

Durban conference set to focus on Africa's green economy

South Africa is to host the 17th Ordinary Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in Durban. The conference will take place on Thursday and Friday, under the theme 'Taking Action for Environmental Sustainability and Prosperity in Africa'.



Image source: Gallo/Getty

The 17th Ordinary Session of AMCEN will focus on the green economy in Africa. This economic sector is underpinned by, among other things, the circular economy, green business and green financing, the promotion of the biodiversity economy and natural capital accounting, as well as the oceans economy.

“It is my sincere hope that in line with the theme of this conference there will be a greater focus on implementation in the short term and, in following, a business-unusual course of action trajectory.

“The people of the continent are looking to use for inclusive solutions and meaningful action at the grassroots level in addressing the plethora of environmental challenges we are facing today,” Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries Barbara Creecy said.

Urgent action required

The minister said the African Union’s Vision 2063 requires that urgent action be taken by all to halt unsustainable use of natural resources and ensure that the continent is placed on a growth trajectory that will meet the needs of present and future generations.

“Sound management of natural resources provides the economic case for environmental management and sustainable development. By facilitating the scaling-up of labour-intensive natural management programmes, African governments can contribute to decent work and sustainable livelihood opportunities for the unemployed, thereby reducing poverty in many communities living adjacent to protected areas,” she said.

Creecy said of equal importance is discussions on the upscaling of manufacturing, utilising Africa’s unique resource base, as well as preventing and combating the illegal trade in natural resources.

Continental Free Trade Area

This is particularly relevant with the recent adoption of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) which is intended to promote and enhance intra-African trade.

This week South Africa takes over the chair from Gabon until 2021. Chairing this strategic ministerial forum comes at a time when AMCEN is playing an increasingly prominent role in coordinating African positions on key issues for the United Nations Environment Assembly.

“As the incoming president of AMCEN, our country hopes to strengthen this body within the multilateral system of both the African Union and the United Nations Environment Assembly,” Creecy said.

This week’s meeting is expected to be attended by around 500 delegates from governments, United Nations agencies, civil society, academia and the youth.

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