

**AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT TO THE GOVERNING
COUNCIL/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM,
DUBAI, FEBRUARY 2006**

The Seventh UNEP African Civil Society Forum was held from 27th - 28th October 2005 in Luanda, Angola and hosted by the Ecological Youth for Angola (JEA), on behalf of UNEP Regional Office for Africa (ROA). Participants at this Forum deliberated on the key themes that will be considered during the GCSS-IX/GMEF and produced the following statement. The statement reflects issues of concern for the African region and key recommendations to governments, multilateral agencies and regional integration organisations on the three themes of Chemical Management; Energy and the Environment; and Tourism and the Environment.

African Civil Society appreciates this opportunity to contribute to the Global Civil Society Statement and ultimately to input into UNEP's decision-making process on key environmental policies during the Ninth Special Session of the GC/GMEF scheduled for 7th - 9th February 2006 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Chemical Management

African Civil Society appreciates the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) initiative, especially since it has been negotiated in a participatory process involving governments and civil society. African governments should therefore adopt the SAICM and demonstrate their commitment to implementing the global plan of action through relevant national level initiatives as well as by seeking additional resources to implement activities geared towards protecting human health and the environment.

The poor management of chemicals in African countries results in harm, both to the environment and to the people. One of the causes of poor chemical management is the weak policy, legal and institutional framework in African countries. The African Civil Society is therefore calling on governments to put in place the necessary legal and institutional frameworks on chemicals and sustainable development by enacting legislation that embrace core principles as outlined in Agenda 21, including the precautionary principle, the extended producer responsibility, liability and compensation principles, the polluter-pays principles, comprehensive right to know laws and the principle of "no data, no market". Governments should also put in place the necessary enforcement mechanisms.

Governments should also accelerate the domestication of international conventions and agreements that address chemical management issues, such as the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste and Their Disposal; the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade; and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). They should also integrate sound chemicals management guidelines into country and regional development programmes.

African Civil Society calls on the African Union (AU) to convene the first Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa, and the Control of Trans-boundary Movement of Hazardous Waste within Africa, which came into force in 1998. Further, all those African countries that have not ratified it are urged to do so. UNEP and other relevant intergovernmental organizations should support this process, both technically and financially.

There is currently limited access to data and information on chemicals in Africa. This problem is experienced at different levels, and includes limited information from industries on the chemicals they produce and use and from governments on the types of chemicals being imported into countries. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO),

poor nations have been led to believe that the only alternative to combat pests, agricultural or otherwise, is by using pesticides. African governments often seek for assistance from developed countries and organizations, either for direct supply of pesticides or for contributions of financial support for purchasing them. This leads to uncoordinated influx of pesticide donations and trading, subsequently giving rise to excessive supply. While some of the donations are genuine, others take the opportunity to dump unwanted and illegal pesticides on the poor and unsuspecting countries. There is need for coordinated international action to address this problem.

Limited labelling on the proper use and handling of farm and household chemicals results in harm to communities and their livestock all over Africa. Occupational hazards often accompany the use of chemicals in commercial farms and factories. Collaborative efforts between governments, private sector and civil society organisations can enhance the level of awareness about the harmful effects of diverse chemicals among communities. The youth can be instrumental in designing and implementing innovative awareness raising campaigns on chemical use and management.

Governments should develop tools for participatory risk assessment analysis and procedures for chemical management. Mechanisms for ensuring access to relevant data and information on chemical management issues should also be developed and adopted at the national, regional and international levels. Tools should also be developed for monitoring the effects and impacts of industrial and domestic chemicals while existing laws on chemical management should be enforced.

Energy and the Environment

Biomass, especially wood and its derivatives, constitutes the energy source most used in African households. Between 70-90% of the population in Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, depends on biomass energy for their household needs for cooking, heating and lighting. The African Development Bank (ADB) estimates that 9 out of 10 people in Sub-Saharan Africa use biomass, such as wood or left-overs, for lighting, cooking and heating.

The table below shows the energy consumption by type in 2001.

Energy Consumption by type in % in 2001

Region/Country	Biomass	Petroleum Products	Electricity	Gas	Coal
North Africa	4.1	61.5	15.1	18.1	1.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	81.2	14.5	2.9	1.0	0.5
South Africa	16.5	29.3	25.9	1.6	26.8

Source: IEA, 2003 and Karekezi, S., J. Wangeci and E. Manyara. Sustainable Energy Consumption in Africa. UNDESA Report, 14th May 2004.

Sub-Saharan Africa's dependency on biomass energy is aggravated by the fast diminishing availability of wood due to over-exploitation of forests and the use of inefficient production and end-use technologies. At the household level, therefore, there is often a severe crisis of the deprivation of biomass energy, especially in the rural areas. In some countries, such as Eritrea, where 94% of domestic energy is derived from biomass sources, scarcity of firewood has forced many households to shift to the use of cow dung, which in turn deprives the soil of organic nutrients and subsequently results in poorer farm yields (Habtetsion S. & Z. Tsighe, (2005).

The impact of this lack of firewood is disproportionately borne by women and children. For example, according to the ADB and the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD) Centre, 6 out of 10 African women living in rural areas have to deal with the scarcity of supply of firewood, compared with 8 in Asia and 4 in Latin America. By tradition, women

shoulder the responsibility of fuel wood collection and are sometimes forced to carry more than 35kg of firewood over distances of up to 10km, while the International Labour Organisation (ILO) limits the weight that should be carried by women to 20kg.

Further, alternative sources of energy are often inaccessible or expensive. With only 35.5% of the population with access to electricity by 2002, Africa has the lowest level of electrification in the developing world. Despite these realities on the ground, there are serious gaps in official government policy and legal frameworks, with regard to the issue of biomass energy. Instead, the policies and laws tend to focus more on hydro-electricity and fossil fuels.

African Civil Society is calling on African governments to urgently enact the necessary policies and laws to promote the efficient production and use of biomass energy that address issues of environment and sustainable development. Governments should recognise that appropriate biomass technologies can provide a remedy to poor households. Therefore, biomass technologies should be developed and support given for their adoption. One of the priorities should be capacity development, to create a critical mass of personnel with the requisite skills to develop and adopt these technologies to the local realities. Countries like Mauritius, which use a by-product from the sugar industry, baggase, to generate electricity should serve as examples for other African governments, on how to reduce waste and increase the efficient use of biomass.

Africa has continued to lag behind in the development and use of renewable energy. For example, Africa has only 1.3% of the world photovoltaic production capacity, although Africa is one of the regions with the highest average annual solar radiation. At the same time, there are numerous examples of successful renewable energy projects in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Zimbabwe, for example, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) extended a pilot solar programme beyond its 1998 termination date due to popular demand. Therefore, support to Africa should take the form of strengthening renewable energy production capacity, through the appropriate policies and laws and through investments.

Within the policy and legal frameworks, governments should provide incentives to promote the development and use of renewable energy and facilitate the uptake of appropriate technologies, especially to reduce dependency on fossil fuels, especially oil. Countries with incentive systems, for example Germany, India and Mauritius, could provide useful examples, including fuel displacement levies and feed-in laws, which encourage communities and enterprises to generate energy for their own consumption and to contribute to the national grid. Such incentives have the potential of encouraging private sector players to promote the use of renewable energy, including wind, solar and hydropower.

In addition to the relatively low level of electrification, 11.3% of the electricity that is generated in Africa is wasted in the course of production and transportation, compared to 9.2% in the world as a whole. This wastage exceeds 20% in Senegal, Kenya and Tanzania and 40% in Nigeria and Congo. Many public electricity institutions in sub-Saharan Africa are characterised by unreliable power supply, deficient maintenance, poor access in rural areas and high transmission and distribution losses. Such constraints have led to reforms in the power industry, including the privatization of some of these services.

Due to the vulnerability of the energy sector to corruption during the privatization process, governments and development partners should ensure that appropriate mechanisms are put in place to ensure transparency and good governance, as a prerequisite to privatization. African governments should also strengthen their regulatory role with regard to the energy sector, so as to protect the public from exploitation by private sector players, especially multinationals. Government should involve civil society in multi-stakeholder participatory processes during the design, implementation and monitoring of energy programmes.

Although the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) lack explicit targets related to the provision of energy to the poor, access to affordable energy is imperative for poverty alleviation and sustainable human development. Therefore, governments, regional integration organisations, multilateral agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector and local populations should collaborate in developing long term strategies for addressing the energy needs of Africa.

Tourism and the Environment

Tourism is a growing global phenomenon, which contributes significantly to national economies. Tourism in Africa is largely based on the natural environment, including the oceans, wildlife and mountains, with the warm temperatures acting as an additional incentive for visitors to the Continent. Key tourist destinations include the Okavango River Basin that is shared by Angola, Namibia and Botswana and the Eastern Africa region for big game viewing and sandy beaches. However, when poorly regulated, both domestic and international tourism results in far-reaching environmental degradation and pollution.

African governments should enact and/or strengthen the policy, legal and institutional framework by acknowledging the central role played by the natural environment in tourism, and by putting in place mechanisms to ensure that the level of environmental degradation is kept at a minimum. Proper assessments should be made of carrying capacities, especially of fragile ecosystems. Governments should also ensure that environmental audits are done of existing structures and tourism operations and measures to stop, reduce and reverse adverse environmental impacts put in place.

Despite the significant revenue generated by tourism at the local, national and international levels, sometimes the communities that live adjacent to these natural resources receive minimal benefits while often being denied access to the resources. Therefore, governments should establish access and benefit sharing regimes that promote the equitable sharing of the benefits of tourism, especially ensuring that communities also receive tangible monetary benefits, and that they have access to critical environmental goods and services to meet their livelihood needs.

Although the environment and natural resources provide substantial revenue for governments, both directly and indirectly, this is not matched by the level of national budgetary allocations for their management, which are often low. African governments should conduct economic analysis of the value of the diverse goods and services provided by the environment, which should then form a basis for allocating the necessary resources for their sustainable management. This should include mechanisms that compel public and private sector institutions to pay for ecosystems goods and services.

Governments and development partners need to promote tourism within an integrated approach towards social and economic development that includes different options for communities in Africa. Such an approach will reduce the vulnerability of communities in tourism areas from the unpredictability of the tourism industry and ensure that they have options to cater for their needs during low tourism seasons. These options should include activities that are complementary with tourism, such as livestock keeping, farming, apiculture and fishing.

African Civil Society recognises the special position of coastal areas, Small Island States and inland water bodies, and the impact tourism has on local populations, which are often denied access to resources that they traditionally had access to, due to the construction of hotels and other structures. Further, poor waste disposal by tourism establishments contributes significantly to the pollution of the seas, oceans and lakes, which makes it even more difficult for the communities to access natural resources for their needs. Governments should adopt integrated coastal zone management systems, which ensure that coastal tourism is conducted within the principles of sustainable development. Policies and laws that define riparian rights of access and use should also be reviewed to ensure that communities are not denied key resources.

Conclusion

The sustainable management of the environment requires collaborative efforts among governments, civil society and the international community. Poor governance and lax implementation of existing policies not only jeopardise communities' ability to meet their livelihood needs in the present but also takes it away from the youth and future generations. The youth, being the major stakeholders of the future, want governments to start facing the reality, which is the depletion of the planet's natural capital, and not only put in place good policies but implement them fully, to ensure sustainable development.