



# Strengthening the Africa Environment Information Network

A Framework to Increase Access  
to Environmental Information and  
to Support Africa's Development  
Planning Processes



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### **Acknowledgements**

*Strengthening the Africa Environmental Information Network: A framework to increase access to environmental information to support Africa's development planning process* was compiled and reviewed by Rannveig K. Formo, Frank Turyatunga, Thor-Jürgen Greve Løberg, Clever Mafuta and Hanne Jørstad.

Language editing and proof reading were done by Margaret Crump Cole and Janet Fernandez Skaalvik while design and layout were done by Audrey Ringler and Strategic Agenda.

ISBN: 978-82-7701-115-8

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## List of acronyms

AEIN	Africa Environmental Information Network (old acronym)
AEO	Africa Environment Outlook
AfricaEIN	Africa Environmental Information Network (new acronym)
AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
ATC	African Topic Centre
CC	Collaborating Centres (sub-regional)
CEP	Country Environment Profile
EIN	Environmental Information Network
GC/GME	Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environmental Forum (of UNEP)
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEO	Global Environment Outlook
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
NES	National Environment Summary
NFP	National Focal Point
RODA	Reporting Obligations Database for Africa
SERISA	State of Environment Reporting Information System for Africa
SOE	State of the Environment
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP/DEWA	United Nations Environment Programme, Division of Early Warning and Assessment

## Summary

The Africa Environmental Information Network (AfricaEIN) initiative succeeds the old Africa Environmental Information Network, which was launched in 2003 and was mandated by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) to, among other purposes, support the Africa Environment Outlook (AEO) process. The rebranding of the initiative is a response to some of the challenges that the old network has faced. The AfricaEIN will be spearheaded by the AMCEN and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), with support from GRID-Arendal.

The network seeks to support African countries as they keep their state of the environment under review; to improve and provide integrated environmental assessment products that support national development planning processes; to strengthen the capacities of countries to meet environmental reporting obligations, including State of the Environment (SOE) reports and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) to which they are party; to facilitate the exchange of environmental information nationally, in Africa and globally; to enhance the incorporation of environmental considerations into national development planning, as well as in decision-making processes through improved access to data and information; and to support the preparation of relevant reports on policy and other products for use by governments, the AMCEN and other regional bodies and institutions.

The AfricaEIN focuses on identifying national strengths and weaknesses in the management of environmental information through a comprehensive set of performance indicators. The performance assessment will facilitate the monitoring of national progress towards achieving the objectives set out by the institutions engaged in environmental information management in Africa. It is intended that the performance of the various national environment information networks meets international standards.

Launched during the first quarter of 2013, the AfricaEIN's initial phase is expected to run over a five-year period (from 2013 to 2017). Anticipated milestones for the first two years of the project include: the establishment of a new AfricaEIN governance structure; the development and regular update of an AfricaEIN website; the training of National Focal Points (NFPs) so that activities are consistent and comparable across the region; the publication of national information products; and the regular assessment of the performance of environmental information management institutions in order to ensure that their activities are continuously improved and aligned with best practices.

## Context

One of the core mandates of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is to enhance the connection between science and policy with regards to environmental issues through the consolidation and dissemination of credible science and knowledge to guide policy- and decision-making. Since its establishment in 1972, UNEP has continuously kept the global environment under review by highlighting global environmental challenges and by facilitating many global and regional environmental treaties and conventions. Its success in placing the Green Economy at the centre of global development discourse during the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development is a major indicator of UNEP's effectiveness in managing the link between science and policy.

- With regards to Africa, UNEP, in close collaboration with the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and other partners, has been supporting the region through the establishment of the Africa Environmental Information Network (AEIN), the production of the Africa Environment Outlook (AEO) report series and regular State of Environment (SOE) reports for some countries. While this support has been highly instrumental in enhancing Africa's informed engagement in the global environmental sphere, particularly in international negotiations, ensuring the use of the available environmental information in national development planning and decision-making processes has been a challenge. There is an urgent need to enhance the contribution of integrated environmental assessments to national development planning processes in Africa due to the following factors:
- **Mainstreaming the Environment into United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks:** Over the past few years, UNEP has worked closely with the United Nations Development Group on efforts to incorporate environmental sustainability into the development and implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) at the country level. This has resulted in an increased demand for incorporating environmental assessments into the UNDAF planning process.
- **Quality Assurance:** Increasingly, African countries are seeking out consolidated, reliable and up-to-date environmental information that can feed into the national planning process. This requires a core set of performance indicators that measure the quality of the environmental information available for each individual country as well as for the region as a whole.
- **Africa and the Green Economy:** As noted in a number of regional statements made by African nations, including Africa's Post Rio+20 Strategy for Sustainable Development, countries in the region recognize the opportunities provided by the transition to a Green Economy and call upon the international community to provide the required technical and financial support for its realization in Africa. By integrating aspects of a Green Economy into the environmental assessment landscape, African nations will be able to make more informed decisions about sustainable development.
- **Results Based Management:** One of the key objectives of the UNEP Medium Term Strategy is to transform UNEP into an organization that incorporates Results Based Management into their projects and programmes. This will ensure that environmental assessments are relevant to national development planning processes and will transform UNEP's activities by guaranteeing concrete results and measurable impacts.

These key strategic developments have created a demand for integrated environmental assessment products that can be used to inform policy and planning decisions. These emerging needs provided the foundation for a joint UNEP and GRID-Arendal initiative to enhance and improve the quality of integrated environmental assessments in Africa. The AfricaEIN will continue to serve as the vehicle and convening body of this initiative, however the network must be strengthened and refocused if it is to meet both the challenges of the rapidly changing landscape of environmental information in Africa and the expectations of a growing audience.

## AfricaEIN: Supporting the activities of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The Africa Environmental Information Network (AEIN) was established in 2003 and mandated by AMCEN to support the Africa Environment Outlook process. Between 2004 and 2006 the AEIN was piloted in 13 African countries. From the outset, the AEIN has worked to promote the Integrated Environmental Assessment and Reporting methodology. The network initially involved partners such as national Ministries of Environment, various organs of the African Union, various United Nations agencies, Collaborating Centres (CC) at the sub-regional level, and the National Focal Points (NFP) in each country. The activities of the network were coordinated at the regional, sub-regional and national levels and were supported by the United Nations Environment Programme's Division of Early Warning and Assessment (UNEP/DEWA).

Recent efforts to expand and upscale the AEIN have faced challenges and many of the activities of the network have progressed more slowly than expected. As a response to this, UNEP/DEWA and the UNEP Regional Office for Africa in collaboration with GRID-Arendal have taken the initiative to review the current structure, programmes and activities of the AEIN and to develop a plan to strengthen the network. In doing so, lessons have been drawn from similar regional networks, primarily the European Environment Information and Observation Network of the European Environmental Agency.

### An Initiative of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN)

During the 8<sup>th</sup> AMCEN session in the year 2000, the Ministers decided that an AEO should be produced to provide a comprehensive scientific assessment of the state of Africa's environment, including an assessment of national policies and environment programmes. The first AEO was produced and launched at the 9<sup>th</sup> AMCEN Session held in Kampala, Uganda, in 2002.

The process of producing the report revealed substantial gaps in the existing environmental information, as well as in regional capacity to manage and exchange environmental information. There was a clear need for a strong foundation of environmental information to better support the AEO process including the development of future scenarios and policy options for sustainable development. As a result, the Ministers called for initiatives to bridge these information gaps through the AMCEN Kampala Declaration (2002). The Declaration endorsed a proposal to *"establish a comprehensive environmental information network to promote access and harmonization of data in the Africa region to act as a basis for tracking environmental changes using quantitative indicators focusing on national needs."* To implement this Declaration, the Africa Environmental Information Network was established in 2003.

At the 25<sup>th</sup> UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environmental Forum (GC/GMEF) in 2009, the Ministers further called for the AEIN to *"promote access to, and harmonization of data in the African region, and act as a basis for tracking environmental changes using quantitative indicators focusing on national needs"* with the overall goal being to *"enable all nations in Africa to participate in a collaborative and fully operational network for transactional information exchange that supports sustainable development decision-making at sub-national, national, sub-regional, regional and international levels."*

Subsequently, AMCEN as well as GC/GMEF Decisions and Declarations have continued to reinforce the role of the AfricaEIN as a means of keeping the state of the environment in Africa under review, as a mechanism for capacity building at national level and as a tool to promote the mainstreaming of the environment in regional and national development planning processes.



## Mandate

The AfricaEIN supports two of UNEP's global mandates: to *"keep the state of the global environment under review"*; and to *"provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations."*

UNEP/DEWA is at the forefront of UNEP's information activities and the AEIN initiative supports DEWA's mission to *"provide the world community with **improved access** to meaningful environmental data and information, and to help increase the capacity of governments to use environmental information for decision making and action planning for sustainable human development."* It equally supports GRID-Arendal's mission to *"support environmentally sustainable development through UNEP and other partners by communicating information that strengthens environmental management capacity and motivates decision-makers to act."*

The AfricaEIN also supports the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building, which emphasizes the need for country ownership, country-specific capacity building needs, data collection, research and analysis to support decision-making in governments.

Environmental information sharing has become increasingly important to UNEP and the international community over the last two decades. Agenda 21, the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in 1992, includes a chapter entitled Information and decision-making. Furthermore, the Rio Declaration emphasizes this, particularly through principle 10, which states that *"States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available (...)"*<sup>1</sup>

The 1998 Aarhus Convention embodies the principles of environmental information sharing. The mandate of UNEP is well aligned to promote the Aarhus principles globally and given that one of UNEP's focal areas is to support the African region, efforts to strengthen these principles in the region are well founded.

A number of Outcome Statements of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20: The Future We Want), specifically paragraphs 76 (g, e and f), 90, 99, and 276-279, reinforce the goals and objectives of the AfricaEIN. Furthermore, the *"Africa Integrated Environmental Assessment for Sustainable Development"*, one of the ten AMCEN Flagship Programmes, has as its objective ensuring the effective implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and is best served by a strong AfricaEIN.

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<sup>1</sup> Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration: "Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy shall be provided." Adopted by 178 nations at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, June 1992.

## Reflections on the Early Phases of the Africa Environmental Information Network (AEIN)

The pilot phase of the AEIN revealed a number of challenges that must be addressed if the network is to continue to achieve the goals and objectives for which it was established. A summary of the findings is presented below.

### Key findings

*Data Availability:* Some data exists at the national level, however data collection methodologies differ. There is therefore a need to encourage common standards of data collection and analysis to allow for comparative studies of the current state of the environment, as well as emerging trends and issues.

*Environmental Indicators:* There is a strong need to develop and integrate a core set of environmental indicators into national statistical systems. These will help fast-track the inclusion of environmental considerations into national development planning processes.

*Measuring Progress:* Performance measurement tools must be developed in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the institutions involved in the management of environmental information. The use of such tools would facilitate the design of plans to build capacity tailored to the specific needs of a country. It would also facilitate the monitoring of the achievement of the objectives of national environment authorities in a manner consistent with international practice.

*Partners and Partnerships:* Partners and possible partnerships should be identified based on their interest, comparative advantages and capacity to support the network. The building of partnerships provides a strategic approach through which network programmes and activities can be more effectively delivered, especially where the use of specialized data and information, including remote sensing data and the articulation of new and emerging environmental issues, is involved. Partnerships operate best when founded on mutually reinforcing relationships. Partnerships also enable the network to simultaneously serve a larger clientele.

*Network Products:* There is a need to clearly define the network products to which each of the network members and/or partners contribute. These could include but are not limited to the national State of the Environment (SOE) Reports, national socio-economic and environmental indicator booklets and/or compendia, Country Environment Profiles (CEP) and National Environment Summaries (NES). Ultimately, the network members' capacity to deliver a product should guide the decisions related to product identification. Where such capacity does not exist, network members should approach product development through capacity development.

*Capacity Building:* It is imperative that capacity building remains a central and visible function of the network. Countries must be supported in the collection of their own data, the generation of policy-relevant information products, as well as in the use and dissemination of these products.

### Identified Challenges

*National Focal Points:* The lack of a clear mandate for network focal institutions and/or persons resulted in a lack of ownership of the AEIN concept, which in turn led to poor implementation that in some cases threatened the network's sustainability.

*Regional and Sub-regional Bodies:* The implementation of the activities of the network were severely hampered by the lack of a clear mandate for the Collaborating Centres (CC), thus increasing the distance between participating countries and the network itself. Consideration should be made to involve the Regional Economic Communities, which have a clear political mandate and convening role.

*Quality of Environmental Information:* The quality of environmental information in Africa varies greatly between countries and institutions. Official data is not always quality-checked and there is no system in place to measure the quality of available data across sectors and countries.

## Addressing Existing Challenges

Since its inception, the activities of the Africa Environmental Information Network (AEIN) have contributed towards the development of national environmental information networks and the promotion of information sharing at local, national, sub-regional and regional levels. The AEIN supported the production of the second Africa Environment Outlook (AEO) in 2006, as well as numerous national State of Environment (SOE) reports and other environmental information products. Additionally, the network has acted as a vehicle for Africa to make its contribution to global environment reports, including the Global Environment Outlook (GEO). Most importantly, it has assisted countries in building their capacity to carry out integrated environmental assessments and reporting and, in so doing, has supported the integration of environmental dimensions into decision- and policy-making at national levels.

Despite the progress achieved, the challenges faced by the network have resulted in a less-than-desirable level of network activity. Primarily, the lack of funds to support the activities of the network has limited its ability to respond to the needs of its members and to support the delivery of its key functions. Changes in the mandates of national institutions and in the roles of National Focal Points, as well as high staff turnover in the key institutions working with the network have weakened its activities and the level of communication between member-countries. Additionally, a lack of direct contact with countries during the implementation of network activities has undermined the AEIN's ability to either conduct national needs assessments, or to effectively respond to these where needs have been articulated. Furthermore, although the institutional infrastructure for information networking was created and datasets and indicators were standardised to a limited extent, accessing data and information through dedicated portals and repository centres remained a challenge. Lastly, the AEIN was initially developed as a project with time-bound outputs and limited funds. This has resulted in the atrophied state that the network finds itself in today: its relevance to key stakeholders has been undermined and the region is left struggling to meet its environmental assessment, reporting and awareness-raising obligations.

The way that environmental information in Africa is communicated through reports and assessments, as well as within the countries themselves, is continuously changing. Indeed, there has been a change in the analytical frameworks used both to conduct environmental assessment and to deliver outputs, thus making some components of the AEIN somewhat outdated and in need of refocusing. Environmental reports have moved from thematic assessments to Integrated Environmental Assessment and Reporting, the traditional SOE reports now incorporate scenarios as forward-looking analyses, and Summaries for Policy Makers are now used as a means of communicating assessment findings to a targeted audience.

Necessarily, the structure and products of the AEIN must be adjusted to align themselves to this evolving landscape, taking advantage of new approaches and adopting appropriate courses of action. The network will promote and strengthen access to and the use of online data and information, and will adjust its capacity building activities by shifting focus away from the resource and process intensive SOE reports, towards short and visual products including Country Environmental Profiles (CEP) and National Environmental Summaries (NES). The extensive SOE reports will only be conducted based on the expressed needs of countries, the availability of adequate resources, envisaged added value and national level capacity considerations. However, capacity building for Integrated Environmental Assessment and Reporting will continue to remain a core function of the network.

At the national level, extensive restructuring of environmental institutions and a marked change in information networks has begun. During the early phase of the AEIN, when there was an absence of national networks, it was reasonable to work through the sub-regional Collaborating Centres (CC). However, because many African countries have now established Environmental Information Networks (EIN), the new network structure proposes number of changes to ensure a closer link between the network and the stakeholders at the national level, including moving the focus away from the sub-regional CCs and towards direct engagement with member-countries and strengthening the role of the National Focal Points (NFP).

The strengthened network will enable countries to adopt modern ways of integrating, manipulating and interpreting the data to which they have access and will enable them to improve the scientific base of their work to provide a sound and robust foundation for development planning. Given the importance of sharing environmental information and

data, the AfricaEIN will be supported in its monitoring and evaluation through a performance appraisal process, which will lay the foundations for a detailed and sequenced programme of capacity building and reform. The environmental performance appraisal is intended to help define the minimum requirements for conducting environmental information networking and to promote the replication and expansion of the activities of the AfricaEIN. It will help to bridge the transition between the old and new network, while also facilitating linkages with similar initiatives such as UNEP-Live<sup>2</sup> (including the SOE-Live and the AEO-Live) the Global Network of Networks<sup>3</sup>, the World Bank's Open Data Initiative<sup>4</sup>, and the European Environment Information and Observation Network<sup>5</sup>.

The proposed framework is one in which national networks and coordinating institutions will play a much more central role in order to ensure buy-in from countries, strengthen activities at the national level, and ensure long-term sustainability. Conceived as a programme rather than a project, the proposed framework will encourage long-term commitment and perspectives, providing a model for improving access to information, increasing the capacity of the NFPs to produce policy-relevant environmental information and for mainstreaming such information into national development planning processes. The proposed framework will also promote the continuous development of attractive and thought-provoking methods of communicating the results achieved from interventions taken at national and other levels.

This framework document sets out to describe the strengthened network. Included in the document is a proposal for a new governance structure, improved products and content, and relevant information technology tools. To reflect the new, strengthened and re-branded network, it is proposed that the Africa Environmental Information Network will change its acronym from AEIN to AfricaEIN.

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2 UNEP-Live seeks to create and share knowledge for future assessments by establishing partnerships that enable countries to better collect, manage and analyze their environmental knowledge, information and data through the use of emerging technologies. UNEP-Live aligns itself with initiatives being undertaken at global, regional and national levels to improve data availability, quality and accessibility. SoE-Live is compatible with and linked to UNEP-Live, but specific to national level products. AEO-Live refers to an online version of the Africa Environment Outlook.

3 This Global Network of Networks seeks to bring together and make available to a global audience, in their own local and regional setting, the vast resources of environmental expertise, in the form of data, information and knowledge, to support decision-making and action in response to environmental challenges. The aim of the Global Network of Networks is to leverage the capabilities of the diverse, yet separate, existing and emerging networks in order to provide users with the richness of data, information, and knowledge that exists in these networks and among the various environmental communities of practice.

4 The World Bank Open Data Initiative makes available through the Internet the large amount of data from the bank's databases. The databases encompass over 2,000 indicators of countries all over the world, many of them covering a time-period of 50 years.

5 The European Environment Information and Observation Network is a partnership network of the European Environment Agency and its member and cooperating countries involving approximately 1,000 experts and more than 350 national institutions. The network supports the collection and organisation of data and the development and dissemination of information concerning Europe's environment.

# Goal, Objectives and Activities of the AfricaEIN

## Goal

To support African countries in keeping the state of their environment under review.

## Objectives

1. To strengthen the AfricaEIN in order to meet its goal, including the improvement of its institutional arrangements;
2. To strengthen and foster improved thematic and integrated environmental assessment processes;
3. To strengthen the capacity of African countries to meet their environmental reporting obligations, including State of the Environment (SOE) reports as well as obligations set out by the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) to which they are party (through development of appropriate tools, methodologies and approaches);
4. To facilitate the sharing and exchange of environmental information nationally, within Africa and globally, while promoting common standards and norms for data and environmental information sharing;
5. To enhance the mainstreaming of environmental considerations into national development planning, as well as into environmental decision-making processes through better access to information; and
6. To support the preparation of policy-relevant reports and other products for use by governments, AMCEN and other environmental policy- and decision-making bodies and institutions.

## Activities

1. Develop and implement a performance measurement methodology that identifies the strengths and weaknesses of environmental information networking through a comprehensive set of performance indicators;
2. Develop and popularize new environmental information products, including the Country Environment Profiles (CEP), National Environment Summaries (NES), Core Set of Environmental Indicators, and the Reporting Obligations Database for Africa (RODA);
3. Build the capacity of national environmental institutions in Africa to conduct integrated environmental assessments, produce reports, develop new information products and relevant tools, including citizen science, and to position them to support national development planning;
4. Strengthen the visual presentation of environmental information in assessment reports and other products through the increased use of illustrations, maps and graphics; and
5. Support the preparation of the Africa Environment Outlook (AEO) reports, including an "Annual Review Report" and a biennial report on "Emerging Environmental Issues"<sup>6</sup> in the region;
6. Promote the use of online platforms such as AEO-Live and SOE-Live as a means for sharing timely and up-to-date environmental information; and
7. Organize partnerships (public, private, technology centers, etc.) in support of the above objectives

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<sup>6</sup> For purposes of this document, an emerging issue is defined as "an issue with either a positive or negative regional/global environmental impact that is recognized by the scientific community as very important to human well-being, but has not yet received adequate attention from the policy community." The definitions of "very important" and "adequate" are left open to those identifying the issues.

# Annex I: AfricaEIN Governance and Structure

## A Strengthened AfricaEIN

The AfricaEIN is proposed as a joint initiative between the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and GRID-Arendal. These organisations will work together, assuming mutually agreed-upon roles and responsibilities in the implementation, administration and politics of the network, including resource mobilization. GRID-Arendal will use its expertise in the development of graphics to provide special support in visualization of data as well as capacity building activities to countries, while UNEP, through the Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA) and the Regional Office for Africa will provide specific institutional support and support the overall management of the network activities. The AMCEN will provide the high level political support necessary to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of the network.

## Institutional Structure

The strengthened AfricaEIN will depart from its current reliance on six Collaborating Centres (CC) and adopt a broader governing structure consisting of a Secretariat, a Steering Committee and a Scientific Committee. The Scientific Committee will be made up of the Secretariat, seven African Topic Centres (ATC)<sup>7</sup> and a representative from the African Academy of Sciences. The Committee will play an advisory role to the governing structure.

Beyond the governing structure, the AfricaEIN will be made up of a number of National Focal Points (NFP) drawn from each of the participating African countries and representing technical national environmental institutions. Where applicable, the NFPs will also represent the national environment information networks.

### AfricaEIN Secretariat

The AfricaEIN Secretariat will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the network. The secretariat ensures regular communication with countries through the officially designated NFPs, the ATCs and the Steering Committee. It will support the maintenance of the AfricaEIN webpage and the AfricaReport! database. In addition, the Secretariat will conduct a regular evaluation of the performance of countries in meeting their reporting obligations, including, where applicable, those related to national State of the Environment reports (SOE) and Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA). The evaluation will be based on a review of the websites of participating countries, as well as an analysis of a survey administered by the Secretariat. The products of this assessment will be the Annual Performance Sheets. The Secretariat will convene, facilitate and participate in deliberations of the AfricaEIN Steering and Scientific Committees. The Secretariat functions will be performed by UNEP/DEWA, assisted by GRID-Arendal.

While the Secretariat will play an important role in the initial phases of the network, it is envisioned that the AMCEN will eventually assume responsibility over many of the activities. Over time, it is expected that the AfricaEIN will become an AMCEN programme and that the Secretariat (as constituted) will gradually only play a supportive role. During the next five years of operation, the AfricaEIN, the UNEP Regional Office for Africa and the AMCEN will develop and agree on a transition plan that should result in this transition.

### AfricaEIN Steering Committee

The AfricaEIN Steering Committee will be supported by the Secretariat and its main responsibility will be to guide the progress of the network. The body will consist of core representatives from national technical environmental institutions. The existence of such institutions is a prerequisite for participation in the network.

The AfricaEIN Steering Committee will consist (in its initial phase) of the following representatives:

- One representative from the AMCEN Secretariat;
- One representative from each of the UNEP six economic sub-regions of Africa (Northern, Western, Central, Eastern, Southern and the Indian Ocean) will take part in the Steering Committee for one term of two years. The sub-regional representatives are elected by the NFPs of the sub-region and serve on a rotational basis;

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<sup>7</sup> The rationale for selecting seven Topic Centres is provided below.

- The Secretariat;
- One representative from the Agriculture and Food Security Division of the African Union; and
- One representative from each of the following Sub-Regional Economic Communities: the Arab Maghreb Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the East African Community, the Southern Africa Development Community, the Indian Ocean Commission, and the Economic Community of West African States.

### **AfricaEIN Scientific Committee**

The Scientific Committee will be responsible for ensuring that the activities of the network are founded on credible science. It will be supported by the Secretariat.

The Scientific Committee will consist of the following:

- The AfricaEIN Secretariat;
- One representative from each of the seven ATCs;
- One representative from the African Academy of Sciences (Observer);
- One representative from EIS-Africa (Observer); and
- One representative from the African Association of Remote Sensing of the Environment [Observer].

The Scientific Committee will ensure a strong scientific basis for its products, support peer review processes, create linkages with other networks, guide the development of new products and services and advise on sources of data.

In addition, the Scientific Committee will support countries in their national environmental assessments either through the NFP, or directly with the institutions that constitute the national environmental information network.

### **Advisory Bodies**

In addition to the Secretariat, the Steering Committee and the Scientific Committee, the CC established under the old AEIN will support the network in an advisory capacity.

### **African Topic Centres (ATC)**

Seven ATCs are proposed. Each centre should have proven expertise in a particular environmental topic, in line with those used by UNEP in environmental assessments. The following seven topics are suggested:

1. Atmosphere (including air quality, climate change, variability, mitigation and adaptation);
2. Land (including land use/change, land degradation, and desertification);
3. Freshwater;
4. Biodiversity (including Forest biodiversity);
5. Chemicals and Waste;
6. Marine and Coastal Resources; and
7. Environmental Governance (including Foresight and Outlook processes (scenarios), Policy Analysis, Legislation and Institutional arrangements).

### **Qualities of the ATCs**

The primary consideration to be made when selecting an ATC is that it must have extensive expertise and experience in the specific field in which it is assigned to take leadership. Secondly, the centre must have a broad regional reach with a mandate that is generally recognized by countries in the region. Thirdly, it must have some level of responsibility in the coordination of or be part of a pan-African and/or global network that addresses the issues related to the topic. This is to ensure that the centre is generally considered to be a leader in its field across the region and is able to draw on expertise from these and similar sub-regional centres. Finally, the centre must have on-going programmes and activities in that field.

The process of selecting the ATC will entail the following:

1. Consultations with relevant offices of the African Union Commission and Regional Economic Communities;
2. Internal consultation within UNEP;
3. The development of a preliminary list for consideration by countries;
4. Contact made with the proposed ATCs to seek their consent: and
5. Decision approval and endorsement by the countries.



## **Roles and Responsibilities of the ATCs**

Each ATC will be a scientific reference centre that will support the implementation of the goals and objectives of the AfricaEIN. It will support the activities, products and services of the AfricaEIN that relate to its specific expertise, including the Africa Environment Outlook (AEO) and Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) series. The ATCs will also be expected to support member countries in the management of their national environmental information. This support will either go through the NFP or to the respective institutions of the national Environmental Information Network (EIN).

Each ATC will be assigned the following tasks:

- Serve on the Scientific Committee;
- Support the AEO, GEO and other AfricaEIN products. This includes contributing to or peer-reviewing draft documents;
- Support the NFPs and national networks in the fulfillment of their reporting obligations where these obligations are linked to its area of expertise;
- Develop capacity in areas related to its expertise;
- Assist in convening meetings;
- Promote cooperation between the AfricaEIN to its own thematic networks;
- Share its platform for outreach and dissemination;
- Implement joint activities, projects and programmes with the AfricaEIN; and
- Any other mutually agreed activities related to the network.

## **National Focal Points (NFP)**

It is envisioned that the NFP will represent an institution, but will be first and foremost a technical person that takes on the role of national representative. The NFP will primarily be responsible for coordinating the activities of the national network where it exists, or developing one where it does not. The NFP will also be responsible for regularly sharing information with the AfricaEIN. The NFP will be the liaison between the AfricaEIN and the national network and will serve a crucial role in ensuring success of the AfricaEIN. The selection of the NFPs as well as the support provided to them through the strengthened network, particularly in the initial stages, will therefore be critical to their performance. The NFPs will be introduced to the new network support tools as well as to the products produced by the AfricaEIN and will be expected to pass them on to their national networks. Strong and competent NFPs will be crucial to the success of the regional network.

Efforts will be made to ensure that the NFPs meet on a regular basis at the sub-regional level as well as at the regional level. It is also recommended that the NFPs engage in peer-to-peer mentoring. For example, NFPs from fully operating networks will mentor NFPs from countries that either have very young networks, or have not yet established a network. It is also suggested that this activity should include mentoring by NFPs from the European Environment Information and Observation Network or those from other regions with similar networks.

## **NFP Designation Procedure**

The head of each national technical environmental management institution will nominate the NFP. The NFP should be first and foremost a technical person who will on the role as a national representative and the appointing institution is responsible for ensuring that the position is always filled.

The NFP will hold the position for as long as the appointing institution deems necessary. Preferably, the NFP would hold a senior position in the appointing national institution. If this is not the case, it is essential that the appointed NFP have the full support of the management of the institution.

## **Skills**

The following skills and abilities are preferred in a NFP:

- Strong managerial and coordination skills to ensure the effective management of the national network and the effective coordination of various tasks;
- Strong communication and networking skills which will promote effective communication between the various institutions of the national network as well as with the AfricaEIN governing bodies;



- Fluency in spoken and written English and/or French. Fluency in any other official national language(s);
- Basic information technology skills, including familiarity with basic software such as Microsoft Office and any other software needed for the position as NFP. Familiarity with satellite remote sensing and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) applications is an asset.
- Ability to monitor the information available on the websites of national environmental institutions;
- Experience in (or positioned to develop working knowledge of) environmental assessment and reporting.

In addition, the NFP should have the following desired support:

- Adequate budget and resources to accomplish the NFP tasks, including access to the Internet and data equipment as well as dedicated time to work on AfricaEIN-specific tasks and to attend training and meetings with other NFPs;
- Consensus from the national network institutions regarding the NFP role; and
- Access to environmental information at the national level.

### **Tasks and Activities of the NFP**

A NFP will take on various tasks, activities and responsibilities. These may vary considerably from one country to another depending on the agreed distribution of work and the responsibilities identified by the NFP and the national EIN, as well as the resources available at his/her disposal.

The list below outlines some of the main responsibilities of the NFP :

### **Tasks and Activities Related to the National Environmental Information Network**

- I. Coordinate the establishment, development and operations of the national EIN:
  - a. Identify appropriate institutions to make up the national EIN;
  - b. Negotiate formal agreements with selected institutions; and;
  - c. Coordinate meetings and workshops for the national EIN.
- II. Coordinate the activities of the EIN that are related to the AfricaEIN goal, objectives, products and outputs:
  - a. Responsible for the overall coordination of various information products developed under the AfricaEIN;
  - b. Conduct quality checks of the information collected from various institutions of the national network prior to publication in the AfricaEIN information products;
  - c. Facilitate the production of new information products developed by the AfricaEIN and the national EIN; and;
  - d. Support and encourage the national use of the AfricaEIN tools such as the Reportnet and the State of Environment Reporting Information System for Africa (SERISA).
- III. Support national EIN members:
  - a. Bring the needs and concerns of the national EIN to the AfricaEIN Secretariat, the Steering Committee, and the ATCs;
  - b. Facilitate access to information;
  - c. Share available environmental information, including AfricaEIN information products, with the national EIN; and;
  - d. Represent the national EIN at various AfricaEIN meetings and workshops including:
    - i. The meetings of the Africa EIN Steering Committee where the NFPs represent their sub-region by sitting on the Committee on a rotational basis;
    - ii. The meetings and workshops of sub-regional NFPs; and;
    - iii. Any other meeting or workshop as required.

### **Tasks and Activities related to the AfricaEIN Management Structure**

- I. Participate in various meetings and workshops including:
  - a. The meetings of the AfricaEIN Steering Committee where the NFPs represent their sub-region by sitting on the Committee on a rotational basis;
  - b. The meetings and workshops of sub-regional NFPs; and;
  - c. Any other meeting or workshop as required.

- II. Share all relevant information from the AfricaEIN management structure with the national EIN;
- III. Assist and facilitate communication between the ATCs and national institutions;
- IV. Contribute to the improvement of the work of the AfricaEIN by filling out an annual performance sheet and assist in any other evaluation process where requested; and
- V. Participate in peer-to-peer training by other African and/or European NFPs.

**National Environmental Information Networks (EIN)**

The national networks should be made up of producers and users of social, economic and environmental data and information. The networks will consist of the national institutions and organizations that either produce or use this information and should preferably be coordinated by the relevant technical environmental institution represented by the NFP. In a number of African countries, EINs have already been established and are operating. However, others have yet to put such organized networks into place. The structure and composition of the national networks, as well as their obligations will vary from country to country. The AfricaEIN will work with countries to share best practices for network development, management and activities, as well as for product development and coordination through the NFPs. One of the options is to lower the threshold for countries that have not yet produced full-fledged SOE reports to produce periodic updates on the state of their environment through less detailed information products such as Country Environment Profiles (CEP) and National Environment Summaries (NES).

**Existing NFP and EIN Categories**

Northern Africa 6 countries	Category		
	Fledgling	Young	Well established
Algeria	●		
Egypt		●	
Libya		●	
Morocco		●	
Sudan		●	
Tunisia		●	

Southern Africa 10 countries	Category		
	Fledgling	Young	Well established
Angola	●		
Botswana		●	
Lesotho		●	
Malawi		●	
Mozambique	●		
Namibie		●	
South Africa			●
Swaziland	●		
Zambia			●
Zimbabwe	●		

Eastern Africa 10 countries	Category		
	Fledgling	Young	Well established
Burundi	●		
Djibouti	●		
Eritrea	●		
Ethiopia		●	
Kenya		●	
Rwanda		●	
South Sudan	●		
Somalia	●		
Tanzania		●	
Uganda			●

Western Africa 16 countries	Category		
	Fledgling	Young	Well established
Benin	●		
Burkina Faso	●		
Cape Verde	●		
Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)	●		
Gambia		●	
Ghana			●
Guinea	●		
Guinea-Bissau	●		
Liberia	●		
Mali	●		
Mauritania	●		
Niger	●		
Nigeria		●	
Senegal			●
Sierra Leone	●		
Togo	●		

Central Africa 8 countries	Category		
	Fledgling	Young	Well established
Cameroon		●	
Central African Republic	●		
Chad	●		
Congo, Democratic Republic	●		
Congo, Republic (Brazzaville)	●		
Equatorial Guinea	●		
Gabon	●		
Sao Tome and Principe	●		

Indian Ocean 8 countries	Category		
	Fledgling	Young	Well established
Madagascar	●		
Mauritius		●	
Reunion	●		
Seychelles	●		

## ANNEX II: AfricaEIN Information Material

As with the AEIN, the overall goal of the AfricaEIN will be to assist African countries in meeting their national environmental reporting obligations. Frequent reporting is intended, in turn, to inform national policy and support the sustainable management of the nation's environment. Such obligations include filing reports on the state of the environment and on the implementation of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA) to which the countries are party. The AfricaEIN will continue to promote the production and sharing of environmental and other related information, firstly to meet national needs and secondly to support regional initiatives. As such, the Africa Environment Outlook (AEO), a flagship publication of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), will be part of the regional-level products to which the network's activities will contribute. Furthermore, through capacity building, the network will support the production of national State of the Environment (SOE) reports, which, due to their resource- and process- intensive publications, many African countries have yet to produce.

To bridge this gap, the AfricaEIN will promote the preparation of a series of new but equally useful information materials, including National Environment Summaries (NES) and Country Environment Profiles (CEP). These new publications will be short, visually appealing, accessible online, and structured in such a way that they facilitate the mainstreaming of environmental considerations in national development planning processes.

In addition, the network will support the harmonization of the information base as well as approaches to MEA reporting at the national level. This will be done through the Africa Report database.

### National Environment Summaries (NES)

The NES is intended to be a short, concise and visually appealing online publication of maximum 20 to 25 pages. It will comprise a set of core environmental indicators for which specific graphics will be developed to represent each indicator. The NES should place emphasis on trend analysis, linkages between the environment and socio-economic development and should be both easily accessible and easy to update. Because the NES is meant to support national development planning, it will serve as an important vehicle for country analysis and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) preparation processes. It will also be relevant to bilateral and multilateral development planning processes.

### Country Environment Profiles (CEP)

Each CEP will be a short, online and visually appealing publication of maximum 3-5 pages. It is meant to provide a snapshot of the African nation's state of the environment, presenting its unique characteristics, as well as established national environmental priorities. The CEP may accompany the national SOE report, but can also be used as a stand-alone product. The CEP is expected to be a concise overview of the country's current state of environment, providing information about location and geography, population trends, and economic development. It will then answer three questions regarding environmental governance, environmental pressures and the national environmental outlook.

### Core Set of Environmental Indicators

A core set of environmental indicators for Africa and their associated methodology sheets have already been developed to promote standardized data collection and monitoring and reporting of socio-economic and environmental trends across the continent. The process of developing the core set of environmental indicators was undertaken through a collaborative process between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, Regional Economic Communities and African governments.

The AfricaEIN will support the capacity of African countries to customize and/or strengthen these environmental indicators to suit their local sustainable development needs, as well as to mainstream the relevant environmental indicators and statistics into their national statistical systems.

The core set of environmental indicators adopted for national-level reporting will be collected and analyzed in a process coordinated through the National Focal Points (NFPs) and then disseminated using an environmental indicator booklet and/or factsheets.

## Biennial Regional Reports on Emerging Issues

These reports, to be produced once every two years, will provide a thorough analysis and ranking of the issues that African nations consider to be “*emerging environmental issues*.” The definition of emerging issues applied in these reports will be similar to the one used in the 2012 UNEP Foresight Process. That is: “*Issues recognized as very important by the scientific community, but are not yet receiving adequate attention from the policy community*.” As with the Foresight Process, the qualification of what is deemed “very important” and “adequate” will remain open to interpretation by those involved in the preparation of the report. However, guidance may be taken from the UNEP Foresight Process, which bases itself on the following considerations:

1. The issue can be either “positive” or “negative” but **must** be environmental in nature, or environmentally-related;
2. The issue must be accorded priority over the next one to three years in the work of African nations and other partners interested in the region’s environment;
3. The issue should have a considerable spatial scale, that is, it should occur in many places around Africa; and
4. The issue is considered as “emerging” based on how “new” it is, as a result of recent scientific knowledge, evolving scales or severity of impact, raised level of awareness and/or novel approaches to address the issue.

Working in collaboration with the African Topic Centre (ATCs), a thought-provoking and inclusive approach will be used to prepare and disseminate the findings of the biennial report. It is also hoped that the findings will inform the UNEP-led global Foresight Process for Africa.

## ANNEX III: Information Technology Tools and Infrastructure

### AfricaEIN Website

Management of the AfricaEIN website will be the responsibility of the Secretariat which will ensure its development, oversee the creation of appropriate content and be responsible for its maintenance. The website will contain a range of up-to-date environmental information material related to the region as well as the network itself, including:

- An overview of the history and the work of the AfricaEIN;
- An up-to-date database of all the National Focal Points (NFPs) with contact details and links to institutional websites;
- An overview of the seven African Topic Centre (ATCs) with a short description of their expertise, current activities, and contact details;
- A database of maps and graphics;
- A Country Environment Profiles (CEP) database;
- A National Environment Summaries (NES) database;
- The AfricaReport!;
- Environmental indicator booklets and/or factsheets with clear, illustrative graphics;
- Africa Environment Outlook (AEO) reports;
- Regional, sub-regional, basin and national environmental atlases;
- Other regional and national integrated and thematic assessment products; and
- Updated links to the websites of the environmental institutions in the region, important data sources, etc.

### AfricaReport!

AfricaReport! will be AfricaEIN's online database for environmental reports and will comprise the State of Environment Reporting Information System for Africa (SERISA) and the Reporting Obligations Database for Africa (RODA).

SERISA will be a database of all the national State of the Environment (SOE) and AEO reports. The reports will be available for online viewing and for downloading. SERISA will also contain links to the websites of the key organizations involved in the production of the reports. The SOEs will be identified and searchable by their geographical area and/or year of publication. Both national and multi-national reports will be included in the database. This database will also serve to provide critical inputs to UNEP-Live once it is fully developed (this discussion is still on-going).

Reporting obligations related to the many Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) of which African countries are signatory will be supported through the RODA and made accessible through this database. The uploading of the reports to RODA will be the responsibility of the national EINs, but will be overseen by the National Focal Points (NFPs). RODA will provide information about the specific reporting obligations including their description, the legal instrument to which they are associated, the length of the reporting period, national reporting contacts, etc. It will be easily searchable by country and thematic area and will be particularly useful for the NFPs as it will give them an overview of all the environmental reporting deadlines set for their country under each MEA. As a starting point, emphasis will be placed on Global Environment Facility (GEF)-relevant MEAs, that is the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Convention to Combat Desertification.

The AfricaEIN's annual performance sheets will evaluate the African countries' success in uploading the coherent environmental reports in a timely manner onto the AfricaReport! database. The performance sheets will be produced by the Secretariat and will provide its evaluation using a "smiley-face system." These performance sheets will encourage the NFPs and their national networks to improve their environmental reporting processes and procedures.

## ANNEX IV: Making the Framework Operational

Four initial meetings are necessary to kick-start the strengthened network:

### I. Start-up Meeting with the Heads of the Technical Environmental Management Institutions

The meeting will convene representatives from at least 22 selected, regionally representative African countries<sup>8</sup>. The purpose of meeting will be to:

- Endorse the AfricaEIN;
- Solicit and receive commitment from each country to select a National Focal Point (NFP);
- Present and endorse the list of seven proposed African Topic Centres (ATCs);
- Present and endorse a programme of activities for the fledgling, young and well established networks;
- Present the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process and highlight the roles and responsibilities of national level actors; and
- Discuss the value of the proposed network products in supporting national development processes.

### II. Initial Meeting of the Scientific Committee

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Agree on the Terms of Reference included in the Memorandum of Understanding between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the ATCs;
- Clarify the role of the ATC; and
- Initiate the process to establish a Memorandum of Understanding between the AfricaEIN and ATCs.

### III. Initial Meeting with NFPs

The meeting will convene NFPs from at least 22 selected countries. The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Agree on the proposal of rotational representation on the Steering Committee and to elect sub-regional representatives to the Steering Committee;
- Present and achieve consensus on the products to be supported by the AfricaEIN;
- Present the AfricaReport! and its sub-components the State of the Environment Reporting Information System for Africa (SERISA) and the Reporting Obligations Database for Africa (RODA) and decide on the way forward to bring these into use at the national level;
- Clarify the role of the NFP;
- Discuss the design and establishment of national level structures; and
- Discuss national level activities and products.

### IV. Initial Meeting of the AfricaEIN Steering Committee.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Present, agree and endorse the roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee;
- Discuss the proposed activities and products of the AfricaEIN;
- Discuss and endorse the Resource Mobilization Strategy;
- Agree on the regularity of Steering Committee meetings; and
- Address any other matters arising at the time.

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<sup>8</sup> The 22 countries will be divided into three clusters, namely fledgling, young and well-established.



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