

# **African Regional Statement to the Ninth Global Civil Society Forum and the Tenth Special Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum.**

Cairo, Egypt, 21 - 23 October 2007.

This statement is a synthesis of the recommendations of the Regional Consultation Meeting for Africa in preparation for the 9<sup>th</sup> Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF) which was held in Cairo, Egypt, from 21 to 23 October 2007.

## **PREAMBLE**

1. We, representatives of African Civil Society and Major groups appreciate UNEP's role in facilitating our participation in the preparation for the forthcoming 9<sup>th</sup> GCSF and 10<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF);
2. We recognize UNEP's appreciation of the role of civil society in enhancing environmental sustainability and its endeavor to engage CSO in its own work;
3. We are satisfied with the coverage of the overview of Global Environment Outlook (GEO 4) report, the introduction of UNEP's Medium Term Strategy, enhancing Major Groups' participation in UNEP's work and the introduction to the SS X- GC/GMEF theme, Globalization and the Environment: Mobilizing Finance to meet the Climate Challenge and its links to poverty alleviation;
4. We are concerned with the levels of poverty, environmental degradation and the threat and risks of climate change on our continent; and
5. We are committed to work with our governments, UNEP and all stakeholders of environmental sustainability and urge all to give due regard to the following concerns and recommendations.

## **PART I: GLOBALIZATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT: MOBILIZING FINANCE TO MEET THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE AND ITS LINKS TO POVERTY ALLEVIATION.**

6. Climate change is emerging as the single biggest threat to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other development targets. Although Africa has contributed only about 2.5% to greenhouse gas (GHG) concentration in the atmosphere, the continent stands to lose more than many other regions of the world from the results of climate change. Extreme weather events (droughts and floods) have already wreaked havoc on Africa's fragile ecosystems and may retard development even in those countries that had made great strides. Africa's coastal regions and small island states will face further threats from sea-level rise and destruction of marine resources and infrastructure. All-round, climate-induced changes in ecosystems will have impacts ranging from altered disease patterns to seasonal and cyclical aberrations in food, water and energy availability.

### **African response to the climate challenge**

7. Recognizing the urgency of limiting the impacts of the global climate, the African Union (AU), the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN), the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) and ministers responsible for disaster risk reduction have sketched policies and strategies to respond to different aspects of climate change.
8. In line with Africa's response as well as global efforts to meet the challenges of climate change:

9. We recommend:
- Stabilization followed by the reversal in the pace of climate change.
  - The mitigation of the impact of climate change on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility should be accelerated, while Africa receives its due support for adaptation to the effects of the phenomenon.
  - African responses are met with decisive support from UNEP's Governing Council through the provision of meaningful resources and technology transfer
  - The role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other stakeholders in society are integrated in finding solutions and practical responses to climate change

### **Climate Change Mitigation**

10. As a low producer of GHGs, but largely experiencing the impacts of climate change, Africa has tended to focus more on adaptation measures. Mitigation measures can reduce the effects of climate change and in turn the costs of adaptation. In this regard the following key issues were identified as priority areas for action in Africa:
- The need to consider alternative technological options, such as the use of clean and renewable energy;
  - The setting of policy and regulatory frameworks for creating an enabling environment for the transition to a low carbon economy;
  - The investment options, i.e. the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), local and private financing;
  - Provision of technologies for reducing the polluting potential of fossil fuels;
  - Provision, commercialization and financing for renewable energy technologies;
  - The need to design and implement disaster risk reduction strategies.
11. Mindful of the importance of the above issues in reducing the impacts of climate change, we advocate for alternative technological options to facilitate the transition to a “low” carbon economy by:
- Promoting and encouraging the use of new and alternative technologies, especially for the industry and private sector.
  - Promoting and encouraging the disposal of waste and effluents in environmentally-friendly ways.
  - Promoting and encouraging the participation of private sector in climate change dialogues without profit motivation.
12. We strongly recommend that necessary policy and regulatory frameworks at local, regional and international levels to support the transition to a “low” carbon economy are put in place. Furthermore, all stakeholders should play their role to ensure that these policies are implemented within the appropriate regulatory frameworks by:
- Ensuring that the state provides effective regulations and policies for the safety of all living things including humans against adverse impacts of climate change.
  - Supporting the active participation of all stakeholders in the formulation or review and implementation of policies.
  - Ensuring that civil society fully plays its role and pressurises Governments at all levels to enforce policies aimed at responding to the climate challenge.
  - Ensuring that Government and civil society share research findings and use them in policy formulation processes.
  - Favouring a wide dissemination of information regarding policies to the general public: encourage Government to use the media to educate the public on climate change issues/laws/policies.
13. Recognizing the centrality of financial and technical capacity for the transition to a low carbon economy, we recommend:
- The creation of a website and clearing house mechanisms for information management on sponsors, priority issues, location of CDM projects, potential opportunities, etc.

- The private sector is lobbied to donate part of their profits to climate change mitigation.
- Lobbying Governments to subsidise renewable energy technologies or put in place tax incentives for environmentally-friendly technologies: set-up taxation and tariffs systems for new sources of energy, e.g. to encourage power utilities to invest in climate-friendly technologies.
- Civil society should fund-raise internationally and locally for small projects in rural areas, through shares, etc
- Undertaking joint planning and budgeting to ensure increased budget for mainstreaming climate change policies and plans (need to clarify between who and who).
- That poverty reduction is addressed as a priority.
- Payment for environmental services
- Specific measures on finance utilization for greater transparency and accountability: (i) all stakeholders to be involved in the mobilisation and management of available funds, (ii) project budgets and reports to be published to promote transparency, (iii) evaluation of the impacts of the project and utilisation of funds, and (iv) recipient communities to be involved in the above processes.
- That additional source of funding and mechanisms should be put in place. Although different sources of finance exist through the international agencies e.g. World Bank, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), donor Governments, the private sector and local financing through CDM projects, these are however not sufficient to address the regional challenges.

#### Specific recommendations for UNEP

14. As the lead agency on environment, we recommend that UNEP:

- Builds the capacity of civil society to engage Government in climate change issues;
- Supports civil society to implement climate change and climate variability activities;
- Supports Governments in promoting use of clean energy, and encourage African Governments to also address mitigation issues.

#### **Adaptation to Climate Change**

15. The main challenge for Africa, in addressing the climate change catastrophe lies in adjusting to the actual and expected effects of climate change, and strengthening the responsive capacity among vulnerable communities. In this context, the key adaptation issues identified were:

- The need to address the vulnerability of African communities and to reduce poverty;
- The identification of potential impacts on sectors of the economy and communities;
- The lack of strong political will to create an enabling environment and policies addressing the climate challenge;
- The lack of monetary value attached to the environment, the valuation of ecosystem services;
- The issue of compensation to affected communities;
- The access to finance;
- The technology transfer and property rights;
- The awareness and knowledge of complex adaptation issues, as well as the risks associated with adaptation initiatives, globalisation and carbon transfer issues.

16. Mindful of the multiplicity of Africa's challenges in coping and adapting to climate change effects, we recommend the following adaptation activities in Africa that should be articulated along building the resilience of communities especially -- women, youth, trade unions and workers, and civil society at large:

- Development of adequate response measures;
- Evaluation of the environmental losses;
- Training and building the capacity of civil society and communities to be self-sustaining e.g. through income generation and entrepreneurship skills for vulnerable groups -- women and youth;
- Conducting research; and disaggregating data;

- Monitoring and evaluation of interventions and processes.
17. Recognizing that the transition to a low carbon economy is a very expensive exercise that will affect the pace of transition across the broad economic divide affecting more particularly the poorest of the poor on the African continent, we recommend that in addressing the financing of the transition to a low carbon economy our governments, private sector, UNEP and donor agencies:
- Address the issue of compensation to affected communities, and access to finance, by vulnerable groups;
  - As a matter of urgency, set up a Global Adaptation Fund;
  - Adopt technology screening (for environmental impacts) and standardization measures;
  - Involve CSOs in budgeting, planning and policy making;
  - Develop policies for involving insurance firms in compensating victims of adverse effects of extreme weather patterns;
  - Formulate and implement policies for disaster preparedness with the involvement of all stakeholders.

## **PART II: GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT OUTLOOK (GEO-4) REPORT**

18. Mindful of the fact that the Global Environment Outlook process (GEO-4) was a very comprehensive and highly consultative process built through a bottom-up participatory approach as well as from well reputed scientific assessment processes such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment:
19. We recommend the:
- Designing of a two-way relay consultative process in engaging more civil society /major groups and organizations to build more ownership of the process into civil society;
  - Strengthening of the existing coordination and partnerships with civil society for the outreach and dissemination of the GEO report to as many CSOs as possible and establish means of making the Africa Environment Outlook (AEO) report and GEO report more accessible to a diverse readership;
  - Training and support to civil society organizations to participate effectively in the GEO processes, particularly in environmental assessment;
  - Use of multimedia technologies for dissemination of reader friendly information material;
  - Widening of consultative process for subsequent AEO and GEO for agreement on the content; and
  - More transparency in the selection of GEO Collaborating Centres;

## **PART III: INTRODUCTION TO THE UNEP MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY**

20. The UNEP Medium Term Strategy for the period 2010-2013 was introduced to the participants via a teleconference from the UNEP headquarters in Nairobi. Despite a few technical hitches, the major components of the strategy were communicated. There was an opportunity for the participants to ask some questions which were responded to well.
21. We recommend that for future purposes, UNEP circulates such information beforehand so that meaningful questions are asked.
22. We further recommend that the role of CSO is clearly articulated in the document especially with regard to implementation of Bali Strategic Plan.

**CONCLUSION: RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS (GOVERNMENTAL, NON-GOVERNMENTAL, INTER-GOVERNMENTAL)**

23. The world is still faced by the environment and development challenges that were highlighted in *Our Common Future* well back in 1987. For some issues the situation has become worse especially in Africa and other developing countries exacerbated by the high levels of poverty. The Climate Change impacts are weighing heavily on nations globally but more so on Africa with its fragile ecosystems. Apart from some natural disasters, the damage on the environment is as a result of human activities. This means that the action to halt environmental degradation lies with human beings who are the stakeholders of environmental sustainability as governmental, non-governmental and inter-governmental entities. There are many recommendations for the above but these can all be summed up in five simple words: **ACT NOW OR WE PERISH!**