

Algiers Convention

The Organisation for African Unity (OAU) has initiated a process of revision of the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Algiers Convention), intended to bring it up to date with recent international environment conventions, particularly those resulting from the 1992 Rio process (the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)).

The Algiers Convention entered into force on 16 June 1969, and since that time there has been vast evolution and progress in international environmental law. A trend recognised by African countries in general and, in particular, by Algeria, Cameroon and Nigeria, who in 1983 wrote to the OAU Secretariat to request it to initiate a process of revision of the Convention in accordance with its Article XXIV. This states, *inter alia*, that: “*After the expiry of a period of five years from the date of entry into force of this Convention, any Contracting State may at any time make a request for the revision of part or the whole of this Convention by notification in writing addressed to the Administrative Secretary-General of the Organisation of African Unity.*”

As a result of that notification, the OAU Secretariat initiated the preparation of draft revision. The Secretariat received technical support for that task from IUCN, which had similarly assisted in the preparation of the original Convention.

The draft revision was discussed by a Meeting of Experts of the Parties from 20 – 23 November 1984, and the document was received positively. Subsequently, it was discussed by the Council of Ministers and circulated to the OAU Member States. However, the process was never concluded and the proposed revisions were not adopted.

The process was reactivated when on 4 April 1997, the Government of Burkina Faso, as a contracting Party, wrote to urge that the revision be effected taking into account the large number of global and regional environmental agreements. It was clear that there is an urgent need to effect revisions, which harmonise the African Convention with the new concepts, principles and legal thought in the environmental field.

The OAU Secretariat has recently taken the initiative and held discussions with IUCN and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), drawing on their technical expertise in the field of environmental law. Both organisations have accepted to work with the Secretariat in development of draft revision for eventual presentation to the contracting States as well as other OAU Member States.

The agreed working timetable is that the three agencies should meet towards the end of November 2000 to review a first draft revision prepared by two experts designated by IUCN and UNEP. This will be followed by a Meeting of Experts, in March 2001.

