

REVISED AFRICAN CONVENTION ADOPTED – FULL STORY

The revision of the 1968 African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources was adopted by the Assembly of the African Union on July 11, 2003 in Maputo.

The original convention was adopted in 1968 in Algiers. At the time, IUCN played a major role in the drafting of this important regional treaty, as adviser to the Organization of African Unity (OAU, now the African Union).

Subsequent rapid developments in international treaty law led Contracting Parties to call upon OAU, already in 1980, to initiate a revision of the Convention. In 1999, acting on a request from the Government of Burkina Faso to complete the revision, the OAU requested IUCN and UNEP to provide technical advisory services to the organization in the preparation of a comprehensive draft revision. The revision process included preliminary inter-agency work, a meeting of African governmental experts, consultation of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), and culminated in the presentation of the draft to the (by then) African Union Council, followed by the adoption of the revised text by the Heads of States of the African Union Assembly at its recent 10-12 July meeting in Maputo.

The new text succeeds in making the African Convention a most comprehensive and modern regional treaty on environment and natural resources conservation, and the first to deal with an array of sustainable development matters. It covers a wide spectrum of issues, including land and soil, water, and biological diversity conservation and sustainable use. It also addresses processes and activities which affect the environment and natural resources, as well as the relationships between natural resources and sustainable development. Last but not least, it provides for procedural rights (to information, participation and access to justice, echoing Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration). Finally, it also requires cooperation whenever needed to implement the convention, and whenever transfrontier effects are likely to occur, and provides mechanisms to assist in its implementation, including an independent secretariat.

The Convention will enter into force once 15 African states will have ratified it.

Decision 4(II) of the African Union Assembly (see below) thanks the AU Commission Chair, UNEP and IUCN for their endeavor to update the 1968 Convention, and bring it to the level and standard of modern multilateral environmental agreements. The cooperation between the African Union, UNEP and IUCN in this task has indeed been exemplary. A number of individuals have played a key role in bringing this process to a successful close: at OAU, Prof. C.A. Johnson, Foday Bojang, and Ben Kyoko; at UNEP, Donald Kaniaru, Charles Okidi, and Elizabeth Mrema. At IUCN, Françoise and Wolfgang Burhenne.

The adoption of the new African Convention is particularly rewarding to IUCN, two months before the World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa, which will provide an opportunity to promote ratification of the Convention. Not only does the new text update the protected area concept according to modern thinking, it also incorporates the IUCN Protected Areas Management Categories in an Annex to the text.

IUCN Environmental Law Programme, July 2003

**DRAFT DECISION ON OF THE DRAFT REVISED 1968
AFRICAN CONVENTION (ALGIERS CONVENTION) ON THE
CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
Doc. EX/CL/50 (III)**

The Assembly:

1. **COMMENDS** the Interim Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) for their endeavour to update the 1968 African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Algiers Convention) to take into account recent developments in the African environment and natural resources scenes, while bringing the Convention to the level and standard of modern multilateral environmental agreements;
2. **FURTHER COMMENDS** the Governments of Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Nigeria, Parties to the 1968 African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, (Algiers Convention) for their initiative to bring about the revision of the Convention;
3. **APPROVES** the revised 1968 African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources;
4. **CALLS UPON** all Member States to sign and ratify the revised Convention in order to bring it into force as early as possible;
5. **FURTHER CALLS UPON** the Chairperson of the Commission to take all necessary measures to ensure that the revised Convention is sufficiently popularized to facilitate its implementation;
6. **URGES** the United Nations Environment Programme, relevant agencies of the United Nations system, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and other relevant international Non-Governmental Organizations to collaborate with the Commission and Member States of the African Union to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention.

Note: This draft resolution was adopted on July 11 2003.