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African delegates celebrate the continent's contributions to climate and biodiversity policy at ministerial conference

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The 2023 African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) marked a defining moment in global conservation. From August 14-18 delegates from across the continent convened to confront the urgent issue of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, challenges that imperil human health, livelihood, and cultural diversity.

The conference, hosted by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was a resounding call for unity. Participants stressed the vital role of biodiversity in fueling economic growth, ensuring food security, and fortifying resilience in the face of environmental threats. The event responded to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Kunming-Montreal Framework) imperative to turn rhetoric into actionable strategies to protect at least 30 percent of global land and seascapes by 2030.



Rothschild's Giraffe and White Rhino in Lake Nakuru National Park, Kenya. Credit: Kiragu Mwangi.

AMCEN was created in 1985 to promote regional cooperation among African governments working to address shared environmental challenges. Since then, the conference has heightened responses to the continent's environmental and sustainable development needs from both African and international governments.

A highlight of this year's conference was the heartfelt recognition for the work of the African Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity. The organization played a pivotal role in ensuring that Africa's conservation priorities were incorporated in the Kunming-Montreal Framework. The success underscores Africa's unwavering commitment to safeguarding its rich biodiversity for future generations.

The conference also emphasized the critical roles of women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in steering conservation efforts. It recognized the need to share conservation benefits by aligning its objectives with the Africa Union Agenda 2063 and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Delegates also reflected on and celebrated several international policies that were largely driven by African leaders. On August 24, 2023, the Global Environment Facility launched its Global Biodiversity Framework Fund at an assembly in Vancouver Canada. Establishing the fund was an arduous journey, championed fervently by Africa. Similarly, the continent has helped stress the imperative for the Convention on Biological Diversity parties to update their national strategies and action plans to reflect the Kunming-Montreal Framework.

As it came to a close, the conference rooms echoed with calls for a renewed commitment to bolster cooperation and collaboration to build capacity and share technological innovations. In an era where ecosystem connectivity is increasingly important, Africa's steadfast stance on biodiversity conservation sets a precedent for the world. Delegates acknowledged that the road ahead will be challenging, but with unwavering commitment and a united front, Africa can pave the way for a future where biodiversity thrives and the planet flourishes.

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