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Some environmental issues of relevance to Africa

I. Introduction

1. Discussion of topical environmental issues of relevance to Africa has become a feature of the regular sessions of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN). At its eleventh regular session, AMCEN deliberations will include the following selected topics and aim to reach decisions that will form the basis for some of the future activities of the Conference:

(a) Implementation of the action plan for the environment initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development;

(b) The production of the second Africa Environment Outlook report and the Africa Environment Information Network;

- (c) Implementation of the Africa regional strategy for disaster risk reduction;
- (d) The Green Wall for the Sahara initiative;

(e) Implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacitybuilding;

(f) Sustainable financing of the implementation of environmental projects and programmes at country level;

(g) Multilateral and regional environmental agreements.

2. This document has been drafted by the secretariat and a number of authors whose contributions are gratefully acknowledged in annex I to the present report. This document has been prepared with the sole purpose of facilitating deliberations at the eleventh regular session of AMCEN and does not, therefore, provide an exhaustive discussion of the issues. For the sake of brevity, excerpts from some of the documents that have been prepared on the topics listed above have been included in this document. The full texts are, however, available as separate documents for the consideration of the eleventh regular session.

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II. Implementation of the action plan for the environmental initiative of NEPAD

3. The New Partnership for Africa's Development called for the development and adoption of an environment initiative - a coherent action plan and strategy - to address the region's environmental challenges, while at the same time combating poverty and promoting social and economic development. The action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD, covering the first decade of the twenty-first century, is a response to those challenges. AMCEN guided the development and subsequent adoption of the action plan by the Assembly of the African Union at its second ordinary session, held in Maputo in July 2003. The Conference has since organized two Partners' Conferences on the implementation of the action plan. Furthermore, AMCEN devoted considerable time to the matter at its tenth regular session, held in Sirte, Libya in June 2004.

4. Following the tenth session of AMCEN, the momentum behind implementation of the action plan increased considerably. A detailed account of the status of implementation is contained in document UNEP/AMCEN/11/3/Add.1.

5. Under the guidance of AMCEN, various activities have been undertaken to realize the action plan, including the implementation of aspects of the action plan by some member States, improving cooperation between China and Africa to protect the environment and the execution of the 2004–2006 work programme of AMCEN.

6. The Bureau of AMCEN has initiated steps to harmonize the roles of the AMCEN secretariat, the NEPAD secretariat and the African Union. The link between the African Union and AMCEN is under consideration and was discussed extensively during the meeting between the African Union Commission and the Bureau of AMCEN in Addis Ababa in May 2005. A detailed account of the meeting is contained in document UNEP/AMCEN/11/4/Add.1. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has invested considerable effort in conducting complementary programmes and initiatives to encourage the development and implementation of environmental law by African States. These have included capacity-building in the fields of compliance and enforcement of environmental law at the national level. One continuing UNEP programme, the Partnership for the Development of Environmental Laws and Institutions in Africa, has contributed to the development of legal and institutional frameworks to help curb environmental degradation and consequently reduce poverty.

7. The AMCEN secretariat has been working in concert with the African Ministerial Council on Water (AMCOW) since its establishment in 2002, to help provide political leadership, policy and strategic direction, and advocacy for the use and management of water resources in the region. In this regard the secretariat has been providing technical support for a number of activities undertaken by AMCOW.

8. Capacity-building has been identified as a key requirement for the effective implementation of NEPAD and its action plan. A capacity-building initiative to support the implementation of the NEPAD action plan was adopted in Cairo in October 2003 by the fifth meeting of the steering committee of the UNEP/Global Environment Facility (GEF) Medium-sized Project on the Development and Implementation of the Environment Component of NEPAD, and by the NEPAD Partnership Conference, held in Algiers in December 2003. One of the five components of the capacity-building initiative is the preparation of subregional NEPAD environmental action plans.

9. The NEPAD secretariat worked closely with UNEP and GEF to finalize a medium-sized project proposal that established a capacity-building programme for the development of subregional NEPAD environment action plans. The project is progressing steadily. Funding from GEF and the Governments of Belgium and Norway is assisting African countries to implement various components of the capacity-building programme, namely the development of five subregional environmental action plans; human and institutional capacity-building; and synergistic implementation of multilateral environmental agreements

10. AMCEN requested the assistance of UNEP in the preparation of the Africa Environment Outlook report on the state of Africa's environment. The first such report was launched during the ninth regular session of AMCEN, held in Kampala in July 2002. In view of its usefulness, AMCEN requested a follow-up publication. The preparation of the second Africa Environment Outlook report, which is regarded as a flagship AMCEN publication, has been underway since the launch of the first report in July 2002. Production of the Africa Environment Outlook report has incorporated the findings of the Africa Environment Information Network and other early warning activities. The second Outlook report is expected to be launched during the eleventh regular session of AMCEN. 11. It is generally accepted that land degradation and desertification are the most serious and pervasive environmental problems in Africa. AMCEN convened a high-level preparatory meeting for its member States in Nairobi, Kenya in October 2005, ahead of the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertificated the development of several priority projects in collaboration with the NEPAD interim secretariat (SINEPAD) and relevant subregional organizations, as well as UNEP, the World Meteorological Organization, GEF, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, the Islamic Development Bank, and bilateral partners such as the Governments of Italy and the United Arab Emirates.

12. The action plan for the NEPAD environment initiative identified conservation of wetlands as one of the core programmatic areas for intervention. The NEPAD secretariat has been working with the World Conservation Union (IUCN) regional office for Southern Africa, with World Bank funding, to develop and appraise wetland ecosystem inventories and to monitor and assess such ecosystems, based on standardized methodologies for the Southern African Development Community; and to advocate the effective use of the inventories by environmental civil society organizations in Southern Africa. Other environmental civil society initiatives are also being piloted in collaboration with IUCN with the support of World Bank funding. The secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat has organized training on wetlands inventories for a number of countries. Two countries were given financial support to prepare their wetlands inventory reports. The Ramsar Convention secretariat also provided financial and technical support to eight African countries to develop management plans for several Ramsar wetlands sites and for the designation of new ones.

13. Progress in implementation of programme area three, relating to the prevention, control and management of invasive alien species, has been rather slow. Three of the original 14 project concepts were elaborated further with a view to securing funding. These concerned preventing waterweeds from choking Africa's water-bodies; preventing invasive alien plants from ruining Africa's productive land; and preventing invasive alien species entering Africa through airports. A NEPAD invasive alien species workshop, organized by South Africa, was held in Durban, South Africa in September 2005. It was agreed that more collaborative efforts should be made for the implementation of this programme area, particularly in the area of capacity-building in the region. Meanwhile, South Africa, in collaboration with the Global Invasive Species Programme and its partners, and with funding from Norway, has produced a brochure on invasive alien species in Africa.

14. Many activities were undertaken in programme area four, relating to conservation and sustainable use of marine, coastal and freshwater resources. These include activities being implemented within the framework of the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region (Abidjan Convention) and the Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region (Nairobi Convention), under the following subheadings: addressing landbased activities in the Western Indian Ocean region project; Guinea Current large marine ecosystem; sustainable coastal tourism project development facility block B project; Agulhas and Somali Current large marine ecosystem; integrated coastal management projects; and assessments of regional flagship species (dugongs, coelacanth and manatees).

15. It is widely acknowledged that climate change is the most pressing global environmental issue. AMCEN convened a high-level preparatory meeting for its member States in Nairobi, Kenya in October 2005 ahead of the landmark eleventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and first meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, held in Montreal, Canada in December 2005. The GEF project development facility block B grant proposal for the regional project entitled "Adaptation to climate change – responding to shoreline change and its human dimension in West Africa through integrated coastal management", was developed under the guidance of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and has been approved by GEF. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) led the drafting of the block B grant proposal for the regional project on the impacts of tourism on coastal and marine resources, which has also been approved by GEF.

16. Many activities were undertaken in programme area six, relating to transboundary conservation or management of natural resources, and in the cross-cutting issues programme area. These included activities related to the dense and wet forests of Central Africa; health and environment; the African stockpiles programme; capacity-building in chemicals management; capacity-building in environmental impact assessment, including environmental assessment guidelines; development of an Africa strategy

for disaster risk reduction; development of a ten year framework programme on sustainable consumption and production; and the NEPAD cities programme.

17. A draft decision entitled "Implementation of the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD" will be considered by AMCEN at its eleventh regular session.

III. The second Africa Environment Outlook report and the Africa Environmental Information Network

18. The African environment offers many opportunities for human and economic development. The abundant land, freshwater, coastal and marine resources and air are the natural assets available to lift Africa from a position of both human and environmental vulnerability to that of human and environmental resilience. They provide the opportunities to withstand the consequences of recurrent disasters such as drought and floods, as well as sudden and devastating natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis. This interdependence of the environment and development was highlighted in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission, which stated in its report entitled "Our Common Future" that "the two are inseparable".

19. The environmental assets in Africa provide opportunities for the region to attain the objectives of NEPAD and to achieve the targets of the Millennium Development Goals, which Africa adopted at the turn of the century. The Millennium Development Goals and the objectives of NEPAD are important and related indicators. Sadly, most of Africa is failing in its efforts to achieve sustainable development. The United Nations Millennium Project reported in 2005 that sub-Saharan Africa "has been in a downward spiral of AIDS, resurgent malaria, falling food output per person, deteriorating shelter conditions, and environmental degradation, so that most countries in Africa are far off track to achieve most or all of the Goals".

20. To enable the African environment to contribute to achieving both the Millennium Development Goals and the NEPAD objectives, it is imperative that Africa curbs current environmental degradation and seizes the development opportunities presented by its wealth of natural resources. Success on both fronts requires that policymakers ensure proper valuation of natural and environmental resources; conserve, manage and use them effectively; and undertake strategic investments that enable the environment to contribute to development, for example investments in the development of markets for forest environmental services such as carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, watershed protection and landscape values.

21. The daunting environmental challenges facing Africa AMCEN to ask for UNEP assistance in preparing a comprehensive regional report on the state of Africa's environment, entitled Africa Environment Outlook. As noted above, the first report was launched during the ninth regular session of AMCEN, held in Kampala in July 2002. In view of its usefulness, AMCEN requested a follow-up publication. The process of producing national and subregional inputs for the first Outlook report showed major gaps in existing information, as well as a lack of capacity to sustain a process of this nature. With those flaws in mind, AMCEN endorsed the proposal for the establishment of a comprehensive information sharing mechanism, the Africa Environment Information Network, to promote the accessibility and harmonization of data in the Africa region and to track environmental changes using quantitative indicators focusing on national needs.

22. The pilot phase of the Information Network has been completed in 12 African countries and lessons learnt will be used during the second phase of implementation in a further 20 countries as well as serving to strengthen networking in the initial pilot countries. Ten pilot countries have active networks which have resulted in the preparation of comprehensive integrated environment assessment reports, which outline the state and trends of the environment in Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Seychelles, Tunisia and Uganda.

23. The preparation of the second Africa Environment Outlook report is a major AMCEN activity being conducted by UNEP, which has been underway since the launch of the first report in July 2002. Emphasis was placed on the assets and resources in Africa and how they could be managed sustainably during the preparation of the second report. Analyses conducted during the preparation of the second Africa Environment Outlook report demonstrate that Africa has many opportunities to use the environment for development, if the challenges identified are handled effectively. The analyses also reveal some emerging environmental issues which require immediate and long-term strategies and intervention from policymakers. They have also documented positive lessons from transboundary and regional cooperation in natural resource management.

24. While some of the problems identified by the second Africa Environment Outlook report are not wholly new, their continued prominence in Africa should prompt policymakers to reflect on the effectiveness of existing policy and institutional arrangements in achieving Africa's sustainable development goals. That reflection may include consideration of the need for a strategic shift from a reactive approach to dealing with the problems of environmental change and human vulnerability to a more proactive agenda, characterized by an enhanced capacity to manage change and enhance adaptation at all levels.

25. Chapter 14 of the second Africa Environment Outlook report is entitled "A renaissance for the environment" and highlights the key issues identified by policymakers in the region. The chapter lists potential roles for various stakeholders in implementing the proposed actions, as well as time frames for the realizing the targets. The report also outlines policy recommendations in the following areas: social and economic; land; air; forests and woodlands; biodiversity; coastal and marine areas; human settlements; regional cooperation and conflict management; invasive species; genetically modified organisms; small island developing states; and policy interlinkages. Chapter 14 of the second Africa Environment Outlook has been circulated to AMCEN members as a separate document. Its recommendations will be of particular relevance to the deliberations of the technical segment of the eleventh regular session of AMCEN.

26. At its eleventh regular session, AMCEN will consider a draft decision concerning the launch of the second Africa Environment Outlook report.

IV. Implementation of the Africa regional strategy for disaster risk reduction

27. Africa is the only continent whose share in the world total of reported disasters has increased over the last decade. The occurrence of disasters triggered by natural hazards and the resulting social and economic losses are rising in Africa, posing a great threat to Africa's ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development. In addition to social and economic costs, a substantial amount of financial and other resources for development has been diverted to relief and rehabilitation assistance to disaster-affected people each year.

28. Disaster risk reduction policies and institutional mechanisms do exist at various degrees of completeness in African countries. Their effectiveness is limited, however, which implies the need for a strategic approach to improving and enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency. To address the issue of disasters comprehensively, the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), have been working with the African Development Bank and the United Nations International Disaster Reduction since the beginning of 2003 to identify ways to provide strategic guidance and direction to mainstream disaster risk reduction in sustainable development planning.

29. The process of formulating a continental disaster risk reduction strategy started with a NEPAD workshop on disaster management in April 2003. The workshop considered proposals to address the issues of food security and disaster management in Africa. It identified the need to develop a regional strategy on disaster risk reduction and a programme of action on disaster risk reduction.

30. At a follow-up African consultative meeting on disaster risk reduction in Africa, held in June 2003, it was decided to conduct a baseline study to establish the status of disaster risk reduction in Africa prior to the drafting of the regional strategy. The baseline study established that the continent's development was primarily vulnerable to disasters because of gaps in institutional frameworks, risk identification, knowledge management, governance and emergency response capacity.

31. In the light of the above concerns, the proposed African regional strategy for disaster risk reduction aims to contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication by facilitating the integration of disaster risk reduction into those processes. The strategy's objectives are to increase political commitment to disaster risk reduction; to improve identification and assessment of disaster risks; to enhance knowledge management for disaster risk reduction; to increase public awareness of disaster risk reduction; to improve governance of disaster risk reduction institutions; and to integrate disaster risk reduction into emergency response management. The strategy suggests strategic directions to achieve these objectives.

32. An outline of the strategy and its key areas of focus were reviewed at a preliminary meeting of the Africa working group on disaster risk reduction in April 2004. A draft strategy was reviewed at three separate forums in May and June 2004: a meeting of experts to discuss the strategy; an African regional consultation on the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Kobe, Japan, in January

2005; and the first meeting of the Africa working group on disaster risk reduction. A revised strategy was adopted by AMCEN at its tenth session, in June 2004, and officially acknowledged by the African Union at its third ordinary session in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 6 to 8 July 2004. The African Union called for a programme of action to implement the strategy through the joint efforts of the African Union and NEPAD, with further support coming from the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNEP.

33. Joint initiatives between the African Union, NEPAD, the African Development Bank and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, with support from experts, government officials, the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery and UNEP, have resulted in a set of strategic documents. Specifically, those documents are a regional review of disaster reduction, a regional strategy for disaster risk management, and guidelines for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into sustainable development

34. The challenge now is to determine how to transform the strategy and guidelines into actions by policymakers, decision makers, disaster managers and development practitioners at subregional, national and community levels. To face this challenge, NEPAD is proceeding with the second part of the joint initiative, which involves the development of a programme to facilitate the implementation process for the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into sustainable development planning and activities in Africa.

35. The overall goal of the programme is to reduce the social, economic and environmental impacts of disasters on African peoples and economies, thereby facilitating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other development aims in Africa. The specific objectives are to increase: understanding of how disaster risk reduction and management is an integral part of sustainable development; understanding of why the regional strategy is imperative to African social and economic development; knowledge on disaster risk reduction and management for strategy implementation; and capacity at subregional and national levels for mainstreaming and implementing disaster risk reduction and management in the development process.

36. In the initial phase, the strategy will be implemented through activities including:

- (a) Advocacy and resources mobilization;
- (b) Capacity-building in disaster risk reduction and management;

(c) Small-scale pilot projects for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development programmes.

37. Implementation will also be achieved by mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in development programmes in cooperation with the African Development Bank and regional economic communities. Specific actions will include:

(a) Advocating the adoption of guidelines for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction at regional, subregional, national and local levels;

(b) Introducing disaster risk assessment as part of the social and economic development planning process;

(c) Ensuring that disaster risk reduction actions are incorporated into sustainable development programmes and integrating disaster risk assessment into the criteria for selecting and evaluating development, rehabilitation and reconstruction projects and programmes, especially in the agriculture and construction sectors, thereby preventing new risks accumulating as a result of development

38. The proposed activities will be carried out within five years, under the joint coordination of NEPAD and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, working closely with regional economic communities, United Nations agencies and other development partners.

39. The full text of this topic is contained in a report by the African Union entitled "Report of the African Union Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction", which has been circulated to AMCEN members.

V. The Green Wall for the Sahara initiative

40. In July 2005, Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of Nigeria, proposed to the fifth ordinary summit of the African Union the launch of the Green Wall for the Sahara initiative. The objective of the initiative is to arrest the advance of the Sahara desert southwards and to improve the livelihoods of the inhabitants of the Sahelo-Sahara zone. The Green Wall initiative would also help strengthen the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Africa. Although no formal decision was taken on the proposal, the heads of State expressed support for it and requested that the chair of the African Union Commission, Mr. Alpha Oumar Konare, facilitate its formulation and implementation.

41. Mr. Konare convened the first informal consultative meeting of partners on 19 July 2005 to consider the way forward. The meeting recommended that the African Union Commission develop a first draft concept paper for its consideration. At its second meeting held on 27 and 28 February 2006, the consultative group considered the Commission's draft concept paper and made recommendations for its improvement. These have been incorporated in the concept note on the Green Wall initiative prepared by the African Union Commission and circulated to AMCEN members. The introductory part of that document is given below:

"The threat of desertification is real and looms large in the African horizons. Africa is one of the most negatively affected continents by the processes and effects of desertification. The number of communities, countries and subregions within Africa whose livelihoods are being eroded on a continuous basis by the continuous encroachment of the desert areas and mainly by locally generated land degradation processes is clearly a source of grave concern. Livelihood in these areas is heavily reliant on limited and degrading soil, water and vegetation resources. There is mounting pressure, which is unprecedented in history, on these resources with alarming consequences.

"Several causes could be cited for such a state of affairs, but what should be even much disturbing is the fact that only limited and sustained concrete efforts have been made in Africa to counter both the processes as well as the consequences of desertification. In short, the reality could be tersely put as one in which the forces of desertification have been insurmountable in the face of little or inappropriate or inadequate response to prevent or minimize it.

"It is true that there have been certain efforts aimed at counteracting desertification through approaches similar to the presently suggested initiative. Few useful examples from national level interventions could be mentioned in this regard. The Green Wall initiative launched in 1971 in Algeria had an objective of reforestation of 3 million hectares of land that has a dimension of 1500 kilometres length by 10–20 kilometres width. This initiative was later to be the precursor for the formulation of the project known as the Green Belt of Northern African Countries in 1978. Similarly the Green Belt for Nigeria initiative, that was formulated in response to the threats of desertification and deforestation detected using satellite imagery taken between 1976–78 and 1993–95, has an objective of planting about 300 million trees on 240,000 hectares.

"Another example which could lend useful lesson for Africa is the Chinese experience. China embarked upon a vast reforestation programme in 2000, which is known as The Great Green Wall with a view to increasing the extent of planted forest network by 5 million hectares until 2010. This wasn't something new but rather a continuation of an initiative that existed since 1978 in response to the massive deforestation that took place during the 1950s triggered by a growing demand for cultivable land – which in fact was the principal consequence of disruption of ecological equilibrium that continued until the end of the 1970s.

"Similarly a number of other initiatives could be cited that have been undertaken by a multitude of actors with specific objectives, but based on more integrated approaches. To mention just a few, the 'Land Use and Land Cover Project in the Sahel and West Africa, the Desert Margins Program could be some of the examples. There could also be other useful experiences too that are carried out by different actors. "Some of the defining characteristics of past and existing efforts in Africa are that they have had an initial conceptual bias or fault or have a limited area of coverage, are isolated, not coordinated, and therefore their impact on the fight against desertification could not be commensurate with the needs. It is with a view to building on lessons learnt and promising approaches of the past and existing efforts that the present initiative is taken.

"However, the Green Wall for the Sahara initiative should not be considered simply an "afforestation line running across the continent". Rather it should be conceived as a combination of interrelated set of activities and actions towards resolving the problems of resource degradation and people's livelihoods. Therefore it requires multisectoral responses and interventions. It could take several interrelated forms such as conservation and recovery of existing vegetation; introduction of new plantations; promotion of renewable and alternative sources of energy to reduce direct reliance on biomass for domestic energy; and range and water resources management. But its cardinal characteristics should be that it is based on clear societal and cultural vision, land use and human needs and sustainable options accepted by interested communities.

"The goal of this particular initiative is to bring together relevant actors and stakeholders within a framework of combating desertification and environmental degradation through undertaking a series of interrelated and coordinated sets of activities, actions and outcomes.

"The project will have a number of objectives principal amongst which are:

- (a) To enhance environmental sustainability;
- (b) To control land degradation;
- (c) To promote integrated natural resources management;
- (d) To arrest the advance of the Sahara Desert;
- (e) To conserve biological diversity; and
- (f) To contribute to poverty reduction."

42. The initiative is to be implemented in the countries of the Sahara and Sahel zones of Africa. Further details on this topic can be found in a document entitled "The Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative", which has been circulated to AMCEN members. AMCEN will consider a draft decision on the Great Green Wall for the Sahara initiative at its eleventh regular session.

VI. Implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building

43. AMCEN was an active participant during the intergovernmental deliberations that lead to the adoption of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building adopted by the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its twenty-third session in February 2005. This is evidenced by decision 8 of the tenth regular session of AMCEN held in Sirte, Libya in June 2004, which concerned Africa's submission to the High-level Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on an intergovernmental strategic plan for technology support and capacity-building. The Bali Strategic Plan is an approach agreed at intergovernmental level that aims to strengthen technology support and capacity-building in developing countries, as well as countries with economies in transition.

44. The Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building is of particular interest in the African region, as it complements the objectives of Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals and the capacity-building program of the NEPAD environment initiative. That underscores the fact that capacity-building should respond to the needs and priorities of countries, as well as being coordinated with subregional and regional environment initiatives.

45. In view of these developments, UNEP has initiated in close cooperation with UNDP a pilot project in six African countries: Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Rwanda and Tunisia. These were selected on the basis of their geographical distribution, taking into consideration environmental, social and economic factors. The first step in the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan was to conduct a needs assessment in the pilot countries to identify the capacity gaps and technological support requirements to improve implementation of their respective environmental

mandates. To determine progress made thus far as well as chart the way forward, UNEP organized a workshop for technical experts, comprising government and UNDP country office focal points from the pilot countries, which was held in Nairobi, from 16 to 20 January 2006.

46. That workshop focused on preparing heads of State and Governments from the pilot countries for a consultative meeting on the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan, which was held in the margins of the sixth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union in Khartoum from 23 to 24 January 2006, as well as for the ninth special session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, held in Dubai from 5 to 7 February 2006.

A. Progress made

47. The implementation process of the Bali Strategic Plan commenced with the signing of memorandums of understanding between UNEP and UNDP country offices and the Governments of pilot countries. A consultative review meeting was convened on 27–28 October 2005. That meeting discussed implementation approaches and methodologies and enabled participants to share experiences and ideas on previous and current capacity-building initiatives. The overall and individual country workplans and timeframes were discussed and finalized.

48. Following the consultative meeting, individual countries embarked on a process of sensitization and consultation at national level, under the aegis of their respective environment ministries. Consultations involved various stakeholders from public institutions, the private sector, civil society, research institutions and the donor community. UNDP was instrumental in facilitating the process as well as providing useful insights and inputs. The consultations continued during the needs assessment exercise, with some countries using local consultants and others using technical working groups. In order to create synergies, the needs assessment is directly linked to other initiatives, such as the National Capacity for Self-Assessment initiative of the GEF, and the Poverty and Environment Initiative of UNEP and UNDP.

49. The needs assessments made reference to various relevant documents. In addition to the literature on the initiatives mentioned above, the assessments were informed by national development policy documents and plans, national environmental action plans, previous capacity assessments, regional agreements and environmental conventions. In order to ensure the inclusion of countrywide assessments, documents such as the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and poverty reduction strategy papers were also used, as well as a rigorous participatory process of consultation, which involved all relevant stakeholders.

50. Once completed, the needs assessments provide the backbone for the identification of national capacity-building and technology support priorities, which will be developed into fully fledged national plans for capacity-building and technology support. It is expected that countries that are yet to complete the needs assessment will follow the same approach as those that have. The preliminary work done so far on assessments indicates the need for greater sensitization, the adoption of more environmentally friendly technologies, and the fostering of South-South cooperation.

51. In general, individual countries have the requisite technical capacity to undertake the Bali pilot project, but may require further technical support in areas such as logistics, communication and information sharing, resource mobilization, and fostering South-South cooperation.

B. Next steps

52. Understandably, individual countries are at different stages in their implementation of the pilot project, but in general, the following tasks need to be accomplished:

(a) Finalization of the needs assessment reports, including validation by stakeholders;

(b) Development of technology support and capacity-building plans, including the development of implementation mechanisms, identification of resource requirements and costing;

(c) Obtaining donor commitment and mobilization of resources for implementation.

53. These will be carried out following the participatory consultative process already embarked upon, and making use of the comparative advantages of institutions and consultants from the public and private sectors, as well as development partners such as UNEP and UNDP. It is envisaged that all countries will complete this pilot project by mid–2006.

54. South–South cooperation can serve as a key mechanism for the implementation of technology support and capacity-building activities within the overall framework of the Bali Strategic Plan and

should be used as a means to support national action plans that will emerge from the country level needs assessments. This will entail the need for detailed consultations between those developing national action plans and the organizations responsible for developing a comprehensive South-South cooperation strategic approach, such as UNEP and UNDP.

55. AMCEN will consider a draft decision on the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan at its eleventh regular session .

VII. Sustainable financing of the implementation of environmental projects and programmes at country level

56. A paper entitled "Sustainable financing for environmental projects in Africa: Some ideas for consideration" has been circulated to AMCEN members as a separate document and serves as a background text for discussions on this topic. It provides information on the conservation finance situation in Africa; environmental funds; payment for ecosystem services; debt-for-nature swaps; and carbon offset projects. The introductory part of the paper is given below.

"In Africa, more than anywhere else on earth, the well-being of people strongly depends on natural resources. It is therefore essential that natural resources are much better protected and managed. Unfortunately, this is not the case these days and a new approach to nature conservation and the sustainable use of natural resource should therefore be sought. The traditional 'project approach' does not work anymore.

"The major reasons for the failure of the old way to do things are threefold:

(a) They are based on projects and when the project ends, very often the programme or the activities die with it;

(b) They are too dependent on "donor" funding and when the "donor" is not interested anymore, the programme ends, and

(c) Environment and development continue to be seen as two different issues.

"The situation is worsened by the extremely centralized and bureaucratic way in which bilateral and multilateral development funds are functioning. It can take up to five years of expensive and intensive paperwork to have a European Union or GEF project approved. New, locally driven and financed ways of doing things are needed. The paper under reference reviews four of the most promising conservation finance mechanisms that could be useful to Africa. Some already exist in the region, some not. All of them should be adapted to local realities. A very promising South-South cooperation could be established with Latin America (which pioneered most of these mechanisms) as well as Asia.

"UNEP has developed a large portfolio of about 20 conservation finance projects all over the world and is actively promoting this South–South collaboration. For example, members of the Latin American Network of Environmental Funds (UNEP/GEF) project will soon be visiting and supporting their colleagues of the Serengeti Trust Fund Project under negotiation (UNEP/GEF). UNEP/GEF is also promoting exchanges of experiences between colleagues from Uganda, Kenya, Thailand and the Philippines, to look at how best to promote biodiversity conservation with social equity through pro-poor conservation financing (another UNEP/GEF project with CARE). Worldwide Fund for Nature representatives from the (UNEP/GEF) Danube Delta Payment for Ecosystem Services project will support their Maasai colleagues from the forthcoming (UNEP/GEF) Amboseli payment for ecosystem services project."

A. Environmental funds

57. Environmental funds¹ are not new and date back to the early 1990s. It is therefore important to draw lessons from experiences since then. Their importance and number have been on the increase ever since but there is still some reluctance on the part of bilateral donor agencies to support the capitalization of such funds. Today, there are about forty six operating funds, mostly in Latin America. There are fewer environmental funds in Africa, Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States but their numbers in these regions are also increasing. Globally, about 56 new funds are currently being created or are under negotiation.

58. Since their inception, environmental funds have attracted considerable expectations and interest from environmentalists. They are seen and often used as much more than mere financial mechanisms. On the financial side, they are promoted as long-term sources of finance for conservation and sustainable development work. One of the main arguments used is that they are very good instruments to finance protected areas' recurrent costs. In other words, costs like permanent monitoring, park guards, infrastructure maintenance and any other regular cost that can be planned well ahead could be financed through environmental funds. At the same time, they are often used to strengthen environmental organizations and promote a participatory approach to environmental management. Those possibilities are discussed below in the context of fund structures. Another argument put forward is that they are a perfect tool to meet the often very limited financial absorption capacity in many developing countries.

59. GEF is supporting environmental funds for protected area systems. Discussions are underway to secure GEF support for environmental funds outside protected areas, such as in production landscape, where GEF funding might operate in connection with payment for ecosystem services projects.

60. Of course, the counter-argument is that huge amounts of investment may deliver only a diminutive return. Some critics also add that environmental funds require strong institutional capacities and imply a high administrative cost. As we will see below, these arguments are not entirely true and solutions can be found. The fact that the existing global financial mechanisms are administratively cheaper remains to be proved. On the other side, one could bear a higher administrative cost if it produced much more efficient implementation of multilateral environment agreements. Furthermore, capacity-building in conservation finance or financial management of conservation assets is an important and often undervalued part of the art of environmental management.

61. Capital for environmental funds comes from various sources but the most important ones are GEF, bilateral donor organizations through debt counterpart funds, and development cooperation funds. An increase in funds may also come from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, signed in December 1997. The Protocol calls for further exploration of financial mechanisms, including carbon sequestration fees and the clean development mechanism. The latter mechanism is still somewhat controversial and particular attention should be paid to make sure the mechanism does not become a loophole for rich carbon emitters through which developed countries could obtain "carbon credits" for their activities in developing countries.

62. Once they are operational, many funds manage to raise additional capital from various sources or from good portfolio management. Environmental funds should not rely solely on official development assistance funding but also, and perhaps increasingly, on local funding sources like environmental fees, royalties, and fines, and other market-based instruments. For example, a newly created fund in Ecuador, supported by of The Nature Conservancy, will be capitalized by fees charged for the use of water in the city of Quito. The fund, in turn, will provide money needed to protect the forests in the city's watershed.

63. AMCEN will consider a draft decision on resource mobilization for the implementation of environmental projects at its eleventh regular session.

¹ The term "environmental fund" may not be the most desirable as it may give the false impression that these kinds of funds perpetuate the existing dichotomy between environment and development activities. The reality of existing funds has shown that this is far from being the reality but sustainable development funds might be a more appropriate wording.

VIII. Multilateral and regional environmental agreements

64. AMCEN will deliberate on issues of relevance to Africa relating to multilateral and regional environmental agreements during its eleventh regular session. In view of time constraints, the discussions will primarily address the three Rio conventions – the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity – as well as conventions relating to biodiversity and chemicals.

65. AMCEN organized preparatory meetings, held in Nairobi in October 2005, for the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, held in Nairobi the same month, and for the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the first meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, held in Montreal the following month. Accounts of these preparatory meetings are contained in documents UNEP/AMCEN/Prep.Mtg-D/1 and UNEP/AMCEN/Prep.Mtg-CC/1 respectively. AMCEN will discuss issues of particular relevance to Africa that arose during those sessions at its eleventh regular session and the secretariats of the respective Conventions will be invited to make presentations. A representative of the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions (Biodiversity Liaison Group) will also be invited to make a presentation on topical issues.

66. The seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was held in October 2005, in a year characterized by major environmental and humanitarian emergencies in Africa. Those included a drought in Niger that left two and a half million people facing acute food shortages. At that session, the Conference adopted decision 1/COP.7 entitled "Strengthening the implementation of the Convention in Africa", which was based on its review of national reports on the implementation of the Convention in Africa and urged country Parties and international organizations to increase their efforts in combating desertification. In addition, an ad hoc intergovernmental, intersessional working group was established by decision 3/COP.7. The working group has a mandate to develop a draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the United Nations System. Africa is represented in this working group, scheduled to meet for the first time on 22 and 23 May 2006 in Bonn, Germany, by representatives from Namibia, Mauritania and Uganda.

67. With about 65 percent of Africa's population affected by land degradation, and over 3 percent of agricultural gross domestic product lost annually to soil and nutrient depletion in sub-Saharan Africa, a new partnership, TerrAfrica, was launched at the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. TerrAfrica aims to address land degradation and increase sustainable land management throughout the region and is seeking to invest at least \$4 billion over a twelve-year period to help secure the NEPAD goals of increasing agricultural productivity and reach the Millennium Development Goals related to poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. The secretariat of TerrAfrica is currently hosted by the World Bank.

68. At its fifty-eighth session, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution A/Res/58/211 which declared 2006 to be the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. In this context, the international community proposed to organize a series of events worldwide to assess and discuss in depth the role of key stakeholders in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification implementation process. All events are listed on a website: www.iydd.org. Among the events planned is an international conference on youth and desertification, to be held in Bamako, Mali in September 2006. This conference will enable participants to examine the impact of desertification on young people and to take this into consideration when exploring ways to tackle the problem. Other major events in Africa include an international scientific conference on the future of drylands, which will take place in Tunis in June 2006 and an international workshop on climate and land degradation, to be held in Tanzania in December 2006. The outcome of all major conferences held worldwide will be presented at the Summit of the heads of State and Government of the African Union in Algiers at the end of the year.

69. In general, all African Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification were encouraged to do everything possible to give high visibility to the activities forming part of the celebration of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification and in so doing, to ensure the greatest possible impact at the national, regional, and international levels. The UNCCD secretariat has received numerous assurances from African countries in this regard. A wide range of activities and

events are planned that will certainly help raise the visibility of combating desertification at the country level.

A. Biodiversity-related conventions

70. In response to a call from the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to enhance cooperation among the five biodiversity-related conventions, the Biodiversity Liaison Group was formed in June 2004. This group brings together the heads of the secretariats of the five biodiversity-related conventions, namely the Convention on Biological Diversity; the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora; the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals; the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat; and the Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The Liaison Group meets regularly to explore opportunities for synergistic activities and increased coordination, as well as to exchange information.

B. Biodiversity in context – the 2010 target

71. In the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September 2002, the world's heads of State recognized the critical role that biodiversity plays in sustainable development, poverty eradication, human well-being and in people's livelihoods and cultural integrity. They noted that biodiversity is currently being lost at unprecedented rates owing to human activities and that there is a need to achieve a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

72. In September 2005, 150 heads of State, meeting at the World Summit in New York, called on all States to fulfill their commitments and significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

73. The findings released last year under the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment – an exhaustive analysis of the health of the planet's ecosystems undertaken by over 1,300 experts from 95 countries – show that there is still much to do. Worldwide, two-thirds of the products and services that mankind derives from nature are in decline. Humans have made unprecedented changes to ecosystems in recent decades to meet growing demands for food and other ecosystems products and services. These changes have weakened ecosystems and human activity is putting such strain on the natural functions of the earth that the ability of nature to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted. This landmark study concludes that to attain the 2010 biodiversity target will require not only fine words, but an unprecedented effort by all sections of society.

74. This target is integrally connected to the Millennium Development Goals that were adopted by heads of State and Government in September 2000. Goal 7, concerning ensuring environmental sustainability, cannot be achieved without addressing the crisis of biodiversity loss. African environmental leaders are called upon to reaffirm that in order to realise the Millennium Development Goals in a highly populated planet, biological diversity needs to be used sustainably and its benefits more equitably shared. Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth: genes, species and ecosystems. The services we use from ecosystems, such as clean water, food, fuel and fiber, medicines, and climate control, cannot be provided without biodiversity. Failure to conserve and use biological diversity sustainably will perpetuate inequitable and unsustainable growth and deeper poverty, as well as causing the spread of new and more rampant illnesses and result in the continued loss of species and ever-more degraded environments that present health risks to people. Unless we change the way we use natural resources and distribute the wealth generated, the Millennium Development Goals will not be attained.

75. As advances are made in reducing poverty and improving well-being for the growing human population, we will more clearly understand the need for effectively functioning ecosystems. A wide range of crop and livestock genetic diversity is essential to ensure that agro-systems can adapt to new challenges from climate, pests and diseases. The biological wealth of marine environments provides for the livelihood of coastal communities around the world and will increasingly be needed to feed growing populations. Wetlands are needed as water regulators to protect us from floods and storm surges, and together with other ecosystems such as forests, to help in moderating climatic change. They also act as living filters for pollutants and excess fertilizers. We must not forget that biodiversity is central to many of the world's cultures, the source of legend and myth, the inspiration for art and music. It is the basis for medicinal knowledge, drawing on the property of a variety of plants and animals for healing. Provision of these services across all these ecosystems depends on maintaining biological diversity.

76. Biodiversity can indeed help alleviate hunger and poverty, can promote good human health, and be the basis for ensuring equity for all. All of us rely on biodiversity, directly or indirectly for our health and welfare. The 2010 biodiversity target is thus the foundation for our wellbeing, and continued sustainable existence. We must ensure that biodiversity will be available for us, and for all future generations.

C. Role of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements

77. A document entitled "Biodiversity Related Conventions" document has been circulated to AMCEN members. It was prepared by the Biodiversity Liaison Group and outlines the activities of individual conventions that relate to the African continent. The conventions covered include the Convention on Biological Diversity; the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora; the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals; the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands; and the World Heritage Convention.

D. Overview and recommendations of the Biodiversity Liaison Group

78. African countries have responded well to multilateral efforts aimed at the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Annex II to the present document shows the current African membership of the biodiversity-related conventions. Membership is not yet universal and the Biodiversity Liaison Group recommends that AMCEN encourage and assist African States that are not yet party to these conventions to join them, with a view to achieving universal African membership for all the conventions by 2010.

79. At several sessions of the Conferences of the Parties to the biodiversity-related conventions, a divergence of approach between African States has been noted. This not only weakens the voice of the continent in defining international policy governing biodiversity, but also hinders other Parties' understanding of African priorities and objectives. Whilst finance and logistical considerations are always challenging, the Biodiversity Liaison Group recommends that before its twelfth regular session, AMCEN explore the scope for using existing and new forums to promote stronger coordination among African States on the major issues being discussed in the biodiversity-related conventions.

80. At the level of convention secretariats, the Biodiversity Liaison Group has demonstrated that there is much scope for improved coordination of the biodiversity-related conventions' work. It is clear to the Liaison Group that similar coordination at the national level could bring about a much more coherent approach to policy formulation as well as economies in terms of human and financial resources. Where this is not already the case, the Liaison Group recommends that ministers instruct their officials working on the biodiversity-related conventions to meet at least twice a year to improve the coherence of their country's position at international events related to the subject.

81. Finally the Liaison Group recommends that AMCEN undertake a review of progress towards the 2010 biodiversity target agreed in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and its ambitions beyond this date, together with a review of progress in implementing the biodiversity-related conventions. Based on this, AMCEN is recommended to establish pan-African targets in these fields.

E. Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management

82. The development of a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) was initiated by UNEP Governing Council in 2002 and endorsed by heads of State in Johannesburg at the World Summit on Sustainable Development the same year and at the World Summit in New York during 2005. AMCEN endorsed and encouraged the development of SAICM in its decision 5 at its tenth regular session in Sirte in June 2004, and the process has subsequently been brought to a successful conclusion. SAICM was adopted by the International Conference on Chemicals Management in Dubai on 6 February 2006, after a three-year consultative process involving all stakeholders, including Governments, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations, and all sectors with an interest in chemical safety, including agriculture, development, environment, health, industry and labour.

83. SAICM comprises the political commitment made through the Dubai Declaration on International Chemicals Management; the Overarching Policy Strategy, which defines the Strategic Approach's scope, needs, objectives, principles, finance and institutional arrangements; and the Global Plan of Action, which outlines suggested activities and targets. SAICM will provide a policy framework for efforts to achieve the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation goal that, by 2020, chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimize significant adverse impacts on human health and the environment. SAICM represents a renewed focus on the cross-cutting issue of chemical safety. It recognizes, on one hand, the vital contribution of chemicals to the global economy and modern societies, and, on the other hand, their potential impacts on sustainable development if not soundly managed.

84. The development process was guided by an inter-agency steering committee comprising the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, GEF, the International Labour Organization, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank and the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety. SAICM was endorsed by the UNEP Governing Council at its ninth special session in Dubai on 9 February 2006. It is hoped that the governing bodies of other relevant intergovernmental organizations, beginning with the World Health Assembly in May 2006, will also consider endorsing SAICM and incorporating its objectives in their programmes of work.

85. UNEP will establish and maintain overall administrative responsibility for the SAICM secretariat, with WHO also playing a lead role within the secretariat. Initial SAICM implementation activities in developing countries will be supported by a quick start programme, comprising a UNEP administered trust fund and bilateral and multilateral assistance. Around \$5 million has already been pledged to the fund, which is expected to become operational in mid–2006. Another early activity will be the holding of regional meetings to discuss SAICM implementation. The first of these is likely to be for the African region in September 2006. Already African Governments and other stakeholders have begun work on a draft African regional action plan for the implementation of SAICM.

Annex I

Acknowledgements by the secretariat

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Annex II

Current membership of biodiversity-related conventions amongst States on the African continent

	CBD	CITES	CMS	Ramsar	WHC
Algeria	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Angola	ü	û	û	û	ü
Benin	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Botswana	ü	ü	û	ü	ü
Burkina Faso	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Burundi	ü	ü	û	ü	ü
Cameroon	ü	ü	ü	û	ü
Cape Verde	ü	ü	û	ü	ü
Central African Republic	ü	ü	û	ü	ü
Chad	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Comoros	ü	ü		ü	ü
Congo	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Côte d'Ivoire	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Democratic Republic of the Congo	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Djibouti	ü	ü	ü	ü	û
Egypt	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Equatorial Guinea	ü	ü	û	ü	û
Eritrea	ü	ü	ü	û	ü
Ethiopia	ü	ü	û	û	ü
Gabon	ü	ü	û	ü	ü
Gambia	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Ghana	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Guinea	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Guinea-Bissau	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Kenya	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Lesotho	ü	ü	û	ü	ü
Liberia	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Madagascar	ü	ü	û	ü	ü
Malawi	ü	ü	û	ü	ü
Mali	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Mauritania	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Mauritius	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Morocco	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Mozambique	ü	ü	û	ü	ü
Namibia	ü	ü	û	ü	ü
Niger	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Nigeria	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Rwanda	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Sao Tome and Principe	ü	ü	ü	û	û
Senegal	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Seychelles	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Sierra Leone	ü	ü	û	ü	ü
Somalia	û	ü	ü	û	û
South Africa	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Sudan	ü	ü	û	ü	ü
Swaziland	ü	ü	û	û	ü
Togo	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Tunisia	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Uganda	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
United Republic of Tanzania	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Zambia	ü	ü	û	ü	ü
		ü	û	û	ü
