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CONFERENCE PAPER

Oil and Gas Exploration.

In view of the major discoveries oil and gas in the WIO region and the potential social and economic impacts on the economies of the countries on one hand and negative environmental impacts on the other hand it is prudent that adequate governance mechanisms are put in place. Governments in the region recognized this as an emerging issue and requested the Nairobi Convention Secretariat to assist governments to address the issue within the framework of the Nairobi Convention. In response the Secretariat in partnership with WWF, WIOMSA and other members of the WIO-C have prepared an exploratory paper that outlines elements of a conducive investment climate on oil and gas.

A conducive investment climate should be guided by environmental measures that safeguard environmental benefits. Important elements of a strategy on oil and gas exploration in the region could include: i) Appropriate policies, plans and legislation; ii) systems and tools such as strategic environmental assessments and sensitivity mapping; iii) accountability, transparency, capacity building and public participation; and iv) regional harmonization and cooperation including research and development partnerships, regional dialogue and funding mechanisms.

The on-going discussions on oil and gas in the region are important and should involve key stakeholders including governments, industry and the civil society through appropriate forums and mechanisms. The discussions should be organised to particularly enhance awareness among stakeholders of key development and environmental issues as well as transboundary aspects. Policy recommendations on how governments in the region could address oil and gas exploration will be presented before member States of the Nairobi Convention during COP7. The member States will be requested to endorse the partnership between the Nairobi Convention Secretariat, WWF, WIOMSA and other WIO-C members on future work on oil and gas; and urged to adopt the proposed policy recommendations. (See UNEP-DEPI-EAF-CP.7.Inf11-en for details).