), linked to all major international networks, are available throughout the country. VISA and MasterCard are accepted almost everywhere. American Express and Diners Club are also accepted, but not as widely. Most retail stores accept credit cards and pin based debit cards as payment. Shops and traders do not except foreign currency and therefore it is advised that money is exchanged into the correct currency at the Airport or prior to departure to South Africa

Electricity

45. The South African electricity supply is 220/230 volts AC 50 HZ. Most plugs are 15 amp 3-prong or 5 amp 2-prong, with round pins. It is advisable for participants to bring their own adaptor, although these can be purchased at the airport upon arrival. Most hotel rooms have 110 volt outlets for electric shavers and appliances.



Contacts and further information

46. For further information on the sixteenth session of AMCEN, please do not hesitate to contact the AMCEN secretariat (tel: +254 20 7621354/7621396; e-mail: unenvironment-amcen@un.org, with a copy to julie.kaibe@un.org and david.ombisi@un.org).

47. Further information on the Republic of South Africa can be accessed by contacting South African Tourism, e-mail: travel@southafrica.net, tel: +27 (0) 11 895 300, website: <https://www.southafrica.net>.