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**Decisions of the United Nations Conference of Parties to Climate Change,
Biological Diversity and Combat Desertification & FAO cross cutting
strategies: “Challenges and Opportunities for coordinated implementation
in Africa region”**

Executive Summary

Concrete actions are needed to make agrifood systems more productive and environmentally sustainable, necessitating resources, political commitment, knowledge sharing, international collaboration and support for stakeholders along the agrifood value chain.

Africa needs effective policies and enhanced investments in agricultural public goods; it needs to scale up digital solutions for agriculture and develop innovative financing schemes through public-private partnerships, to implement various decisions made at the Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Policy options for food systems include creating public policy solutions, intraregional food value chain and livelihood solutions, on-farm and productive landscape solutions and building regional capacity to manage agricultural risks. These are the areas where partnerships have been implemented throughout in Africa; however, there is need to accelerate their uptake.

FAO's analysis shows that African countries explicitly included decisions from various UN conventions and other multilateral agreements in their Food Systems Transformation Pathways, and that most of the submitted pathways prioritized related approaches and decisions in their National Adaptation Plans; Nationally Determined Contributions; the latest Biennial Update Reports and National Communications to the UNFCCC; Biodiversity National Reports and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans to the CBD; and National Action Plans and goals under Land Degradation Neutrality to the UNCCD.

However, there have been serious challenges to the implementation required by these frameworks. The continent generally needs considerable investments to build climate-resilient economies for agriculture, food security and infrastructure; this would require significant financing from governments, the private sector and international donors.

Documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

The objective of the Ministerial Roundtable is to facilitate experience sharing among Members, stakeholders and partners on promising policies, incentive mechanisms, technological and innovative solutions that can accelerate and help to integrate various environmental COP decisions, regional and national strategies in agrifood systems at country level, as well as strategies to ramp up much needed resources.

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I. Introduction

1. Africa remains the most vulnerable and least prepared continent to deal with the planetary threats of climate change, biodiversity and land degradation; 90 percent of countries have reported food insecurity and malnutrition as major climate-related risks, with far reaching impacts on ecosystem health, productivity and resilience.

2. Hunger and food insecurity are on the rise in the continent and, to put this in perspective, in 2022, 258 million people in 58 countries or territories faced crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity, an increase from 193 million people in 53 countries and territories. Of this figure, 57 percent of these people facing high levels of acute food insecurity in 2022 resided in Africa, equivalent to 146.1 million people.¹

3. Climate change is one of the key drivers contributing to this rise of hunger, and climate shocks were the main cause for nearly one-third of the overall population facing acute hunger in the African continent, in 2022. Africa represented less than 4 percent of global emissions in 2021, yet climate change has significant impacts on the people and ecosystems of the continent. Climate change is the key main driver of biodiversity loss, further jeopardizing important ecosystem services important to the food and agriculture sector, such as pollination, regulating soil organisms, resilience against disturbances and protection against natural pests and disease. Africa has disproportionately experienced increased climate variability, increased frequency, intensity of extreme weather events, severe biodiversity loss and dramatic land and ecosystem degradation, all of which have highly affected the stability of food production and supply, access and utilization of food, thus negatively impacting food security. It has also destroyed people's livelihoods and put at risk the ability of the continent to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

4. The wide-ranging macroeconomic consequences of food insecurity brought on by climate change affect shortage of food and increase in the price of agricultural inputs, which eventually also raise food prices. It has been projected that the annual food imports by African countries are expected to increase by about a factor of three, from USD 35 billion to USD 110 billion by 2025.²

5. Guided by its Strategic Framework 2022-31, FAO is working towards MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems that account for climate change and its impacts. These systems will contribute to low-emission economies and provide sufficient, safe, diverse and nutritious foods for healthy diets, as well as other agricultural products and services for present and future generations, leaving no one behind.

6. Transforming agrifood systems requires action at all levels, while considering national contexts and capacities. This transformation should address systemic and structural causes of vulnerability and exclusion, and their impacts, and support the pursuit of other environmental, social and economic objectives.

A. *United Nations Conference of Parties (COP) decisions relevant to agrifood systems*

7. FAO provides inputs to key Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement; the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Global Framework on Chemicals; and the ongoing negotiations on the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, among others.

8. The 27th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 27) to the UNFCCC, held in November 2022, focused on four key themes: mitigation, adaptation, finance and collaboration; it delivered number of historic decisions, and among them were the establishment of a loss and damage fund for nations hard hit by climate change impacts, as well as the Sharm el-Sheikh joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security, which is the only formal UNFCCC agreement for food security.

¹ Global Report on Food Crises, 2023: <https://www.fsplatform.org/grfc2023>

² State of Climate in Africa report, 2022

It promotes a holistic approach to addressing issues related to agriculture and food security, covering both adaptation and mitigation, with broader scope to consider food systems.

9. UNFCCC COP 27 also announced a number of initiatives which are closely linked with agriculture and food, and these include: the Food and Agriculture for Sustainable Transformation Initiative (FAST), the Action on Water Adaptation and Resilience (AWARe), the Initiative on Climate Action and Nutrition, and the Global Waste Initiative 50 by 2050. During COP 27, there was the launch of the Africa Carbon Markets Initiative as well, which intends to expand Africa's participation in voluntary carbon markets. The initiative involves seven African countries including Gabon, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and Togo, with the support of the United Nations.

10. The 28th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 28) to the UNFCCC was held in December 2023, and Parties adopted several decisions and made advancements or progress on a number of work streams; among them, the first Global Stocktake was concluded, which was designed to chart the way for fulfilling the Paris Agreement's key goals. It provided an update on the Global Methane Pledge, a multicountry initiative to cut methane emissions by 30 percent, by 2030. It also reinforced the deforestation pledge, in which countries were urged to focus on developing and/or revising existing national policies and delivering finance that aims to protect forests.

11. UNFCCC COP 28 also made some progress on the discussion around Carbon Markets and Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which governs carbon trading and other cooperative approaches to cutting emissions, and it is one of the most complex, with many contested elements by Parties. The decision under this article alludes to reducing emissions from the deforestation and forest degradation; the enhancement of forest carbon stock in developing countries; and joint mitigation and adaptation approaches in reducing greenhouse gases for the integral and sustainable management of forests.

12. Significant progress was also made on a number of issues related to agrifood systems; these include the global goal on adaptation and on operationalization of Loss and Damage. Additionally, the United Arab Emirates launched a declaration to accelerate systemic transformation of food systems, which was endorsed by 159 countries. This declaration aims to enhance national commitments in transforming food systems, mobilizing finance and funding, and developing innovative agriculture mechanisms.

13. The 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the CBD was held in December 2022, and it agreed on a major new set of rules for tackling nature loss, known as the "Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework" (KMGBF). It adopted concrete measures to halt and reverse nature loss, including putting 30 percent of the planet and 30 percent of degraded ecosystems under protection by 2030. It also contains proposals to increase finance to developing countries. Four overarching goals of KMGBF focus on ecosystem and species health, including halting human-induced species extinction by 2050; the sustainable use of biodiversity; equitable sharing of benefits; and financing to include closing the biodiversity finance gap of USD 700 billion per year.

14. The KMGBF features 23 action-oriented targets to be achieved by 2030. Over half of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) targets are closely related to agrifood sectors, including many that are vital to securing agriculture and food security, such as reducing pollution; enhancing biodiversity and sustainability in agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry; minimizing the impacts of climate change and building ecosystem resilience; enabling sustainable consumption and reducing food waste; reducing harmful incentives by at least USD 500 billion per year and scaling up positive incentives for biodiversity; and mobilizing finance from public and private sources. A critical step towards closing the nature-finance gap was the announcement of the creation of a new Global Biodiversity Framework Fund in CBD COP 15. The fund established under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) complements existing support and further scales up financing for implementation, with the aim of mobilizing at least USD 200 billion per year, by 2030, from all sources.

15. UNCCD COP 15 was held in May 2022 and adopted 38 decisions to improve drought resilience, reduce land degradation and invest in land restoration efforts. Parties agreed on new commitments, and initiatives were also launched namely: the Abidjan Declaration on achieving gender equality for successful land restoration; the Land, Life and Legacy Declaration, the Business for Land Initiative; and

the Sahel sourcing challenge to enable communities growing the Great Green Wall to use technology to monitor progress, create jobs and commercialize their produce.

16. The UNCCD COP 15 requested FAO to support the development of a “Technical guide” to support the integration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security into Land Degradation Neutrality (SDG target 15.3.1) and the work of the Convention. It also calls partners and Members to increase efforts in mitigating the impacts of drought through gender-responsive and transformative approaches.

B. Priority actions and opportunities for implementation of Conferences of the Parties decisions in Africa

17. Regional and national capacities to implement national action plans:

- a. Many countries in Africa have completed their action plans to implement the Convention decisions; however, they have encountered challenges in their implementation.
- b. A variety of actions towards the implementation of the Convention decisions have been taken, albeit with limited progress, due to various factors, including lack of financial and human resources; lack of indicators; lack of application of the Ecosystem Approach; inadequate means to involve the public in the management of protected areas; and lack of integration of climate and biodiversity issues into political sectors, besides those traditionally dealing with the environment.
- c. One area of required support is to ramp up the capacity building of developing countries, for instance, on reporting requirements to ensure that market and non-market mechanisms for carbon trade are well understood, and to strengthen the capacity in identifying gaps and constraints in the formulation and implementation of National Adaptation Plans for all conventions, including their funding, technology and data.
- d. With improved coordination, increased resources and streamlining of key priority issues – such as energy transitions, financing and adaptation – Africa’s ability will increase, to cope with the effects of climate change, contain drivers behind unsustainable land uses and practices, and enhance biodiversity protection.

18. Loss and damage:

- a. Loss and damage costs in Africa, due to climate change, are projected to range between USD 290 billion (in a 2 °C warming scenario) and USD 440 billion (in a 4 °C warming scenario). Fifty-four African states need more tools, capacity and knowledge generation mechanisms to provide details and specifics about national loss and damage.
- b. Residual losses and damages are impacts of climate change that cannot be avoided through mitigation and adaptation efforts. Africa needs to build its capacity in reducing losses through resilience building; increase its ability to recover; rehabilitate and cope with permanent losses, either with the effects of climate change, loss of biodiversity, degraded land, and their ecosystems. There is the need to address the full spectrum of loss and damage, by addressing their impacts on agrifood sectors.

19. Systems, infrastructure for data and use of technologies:

- a. The African continent suffers from the long-standing problem of lacking a weather infrastructure climate observation tool and sound climatic data. This persistent limitation of information affects the capacity of African nations to predict and adapt to extreme events and monitor and support implementation on the ground. Strengthening systems for capturing data and information will contribute to strengthening climate adaptation, biodiversity monitoring and resilient development in Africa.
- b. Investing in early warnings and early actions is a priority for saving lives, promoting economic development, valuing development gains and livelihoods, protecting the environment and reducing the cost of disaster responses.

20. Innovative financing and investment:
- a. Agrifood systems offer a solution by synergizing development, climate action and food security goals. Current funding in and investments on transforming these systems into sustainable and resilient ones are inadequate.
 - b. The scale and quality of investments in critical areas for Africa, such as energy transitions, investments in climate-resilient agriculture and restoration of natural capital and biodiversity are largely lacking and not sufficient. Concrete measures are required to be put in place for increasing access to finance to support African countries in the implementation of their National Adaptation Plans for climate change, land degradation and biodiversity.
 - c. Innovative financing will help African countries to deal with the impacts of climate change and create an enabling environment for the realization of the SDGs. There are opportunities to leverage the continent's vast nature-based ecosystems to attract innovative financing, such as green and blue bonds and loans, sustainability or sustainability-linked bonds and loans, debt-for-climate swaps, and more efficient and better-priced carbon markets.

C. FAO's support in the implementation of various Conferences of the Parties decisions

21. Building climate-resilient agrifood systems is one of the main solutions to tackle the unfolding climate crisis, land degradation and threat to biodiversity. It contributes in a fundamental way to their sustainability, by enhancing the capacities of agrifood systems actors to prevent, anticipate, absorb, adapt and transform ahead of shocks and stresses.

22. FAO has also developed a few strategies to support Members in adapting their agriculture and food systems transformation in a sustainable manner.

23. FAO developed its Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031,³ together with its Action Plan, with the aim to make agrifood systems a central part of the solutions to the climate crisis. This strategy is supporting countries in both mitigation of and adaptation to the effects of climate change, through a wide range of research-based data collection and development of practical programmes and projects⁴, as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals⁵.

24. The FAO Science and Innovation Strategy⁶ was developed to support the deployment of innovative approaches and technologies to support agriculture production and adapt it to the changing climate. The Organization has also developed a Strategy⁷ and Action Plan⁸ to mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors to reduce the negative impacts of agricultural practices on biodiversity; to promote sustainable agricultural practices; and to conserve, enhance, preserve and restore biodiversity as a whole. Additionally, the FAO Biodiversity Knowledge Hub, an online platform, was created to gather existing knowledge and resources on biodiversity in the agriculture sectors to enhance countries' knowledge and capacity to implement the KMGB and deliver on the SDGs.

25. Through the Science and Innovation Strategy, FAO contributes to strengthening the links between science, research and development, and continues to contribute to science and develop innovations (such as the Codex Alimentarius, the Farmer Field Schools, the Geospatial Platform of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, SEPAL Platform (for land data access, processing and monitoring), and the Global Individual Food Consumption Data Tool. FAO provides support to countries on innovative practices, approaches, methodologies and tools. It also supports science-driven innovative processes, platforms and multi-stakeholder mechanisms.

³ <https://www.fao.org/3/cc2274en/cc2274en.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/climate-change/projects-and-programmes/en>

⁵ <https://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals-helpdesk/en>

⁶ <https://www.fao.org/3/cc2273en/cc2273en.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca7722en/ca7722en.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.fao.org/3/nf735en/nf735en.pdf>

26. FAO delivers its work on these strategies in four key function areas: policy advisory; capacity building and country support; transfer of knowledge and innovative solutions; and resource mobilization and partnerships.

27. FAO is supporting countries in Africa in the implementation and monitoring of relevant GBF targets, developing programme to access GEF, the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Adaptation Fund and others, as well as facilitating partnerships with financing institutions and knowledge organizations to address climate action, food systems in the context of climate resilience, sustainable forest management, land degradation and restoration, fisheries and biodiversity. Currently, FAO has close to 200 related operational projects in Africa associated with climate action, biodiversity and land degradation/restoration activities worth almost USD 552 million. From 2022 to 2023, FAO supported Members to mobilize USD 216 million from GCF and USD 100 million from GEF.

28. The FAO strategies are well aligned with various continental programmes, frameworks and strategies developed by Africa Union (AU) such as African Union Green Recovery Action Plan 2021-2027, Great Green Wall Initiative, the Sustainable Forest Management Framework for (2020-2030), the African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032), and the African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa.⁹

29. FAO Africa's Regional Priority area on "Climate action and sustainable natural resource management" has championed several projects and programmes such as dissemination of climate-smart agriculture best practices through Farmer Field Schools, support to Members in developing agroforestry, urban and peri-urban agriculture, green jobs, green , bioenergy and soil fertility management.

30. Additionally, FAO supported Members in integrating biodiversity in agriculture sectors, the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in the agriculture forestry and land use sectors, and the promotion of the implementation of Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management, institutional capacity, and awareness to combat wildlife crime, the development of national integrated water resources utilization master plans and scaling up solar powered irrigation system in sub-Saharan Africa, among others.

31. FAO supported countries in the formulation and implementation of integrated, evidence-based policies, good practices and policy guidance on integrating food systems in the national frameworks on climate, biodiversity, and land degradation and desertification.

32. FAO supported its Members in enhancing their capacities to identify and access climate finance and investment, and provide the necessary analysis, evidence and advice. Through FAST initiative, FAO is leading this partnership with other partners, to contribute to the improvement of the quantity and quality of climate finance contributions to transform agriculture and food systems by 2030.

33. FAO has created strategic partnerships with key players involved in agriculture, forests and climate change in Africa to support countries in achieving their NDCs. As of February 2023, a total of 53 parties from Africa had submitted their NDCs, and over 90 percent had submitted updated NDCs. Agriculture and food security, water, disaster risk reduction and health are the top priorities for adaptation. It is also reported that, financing African NDCs would require an estimated total of USD 2.8 trillion between 2020 and 2030.

34. FAO has developed several reports and tools as well, to assist and guide Members through ongoing negotiations and discussions, such as the *Impact of Disasters and Climate Change on Agriculture and Food Security 2023*; *Achieving SDG2 without breaching 1.5 °C threshold: A Global roadmap*; and *Loss and Damage in agrifood systems – Addressing gaps and challenges*. FAO has also developed the Law and Climate Change Toolkit, the Nationally Determined Contributions Tracking tool¹⁰, and the Climate Change knowledge hub.

⁹ https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33796-doc-african_strategy_strategy_africaine_au.pdf

¹⁰ <http://www.fao.org/3/cc4960en/cc4960en.pdf>

II. Expected Outcomes

35. The Ministerial Roundtable offers an opportunity to review and take stock of the recent decisions made at the Conferences of the Rio Conventions, as well as on the implementation of FAO's strategies, with reference to the implementation of these UN Conventions both at national and regional levels.

36. The Roundtable will provide a forum for participants to share experiences and highlight promising policies, incentive mechanism, technological and innovation solutions that can accelerate and help to integrate various COP decisions, regional and national strategies in agrifood systems at country level, as well as strategies to ramp up financial and technical.

III. Roundtable organization

37. There will be a moderated roundtable to provide Members with a space for discussion on the issues presented in section I. A presentation by FAO will set the scene for the interactive discussions among Members and partners. Participants will share experiences, best practices, innovations and lessons learned to support implementation of UN Conventions decisions and relevant FAO's strategies.

38. The Roundtable discussion will focus on three critical areas for Africa:

- a. **quality investments and funding** for energy transitions, climate-resilient agriculture, and restoration of natural capital (through agriculture, food and land use practices) and biodiversity;
- b. **capacity of the region** to absorb and leverage on the technologies needed to sustain climate mitigation and adaptation in critical sectors such as agriculture, forestry and land use; and
- c. **effective data and climate information services** for preparedness and response on climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation.

IV. Target audience / Participants

39. The target audience includes Members, the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, international financial institutions, UN Agencies and development partners, as well as relevant national and regional stakeholders.

V. Agenda

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|------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 5 minutes | Welcome and introduction | Moderator (FAO) |
| 15 minutes | Presentation | FAO Director, Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment (OCB) |
| 40 minutes | Interventions of selected Panellists | Ministers of member countries; Representatives of partner organizations; and Representatives of relevant stakeholders |
| | Q&A session | Moderated discussion |
| 10 minutes | Wrap-up, closing remarks | Moderator, FAO |