

Ministers Call for ‘Environment Tax’ on Extractive Industries to Boost Environmental Management in Countries Sharing the African Coast of the Atlantic Ocean.

Pointe Noire (Republic of Congo)/Nairobi (Kenya), 16 November 2012 – Ministers of environment and delegates from the 22 countries sharing the West, Central and Southern African coast of the Atlantic Ocean, recommend a feasibility study for an ‘environment tax’ on extractive industries, as a source of innovative and predictable funding for the realization of sustainable development in Africa.

They were meeting from 15 to 16 November, for the ministerial segment of the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention for the Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central and Southern African Region (Abidjan Convention), which focused on the theme “*innovative funding opportunities of marine and coastal environmental projects in Africa*”.

The meeting, which brought together more than 200 delegates, was organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), broker of the Abidjan Convention and the Government of the Republic of Congo.

African countries, Parties to the Abidjan Convention are endowed with abundant coastal and marine resources, including mining and minerals resources. Yet they are not getting the full benefit of these resources to ensure their development and improve people’s well-being.

In addition, the environmental cost of mining, oil exploration and extraction, transportation, unsustainable fishing practices further compound development prospects. African ministers therefore called on UNEP to support the feasibility study for an environment tax as an initial step in the development of national and regional policies.

Ministers also adopted a set of decisions, which should lead to the sustainable development or management of the marine and coastal environment in Africa in the areas of:

- Sustainable management of mangroves in the region;
- Marine and coastal-based tourism development;
- Interface between freshwater courses and marine and coastal ecosystems;
- Poverty reduction through the sustainable management of marine and coastal resources in Africa;
- Collaboration between the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commissions and the Abidjan Convention;
- Cooperation with African shipping ports in the area of environmental protection;
- Environmental standards for offshore exploration and exploitation and mining activities off the coasts of Member Parties.

Parties agreed to hold the next Conference of the Parties to the Abidjan Convention in March 2014 in Cape Town, South Africa.

Note to Editors:

The Convention for the Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of West and Central and Southern African Region (Abidjan Convention) is one of the African regional Seas conventions administered by UNEP.

The Abidjan Convention and its protocol concerning cooperation in combating pollution in cases of emergency - came into force in 1984. The area covers the 22 coastal states on the Africa side of the Atlantic Ocean from Mauritania to South Africa.

It is a comprehensive umbrella agreement for the protection and management of the marine and coastal area, and aims to address -pollution, - from ships, dumping, land-based sources, exploration and exploitation of the sea-bed, and pollution from or through the atmosphere. It also makes provision for liability and compensation in case of pollution

The Convention is the basis for co-operative efforts to address other issues such as overfishing, control of fish stocks, coastal-based tourism, coastal erosion, protected areas, and environmental impact assessment in the region.

The COP10 of the Abidjan Convention brought together all 22 Parties along with several organizations that are active in the field of marine and coastal environment in the region. These include UNDP, IMO, FAO, UNEP, UNIDO, IUCN, WWF, FIBA, PRCM, the OSPAR Commission, Birdlife International, Wetlands International as well as regional organizations such as the Africa Union Commission and Regional Economic Commissions.

The Decisions and full report of the COP19 of the Abidjan Convention will be available soon on:

<http://www.abidjanconvention.depiweb.org/>

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