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Draft Proposal on the establishment of A Coordination Mechanism for the African Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

I. Introduction

1. At the 16th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held in Addis Ababa, the President of the Republic of Gabon presented a report on African participation at the International Conference on biodiversity held in the month of October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan (Ass/AU15 (XVI).

2. Among the recommendations of the report was the need for AU Member States to join forces and work together to take advantage of the benefits of the Conference of NAGOYA and ensure the adoption of a common African position for future negotiations on biodiversity.. To this end, the report recommends the establishment of a coordination mechanism to support the African Common Position on biodiversity like the one existing for the negotiations on climate change.

3. By decision (Doc. Assembly/AU/15 (XVI) Add.3), the same Summit, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government decided to:

- a) include biodiversity among the priorities of the African Union;
- b) encourage Member States of the African Union to become Parties to all the conventions and protocols on biodiversity and
- c) integrate the proposal within the existing structures.

4. Furthermore, the Government of the Republic Kenya in letter to the Commission of the African Union (Re: MEMR/5.02/Vol.XII of July 5, 2012), asked African Union Commission to:

- a) facilitate the establishment of a mechanism to have an African Common Position and speak with one single Voice in international negotiations on biodiversity.
- b) create a coordination mechanism for the African Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity.

II. Justification for a coordinated structure on biodiversity negotiations

1. There is need to have a coordination structure on Biodiversity for Africa to work as a team and to speak with one voice and to advance a common African position
2. Positive experiences with CAHOSC and Rio+20 underline the need for Africa to have a coordinated structure for biodiversity

3. A coordinated structure provides a link between the political and technical processes. It also provides political guidance to the negotiators, focusing them on issues of relevance to Africa, and It enhances Africa's visibility in the negotiation processes

There is a continental unanimity on the need to establish a structure and coordination mechanism to support the African common position in the international negotiations on biodiversity. The challenge now is identifying the appropriate mechanism.

The proposal is to adopt/adapt the CAHOSC model or the Rio+20 model. These models have been found very useful in coordinating Africa's participation in the climate change and Rio+20 negotiations.

Both models promote African common position, single voice and representation at all levels in the negotiations. The main difference between the two is that while CAHOSC model is a three-tiered approach comprising of an expert group, a ministerial group and a Committee of African Heads State and Government; the Rio+20 model is led by a single country identified by the AU Assembly to lead, on behalf Africa the negotiation process.

For a coordination mechanism for biodiversity, it is being proposed that AMCEN decide to choose between the CAHOSC and Rio+20 models. Any of the two can be adapted as the minister may deem it necessary.

Draft Declaration:

We, the African Ministers of environment,

Having met in Arusha from 12 to 14 September 2012 at the fourteen session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment;

Recalling the report on African participation at the International Conference on biodiversity held in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010 (Ass/AU15 (XVI) presented by the President of the Republic of Gabon at the 16th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held in Addis Ababa;

Considering AU Assembly Decision (Doc. Assembly/AU/15 (XVI) Add.3) which calls for the inclusion biodiversity among the priorities of the African Union and encourage Member States of the African Union to become Parties to all the conventions on biodiversity;

Considering the request of the Government of the Republic of Kenya in letter to the Commission of the African Union (Re: MEMR/5.02/Vol.XII of July 5, 2012), asking for the establishment of a mechanism to have an African Common Position and speak with one single Voice in international negotiations on biodiversity and ensure that the African Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity is structured on the basis of the existing mechanism for climate change;

Considering the importance of African biodiversity resources for promoting sustainable development and poverty alleviation on the continent;

Recalling, the call by Governments at the World Summit for Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002, for the negotiation of international agreement to Promote the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources,

Recalling further the pan-African ministerial conference on Access and Benefit-sharing, held in Windhoek in March 2010 with a view to refining and endorsing the African common position on Access and Benefit-sharing,

Resolve to:

(A) continue to Negotiate as a block on the International Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) to ensure that the international agreement takes into consideration Africa's Specific Needs;

(B) create a mechanism to coordinate African Common Position on United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) process. This Mechanism would compose of 3 levels of coordination (Expert, Ministerial and Heads of State and Government).

a) At the Expert level, the African Group of Negotiators will be coordinated by the Chair of the Group, chosen by his/her peers for a period 1-2years;

b) At the Ministerial level, coordination will be done by a minister chosen by his/her peers for period of 1-2 years. The Chair of AMCEN can equally lead the coordination at the ministerial level;

c) Coordination at the level of Heads of State and Government to be led by a Head of State