

**REFLECTIONS ON UNITED NATIONS  
ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY (UNEA -2)  
AND CLIMATE CHANGE FOR  
EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA**

**WORKSHOP HELD AT UNEP HEADQUARTERS – GIGIRI,  
NAIROBI 20-21 SEPTEMBER 2016**

**WELCOME REMARKS**

**BY**

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**Ladies and gentlemen.**

**All protocol observed.**

Goal 13 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is Climate Action. Goal 13 aims to *“take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact.”* It is worth recalling that all SDG goals

are interdependent and interrelated. For instance, Climate Action has correlation to good health and well-being, life on land, clean water and sanitization, sustainable cities and communities, gender equality, affordable and clean energy and above all partnerships for the goals. The associated targets of SDG 13 focus on the integration of climate change measures into national policies, the improvement of education, awareness-raising and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warnings.

In the context of this workshop, there is intrinsic connection between sustainable development, climate change, food production systems, poverty reduction and climate justice. Climate justice is the ability of Planet Earth to regenerate and maintain all life forms in a sustainable and dignified manner. It affirms that all flora and fauna are entitled to healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. This underscores the connection between climate change and the right to a clean and healthy environment as part of human rights.

A common theme of this workshop is food security, wildlife conservation, illegal trade in wildlife and existing policy frameworks to address impact of climate change in Africa. The nexus between climate change and sustainable development implies that the needs of present and future generations must be balanced through the principle of intergenerational equity. Climate change poses direct threats to flora and fauna as well as threat to livelihood of future generations. We should not destroy Planet Earth and as Desmond Tutu stated at COP 17 on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2011, ***“We only have this one planet. We do not have planet B.”***

Presently, drought, melting ice, food insecurity and depletion of the ozone layer are evidence of climate change. Anthropogenic emissions and removal of sinks of green house gases is critical to achieving sustainable development. Not all countries contribute equally to emission of substances that promote climate change. In this context, nationally determined contributions to global response on climate change become relevant. Developing countries are hurt most by climate change. Historically, developed countries were

most responsible for climate change. But now, developing countries are most responsible for climate change. It is invigorating to observe that participants in this workshop encompass a wide range of stakeholders from East and Southern Africa as well as multilateral, regional and national government representatives including civil society, private sector, media and other stakeholders in climate change discourse. Such a rainbow of participants is an opportunity to forge strong networks for dialogue and execution of programs and policy outcomes from this workshop.

The reflections on UNEA -2 by the East and Southern African countries are important because Africa remains most vulnerable to climate change. Climate change is affecting the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, who often lack the robust systems and capacity needed to cope. While 'mitigation' through tackling greenhouse gas emissions is crucial to limiting impacts, some change is inevitable and climate change 'adaptation' is now a central issue in development.

Africa's major economic sectors are susceptible to climate sensitivity and its vulnerability is exacerbated by desertification, urbanization and infrastructure developmental challenges. Conventionally, the spine of economies of a majority of the East and Southern African countries is agriculture and tourism. Agriculture and tourism are largely climate dependent and climate driven. While grassland and rangeland ecosystem is climate dependent, food production is rain-fed and climate dependent. Tourism in these countries is wildlife determined. Wildlife migration patterns and migration of pastoral communities are climate determined. One of the Seven Wonders of the World – **The Annual Wild Beast Migration** from Serengeti National Park in Tanzania to the Maasai Mara Game Reserve in Kenya is climate dependent. This underscores the importance and impact climate change to wildlife conservation and foreign exchange earnings of the East and Southern African Countries.

Climate change as a reality is constantly threatening the beauty and tourist attractions in East and Southern African

countries. For instance, Mt. Kilimanjaro and Mt. Kenya have lost 80 per cent of their ice cover between 1912 and 2005. The menace of water hyacinth, inter-clan fighting over watering points for animals, reducing farm yields due to over cropping and wanton destruction of trees is but a few examples of socio-economic impact of climate change to livelihoods. The diminishing levels of water basins and receding shorelines of lakes in East and Southern African Countries is **evidence** of negative effects of climate change. The water levels of Lakes *Rukwa*, *Manyara* and *Eyasi* in Tanzania and Lakes *Magadi*, *Naivasha* and *Elementaita* in Kenya and Lake Victoria in East Africa are decreasing annually.

In East and Southern African countries, the rate of tree regeneration is diametrically opposite to the rate of tree cut down. This has affected grassland and rangeland ecosystems that are vital to resilient livelihoods and sustainable development. It has impacted on water catchment areas, flow of water, and maintenance of soil stability, biodiversity and

supporting carbon sequestration and distinct lifestyles and culture.

At a global level, discussions on climate change starts with the Paris Agreement which acknowledges that climate change is a common concern of humankind. This recognition portends a human rights dimension to climate change discourse. The right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities and intergenerational equity all come to fore. An objective of the Paris Agreement is to strengthen global and national response to the threat of climate change in the context of sustainable development. In this regard, climate change is a development issue and it impacts human rights, food security, wildlife conservation, land degradation, combating desertification and conservation of the environment at large.

In the atmosphere and stratosphere, the impact of climate change on the ozone layer need not be over-emphasized. Increased global temperatures are causing rapid vanishing of

world's flora and fauna species. Today, there are animal and plant species that are getting extinct.

The Paris Agreement embodies statements of values and principles. This workshop should discuss the challenges and opportunities arising from the Paris Agreement and recommend how states can effectively implement the Action Points of the Agreement. Apart from sharing information and experiences, the workshop should recommend modalities for strengthening institutional arrangements for cooperation and linkages between stakeholders in climate change discourse. The workshop should recommend concrete action points to fight climate change and achieve food security in Africa; likewise, measures to mainstream and mitigate negative impact of climate change should be devised and recommended. It is my expectation that participants shall explore the practical application of fairness and equity in stewardship of natural non-renewable resources; examine the relevance of polluter pay principle from the perspective of non-polluting countries and explore modalities to foster regional cooperation on climate change.

This workshop should also reflect on the issue of climate change 'adaptation' and recommend action points to enable East and Southern African countries adapt to climate change in a sustainable development. Climate change, vulnerability and resilience in the context of building adaptation and disaster risk reduction policies that contribute to eradicating poverty should be discussed.

Recognizing the role of civil society and non-state actors in environment and wildlife conservation, it is important for this workshop to identify gaps in national programs and recommend ways to mitigate climate change for sustainable flora and fauna livelihoods. Finally, illegal trade in wildlife and its products affect a wide range of terrestrial and aquatic fauna and flora. It is my suggestion that this workshop should recommend decisive steps and actions at national level that should prevent, combat and eradicate the supply, transit and demand related to illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products.

With these remarks, I wish all of us productive reflections, discussions, networking and camaraderie during and after this workshop. I invite you to enjoy the warmth of Kenya and the hospitality of the people of the City of Nairobi.

**THANK YOU ALL.**