



# UN ENVIRONMENT NEWSLETTER

AFRICA OFFICE

NOV-DEC 2017



UN ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY





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NEWSLETTER

## UNEA-3



### THE THIRD UN ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY

Over 4,000 heads of state, ministers, business leaders, UN officials and civil society representatives gathered at the third UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-3) in Nairobi to tackle the global menace of pollution.

Under the overall theme "Towards a Pollution-Free Planet", the Assembly run from 4 to 6 December at UN Environment headquarters. The theme clearly stood out as of significant importance to citizens around the globe. Over 2.3 million pledges were collected, through #BeatPollution campaign, to take action against pollution in all its forms.

The UN Environment, Africa Office supported various major events that took place during UNEA-3, kicking off with the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, 27-28 November. It also facilitated the participation of civil society in the Environment Assembly and associated meetings.

The Science, Policy and Business Forum and the Innovation Expo took place with the aim of showcasing technologies and viable solutions, as well as the role of individuals, governments, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders to achieve the Assembly's goal of reducing pollution. UN Environment Africa Office showcased a flagship project, SWITCH Africa Green . Various innovative and sustainable initiatives from Africa were on display, ranging from clothing made from recycled plastic to cook stoves and house-hold level biogas systems.



The Africa section of the exhibit was visited by the President of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Miroslav Lajčák who said: "I appreciate your creativity. Congratulations, you are leading; I think the world should follow you."

UNEA-3 adopted eleven resolutions out of which six were sponsored by African States. These resolutions focus on innovative environmental solutions, soil pollution, air pollution, water pollution, lead in paint, and the Implementation of paragraph 88 (a) – (h) of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20 "The Future We Want".

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# AFRICAN WOMEN ENERGY ENTREPRENEURS FRAMEWORK



## AFRICAN WOMEN ENERGY ENTREPRENEURS FRAMEWORK LAUNCHED



UN Environment in collaboration with UN Women, the African Union Commission, the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance, and other partners launched, on 3 December 2017, the Africa Women Energy Entrepreneurs Framework.

The Framework seeks to strengthen political will and commitment from governments and development partners to attract investment to tackle the issue of access to clean and affordable energy in Africa.

“Women disproportionately bear the burden of energy poverty and face significant health and safety risks from household air pollution, from carrying heavy fuel loads, and from the lack of lighting,” said Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo, Director and Regional Representative of UN Environment in Africa.

“Women should play a role as change-agents and decision-makers in energy development and access in Africa,” she added.

African women’s current participation in decision-making and policy processes as well as in the labor force in the energy sector is low.

“We, the African Ministers for Environment, committed to finding innovative environmental solutions, hereby launch the African Women Energy Entrepreneurs Framework to empower women to engage in accessible, sustainable, affordable clean energy development and use,” said Prof. Judi Wakhungu, Environment Cabinet Secretary of Kenya in a statement on behalf of the African Ministers of the Environment. “We will continue to provide the necessary support to this initiative and urge other partners to join,” she added.

The African Women Energy Entrepreneurs Framework will enable African women to participate actively in the transition towards clean energy in Africa. Unlocking the potential of women entrepreneurs in sustainable energy is critical to the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals.

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## YOUNG NIGERIAN WATER EXPERT WINS TOP UN ENVIRONMENTAL PRIZE

UN Environment awarded Mariama Mamane Young Champion of the Earth for her outstanding work on a three-in-one solution to some of Africa's biggest environmental problems.

Mariama - a Nigerian citizen who lives in Burkina Faso - is one of six young winners awarded by UN Environment for their innovative contributions to solve environmental issues in their communities. She graduated in biodiversity and environmental management from Abdou Moumouni University in Niger in 2013, then joined the International Institute for Water and Environmental Engineering to start an engineering degree in water and the environment.

Mariama initiated the JACIGREEN project which aims to introduce a plant-based purification mechanism to help manage fresh water sustainably and improve access to drinking water. The project will simultaneously implement a system to produce organic fertilizer and reduce toxic pesticides.

"We must find nature-based solutions to meet the challenges of the planet," said Mariama.

Feted at the Champions of the Earth Gala Dinner on 5 December, Mariama will receive seed funding, intensive training, and tailored mentorship to help bring her innovative environmental ideas to life.

UN Environment introduced the Young Champions of the Earth competition in 2017 to accompany its long-running Champions of the Earth award, which recognizes outstanding environmental leaders from government, civil society and the private sector. The competition recognizes the importance of supporting the innovation of the



world's young generation to find environmental solutions to the issues increasingly affecting their communities.

Training by SWITCH-Africa Green focused on areas such as resource optimisation, product innovation, resource efficiency, branding, as well as pricing and costing of finished products. The training was informed by an initial assessment on quality of products by Kenya Bureau of Standards.

"Now we are empowered. The training we received from UN Environment and SWITCH Africa Green helped us to improve our shoes and increase both sustainability and profits," he said.

Indeed, the company's profits have been on a healthy rise since 2012, from 20,000 Kenyan shillings (\$193) back then to a total profit of 8,153,040 Kenyan shillings (about \$78,659) today.



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# POVERTY-ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE (PEI)



## PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY PACKAGING, EMPLOYMENT FOR WOMEN'S COOPERATIVES

Poverty-Environment Initiative Africa (PEI) has partnered with the government of Rwanda to train 110 female street vendors on how to set up co-operatives that can access funds from the government's National Environment and Climate Change Fund (FONERWA). The women will be able to use the funds to produce alternative packaging that is environmentally-friendly and safe substitutes for thin plastic bags that they can sell to customers.

In 2008, Rwanda became one of the first African countries to put in place a complete ban on thin plastic bags as part of its Vision 2020 plan for sustainability. Plastic bags that were used in Rwanda had been made from non-biodegradable materials. These would end up scattered throughout the country's agricultural land and were preventing water penetration into the soil, and as a result lowering agricultural productivity. Once disposed, the plastic bags were often burned, releasing toxic fumes into the air.

According to the Rwanda Environment Management Authority, after the ban on thin plastic bags, Rwanda became an extraordinarily clean country. Tourism is increasing which is good for the country's economy. The ban on plastic bags has also spurred community-based associations comprised of mainly women and youth cooperatives to produce bags made from locally available environmental friendly materials.



Many countries in Africa are learning from Rwanda and adopting the initiative to ban plastic bags. In late 2011, Poverty-Environment Initiative facilitated south-south cooperation between Malawi, Rwanda and Mozambique, where Government representatives from Malawi learned from the experience of PEI in Rwanda. During this event, the government of Rwanda shared its experiences on banning plastic bags and the introduction of sustainable substitutes created by women's community organizations.

The use and poor waste management of non-biodegradable plastic bags is a major concern not only across the African continent but also around the globe. The plastic bag menace has been experienced in all forms of ecosystems including land, river, lakes, and oceans. Several African countries have taken the initiative to ban the use and production of thin plastic bags as a means to control plastic pollution and maintaining a clean environment.

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## SUSTAINABLE FARMING



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### THE BENEFITS OF EMBRACING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE BY SOUTH AFRICAN FARMERS



Supporting beef farmers to implement sustainable farming practices that restore and maintain healthy ecosystems can have far-reaching biodiversity and livelihood benefits. With Conservation South Africa (CSA), a SWITCH Africa Green (SAG) grantee, sustainable farming practices across all levels of the red meat supply chain is being promoted.

Within Leliefontein in Namaqualand, an area covering 192,000ha, CSA has signed up 173 biodiversity stewards who provide support services to beef producers and cooperatives. In addition, there has been concerted effort in capacity building through training for two cooperatives with a membership of 100 farmers resulting in improved quality stock.

To add value to the red meat supply chains for the communal farmers, CSA has facilitated a maiden auction which took place in November 2017 where buyers came together to purchase livestock. This will get rid of the middle-men, resulting in the farmers getting better value for their livestock.

With the implementation of this project, farmers in areas that are linked to long-term water security, inhabited by poor and vulnerable groups and threatened by climate change are set to maximize the potential of their farming activities while also conserving the environment.

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## CREATING INDUSTRIAL SYNERGIES IN UGANDA



SWITCH Africa Green has helped turning waste into profit in Uganda. Over 400 businesses have benefitted from resource-efficient and cleaner production, leading to more efficient water, energy and resource use. Linkages in industrial symbiosis have been remarkable. For example, Sky Fat Ltd specializes in processing hides and skin. This company has benefitted from three years of improvement on Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production (RECP) through Uganda Cleaner Production Centre (UCPC). This formed the basis for the company being incorporated in the Industrial Symbiosis (IS) initiative of SWITCH Africa green project. 40% of skins and hides used to be wasted either as untradeable splits or off cuts. Their disposal was also an environmental problem.

Today, waste is used to produce new commodities such as dog chew. Splits are also sold to a gelatin processing company for USD 200 per ton. The company generates between 80 - 220 tons of splits and off cuts. This is not only a new revenue stream for the company but also eases the challenges of waste disposal.



## WASTE MANAGEMENT



### IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS THROUGH WASTE MANAGEMENT IN BURKINA FASO



Women and youth in Koudougou and Dedougou communes in Burkina Faso have formed 12 Community Based Organisations (CBOs) to collect and handle waste safely. Before the implementation of this initiative, the average income from waste collection was 68,750 FCFA (1 USD is equivalent to 530 FCFA) per month. To date, the estimated amount is 137,710 FCFA per month (an increase of 100%), thanks to the capacity building in plastic waste transformation, composting and awareness raising on waste management.

One of the CBOs, the Bénéwindé Women group, comprises of about 52 members who collect waste from households and public places. They currently cover about 340 households in Koudougou commune. About 1 tonne of waste is collected in a day and taken to the designated dumpsite. The association generates about 200,000CFA per month from the household collections (a 200% increase in revenue from 50,000CFA with profits generated shared among the members. Through Switch Africa Green, members of this group have undergone training on waste management regulations and on basic skills on business in waste management.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



22-24  
JAN

Regional forum for the police and prosecutors on environmental crime.  
Entebbe, Uganda

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The Second Conference of the Parties to the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa.  
Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire



## FEEDBACK



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