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EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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**REPORT OF THE PRC SUB-COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

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16th June 2022

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The PRC Sub-Committee on Environmental Issues was established through the AU Executive Council Decision of January 2018 (EX.CL/Dec.987 (XXXII) Rev.1). The overall purpose of the Sub-Committee is to provide guidance on environmental issues given their cross-cutting nature, their application in Africa's efforts to attain sustainable development and the aspirations of Agenda 2063. Since January 2021, the Sub-Committee is chaired by the Republic of Gabon having taken over from the Republic of Kenya that was the inaugural chair.

II. ACHIEVEMENTS

2. Since its inception, the Sub-Committee has embarked on several activities aimed at improving the implementation of the Environmental Agenda of the African Union. The following activities warrant special mention:

2.1 Terms of Reference

3. In order to guide the operations of the Sub-Committee, terms of reference were developed and approved by the Sub-Committee in 2021. To streamline its work, the Sub-Committee also adopted a text that defines the scope of Environment within the context of the African union. Furthermore, the Sub-Committee also adopted an annual work-plan that contains key deliverables and has been revised annually since 2020.

2.2 Budget

4. Over the past 2 years, the Commission has been able to mobilise **66,670,000 USD** for the below listed 8 programmes under the Directorate of Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy for a period of 5 years. This entails allocation of substantive funds per annum into the African Union budget from 2020 to 2023. Consequently, the Sub-Committee supported the increment of the budget ceiling for the Directorate of Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy for the 2021 and 2022 financial year. This rise in the budget ceiling has actually benefitted the entire department including sectors outside Environmental Issues.

No	Project Title	Budget (\$)
1	Global Framework for Climate Services Programme	25,080,000
2	Global Climate Change Alliance Plus	10,260,000
3	Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance for Resilience in Africa	15,390,000
4	Establishing Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems for Early	5,700,000

	Action and Transboundary Risk Management	
5	Strengthening Resilience for Disaster Risk Reduction and Adaptation in the Sahel	7,000,000
6	Building Capacity for Multilateral Environmental Agreements in Africa	2,500,000
7	Advancing Africa's Biodiversity Agenda	600,000
8	Support the Development of the AU Climate Change Strategy	140,000
Total		66,670,000

2.3 Planning

5. The Sub-Committee held its first retreat in September 2021 and managed to examine the entire spectrum of environmental programmes under the Commission. It also provided guidance on the implementation of the programmes and developed an action plan to be executed in 2022.

Key Milestones

6. Through the continued guidance of the Sub-Committee on Environmental Issues, the following strategic targets have been achieved:

No	Title of the Deliverable
1.	The Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy, 2021-2032.
2	The Revised Integrated African Strategy on Meteorology (Weather and Climate Services)
3.	The Establishment of the Multi-Hazard Early Warning System and Early Action Situation Room
4.	The Green Recovery Action Plan for Response to COVID-19
5.	The Operationalisation of the Blue Economy Division within the Directorate of Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy.
6.	Resources mobilized for various new programmes including technical support.

III. CHALLENGES

3.1 Recruitment

7. The new programmes stated above under 2.2. require employment of fixed term personnel to facilitate their implementation. Despite the Chairperson of the Commission having approved the recruitment for some of these programmes (e.g. Global Framework for Climate Services Programme, and the Global Climate Change Alliance Plus, their recruitment is delayed for more than a year. Since these are time bound programmes, the Member States will not only lose benefits but the money will have to be paid back to the donors. In response, the Sub-Committee has brought the matter to the attention of the Deputy Chairperson of the Commission in 2021. This situation affects the execution rate of the project

and is damaging the Commission's reputation as well as affecting future resource mobilization opportunities.

3.2 Implementation of the AUC Departmental New Structure

8. The Directorate of Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy, which is the main player in the implementation of the environmental agenda within the Commission is acutely understaffed. For example, the Directorate has both Head of Division positions vacant, there is no staff recruited yet for the Blue Economy division except seconded staff, and the situation is made worse by the retirement of staff as the replacement process is too slow. However, there is progress as the directorate has been operationalized with the recruitment of a Director.

3.3 Budgetary Allocation from Member States

9. Since its inception, the sessions of the Sub-Committee on Environmental Issues have been funded by the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment using funds from various programmes under the Directorate of Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy. The reason being that the Commission has not been allocating a budget for the activities of the Sub-Committee. This is not only unsustainable but may also lead to ineligible expenses at some stage.
10. In the same vein, it has been observed that Environmental programmes do not receive any allocation from Member States' contributions. This gives a negative impression to partners and undermines the Union's ownership of the programmes.

3.4 Relationship between PRC and CAHOSSC

11. The Sub-Committee has observed that even though climate change is part of the Environmental Issues and is overseen by the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSSC), there is no clear engagement with either the PRC or the Sub-Committee. This creates procedural gaps and hence in 2018 CAHOSSC took a decision for the Commission to develop Rules of Procedures that are consistent with the operations of the Union.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

12. Experience has taught the Sub-Committee that the Commission is able to mobilise substantial resources to be able to support programmes and member states at large. However, maintaining this positive relationship with development partners will require improving efficiency from the administrative arms of the Commission and in particular human resources as recruitment remains the most serious stumbling block for implementation of fixed term programmes within the Commission.

13. It is of paramount importance for the Commission to allocate funding from Member States to environmental activities as a token of ownership and in the spirit of sustainability of such programmes. Equally important, is the budgetary allocation for statutory activities such as the sessions of CAHOSCC and of the Sub-Committee on Environmental Issues. Furthermore, there is need to waive the budgetary ceiling for fixed term programmes as they are required to utilize the funds within a limited time frame to avoid them being returned to the donors.
14. It is highly recommended that the development of Rules of Procedures for CAHOSCC be fast tracked in order to enable its operations to conform with the procedures of the Union and to create a link with the PRC as well as the Sub-Committee on Environmental Issues.
15. Finally, the Sub-Committee recommends that the Commission fills the 2 vacant positions of Heads of Division for Sustainable Environment and for Blue Economy as a matter of priority and in line with phase 1 of the implementation of the New Departmental Structure, in order to enhance the Commission's capacity to support implementation of Environmental Agenda in the African Union. The Commission should also prioritize recruitment of all the positions under the Directorate of Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy in order to fully operationalize it through the implementation plan for the new departmental structure.

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