

Youth Encounter for Sustainability

UN Complex, Gigiri, Nairobi
14 February 2014



Background:

The Youth Encounter on Sustainability (YES) was established in 2000 to help develop the leadership capacity for a sustainable future. This was as a result to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 - "Agenda 21". Agenda 21 called for all nations to "develop and put into effect their own national strategies, plans and policies for sustainable development, and to be prepared to deal with the common challenges facing human kind". The YES program 'Equips Young Leaders to Address Global Challenges' (sustainable development, energy systems, urban planning, ecosystem management, food and water, governance and entrepreneurship among others disciplines) through trans-disciplinary and transcultural teaching, debates, workshops, discussions, projects, case studies, group work.

The Yes-Kenya 2014 was held on Elsamere Conservation Centre from 28 January to 14 February.

- **Opening** – Mahesh Pradhan (*Chief, Environmental Education and Training Unit, UNEP*) opened the training and highlighted UNEP's role in promoting Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD);
- **Social Systems** - Dominik Mösching (*myclimate*) illustrated the interconnection between and within systems;
- **Energy Systems, Resources and the Role of Smart Cities and Communities** – Stefan Gara (*ETA Environmental Consulting*) reiterated the need to promote transformative strategies for sustainable development; green energy consumption and clean development mechanisms (CDMs) to reduce carbon footprints from fossil fuels. Participants visited the *Ubbink East Africa* – a solar power assembly plant in Naivasha;
- **How Can Education Make A Difference?** – Mugisha Moses (*myclimate Expert – Climate Education*) challenged participants to promote sustainable education – "Do not educate your child to be rich. Educate him to be happy. So when he grows up, he'll know the value of things, not the price" – unknown;
- **Eco-social Resilience and Sustainable Community Development** – Alex Awiti (*Aga Khan University*) emphasized the need for community empowerment as a catalyst to environmental resilience and sustainable development;
- **Social Accountability and Citizen Feedback** - Halima Murunga (World Bank) reiterated the need for social accountability and use ICT in the water sector reform agenda;
- **Carbon Offset Projects** – Sylvia Mwangi (*Eco2Librium Kenya*) and John Victor Omondi (*Tembea Youth Centre for Sustainable Development*) stressed the need for enhanced socio-economic capacity of communities through asset based community development, networking and collaboration so as to achieve self-reliance and sustainable livelihood, health, environment conservation and poverty alleviation;
- **Water and Sanitation** – Kizito Masinde (*International Water Association*) and Prof. George Ogendi (Egerton University) reiterated the need to promote water conservation (MDG goal seven - ensure environmental sustainability), in order to achieve the desired millennium development goals;
- **Food and Nutrition** – Luke Metelerkamp (*Sustainability Institute*), CJ Jones (*Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition*), John Njoroge (*Kenya Institute of Organic Farming*) and Bruce Kip'langat (*Dudutech Integrated Pest Management*). They called for the need to promote food nutrition as a way of ensuring a health population, as opposed to just food production. They called for increased use of bio-predators and organic manure to reduce synthetic agro-chemicals; and
- **Nature conservation, sustainable land use and tourism** – Prof. Ludwig Ellenberg (*Humboldt University of Berlin*) highlighted the need for community participation in eco-tourism and management of protected areas as a model for ESD. Participants visited Kongoni Primary School and Crater lake to engage the communities on eco-tourism potential and opinions;
- **Visit to UNEP and panel discussions** – Keith Alverson (*Head, Climate Change Adaptation and Terrestrial Ecosystems Branch, UNEP*) and Mwesigye Patrick (*Regional Programme Team Leader, Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Consumption, UNEP*) engaged participants in dialogues on UNEP's roles and programs on Climate Change Adaptation and Resource Efficiency respectively;
- **Close** – Mahesh Pradhan (*UNEP*), concluded by highlighting the role of higher education in promoting sustainable development solutions and partnerships.

Way forward: 3 more YES courses will be held in 2014, i.e.

- i. July: Basic Course, Serbia
- ii. September: Special Course, Germany
- iii. October: Basic Course, Switzerland

The YES-Kenya 2014 was attended by over 22 participants from 11 countries.