

United Nations Environment Programme

Addis Ababa Highlights



Population, Health and Environment Consortium Launched by President



President Girma Wolde Giorgis, flanked by Dr. Fatoumata Nafu-Traore of WHO and Strike Mkandla (UNEP)

The President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Dr. Girma Wolde Giorgis, officially launched the Ethiopian Consortium of Population, Health and Environment Integration (CoPHEI) on the second day of a founding conference for the consortium on 31 May 2008 at the Ethiopian Hotel in Ambo, 125 kilometers from Addis Ababa. The establishment of CoPHEI is an a follow-up of the decision by Population, Health and Environment (PHE) Network which decided upon its launch in November 2007 that national chapters should be established in five member countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania). In that regional conference some Ethiopian organizations played a critical role, namely Lem Ethiopia and EngenderHealth.

The launching ceremony was chaired by Lem Ethiopia President Prof. B.T. Constantinos and facilitated by the newly elected Chair of CoPHEI and Country Director of EngenderHealth, Dr. Gelila Kidane. The formal launch of the consortium by President Girma was preceded by a solidarity address from Strike Mkandla of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on behalf of the UN Country Team, and by the keynote address from the State Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development Dr. Abera Deresa. The Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) to Ethiopia, Dr. Fatoumata Nafu-

Traore, also came to encourage the initiative and witness the launch of the consortium.

President Girma said the link between population and natural resources is important, and that advances in technology have to be applied with due regard to conservation of the natural environment. In the case of Ethiopia, he said, 80% of the economy is based on agriculture that is in turn dependent on natural resources. The sharp increase in the country's population has not been matched by a commensurate growth in the economy. This calls for national efforts to effect rapid economic change in the new Millennium by implementing the government's strategies. It is crucial in that regard to proceed in an organized manner and have stakeholder cooperation on issues such as population, health and environment.

Balancing environment, population and health

Dr. Deresa said that Ethiopia's Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) has laid foundations by establishing relevant strategies and policies to address issues on wise use of natural resources and an integrated approach for achieving rapid and sustainable growth to end poverty. Synergies can be

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African Union/ International Events

African Water Ministers Appoint Executive Secretary

The African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) has appointed the long-awaited Executive Secretary that will ease the administrative and coordination burdens that face a continental body of this kind. The AMCOW Executive Committee (ExCOM), meeting in extraordinary session, settled on Mr. Bai-Mass Taal as the first Executive Secretary on 10 May 2008 after conducting interviews of six candidates short-listed from a field of over thirty applicants by its Technical Advisory Committee (AMCOW-TAC). Appropriately, the main business of the ministerial session, held in Cairo 10-11 May, was planning for the July 2008 African Union Summit on Water and Sanitation that will also be held in Egypt, this time in Sharm El Shekh. This summit comes at a critical juncture in the midpoint towards the 2015 Millennium Development Goals target to "Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation". Technical meetings organized by the AU Commission and AMCOW-TAC preceded the ministerial session and invited UN-Water/Africa members, civil society and African Development Bank and development partner representatives participated in the open sessions.

The President of AMCOW, His Excellency Mr. Bruno Jean-Richard Itoua the Minister of Energy and Water of the Republic of Congo, announced the appointment of the Executive Secretary flanked by the host of the meeting, H.E. Dr. Abu Zeid the Egyptian Minister of Water. Bai-Mass Taal served as a Cabinet Minister in the Gambia, first as Secretary of State for Fisheries, Natural Resources and the Environment in 2004-2005 and later as Secretary of State for Fisheries and Water Resources from 2005 to 2006.

Strong political and technical background

Prior to holding high political office Mr. Taal had an illustrious record in national and international civil service arenas, having occupied several top government appointments in his native Gambia before joining the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). A conscientious and productive UNEP staff member he served in 1991 – 1998 as Chief of Forests and Other Ecosystems [Senior Programme Officer], in 1998-1999 as Task Manager [Biodiversity Programme] and finally in 2000-2004 as Head of Interagency and Intergovernmental Processes. This stint of prolonged responsibility at UNEP was preceded by equally important professional engagement at the national level. In this context Mr. Taal served for a decade as Director of Forestry in



Mr. Bai-Mass Taal the first Executive Secretary of AMCOW

1982-1991, having also been Assistant Conservator of Forestry (1978-1982). Because of this range of political and professional experience, Mr. Taal brings to the job of AMCOW Executive Secretary a formidable combination of skills in diplomacy, policy formulation, partnership building, programme development and management, resource mobilization, capacity building, and institution management that will come in handy in the performance of his functions.

Bai-Mass Taal, who would assume duty in July 2008, beat a strong field of candidates that responded to the vacancy announcement issued on behalf of AMCOW by the African Union. He will be based at the AMCOW Secretariat in Abuja. The Federal Republic of Nigeria has provided an interim secretariat for a few years, after its offer to host the structure was accepted. Nigeria was the first to hold the AMCOW presidency, followed by Uganda, before the current Congolese presidency. These successive holders of the rotating presidency have shouldered heavy responsibilities and have been compelled to run a strong coordinating office to assist the incumbents with their continental duties. It is expected that the Secretariat, when in full strength, will reduce the pressure and facilitate continuity. In the long term, crafting of the benchmarks and conditions of service of secretariat posts on AU Commission standards should make it easier when AMCOW assumes its role as a Specialized Technical Committee of the African Union as provided for in the decision of the Extraordinary Summit on Agriculture and Water in Africa, held in Sirte, Libya, in 2004.

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obtained through integrated programmes to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in population, health and environment interventions. He said the pressure on environment has increased in the last two centuries. The Industrial Revolution and advances in technology have brought about economic growth and betterment in human health and creativity. However, the attendant population increase has also led to increased exploitation of natural resources and pressure on the environment; Green House Gas emissions from industry, responsible for global warming and climate change, have brought some adverse effects. Climate change is causing extreme weather events (droughts, flooding, heat waves etc.) that affect socio-economic stability; and climate change adverse effects also include increase in diseases such as malaria. More importantly, Dr. Deresa said, risks from climate change are also expressed in the form of loss of agricultural production, water stress and water scarcity, rising sea levels and exposure of all life to unfavorable conditions due to change in ecological systems. Land and natural resources degradation and their impact on crop and livestock lead low per capita calorific intake, which would influence the health status of people.

Reducing environmental footprints

The UNEP representative conveyed the support of the UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Fidele Sarassoro, who welcomed the formation of CoPHEI. He said the consortium is a very important initiative from the point of view of the UN Country Team because it responds to many themes cutting across the mandate of the agencies working in Ethiopia. "Indeed, the name of your

consortium itself spells out the broad range of interlinked issues that call for a wide partnership with the UN family. The timing of this initiative is also very fortuitous in that this is an era when the UN is committed to **delivering as one**". He went on to say the UNCT also share the observation in CoRHEI's founding documents about the "interconnectedness between people and their environment and the interdependencies between the three sectors of population, health and environment". The consortium and PHE Network had signaled an intention to deal with issues such as disaster mitigation, gender mainstreaming, combating HIV/AIDS, promoting food security and good governance, promoting environmental health and economic development. These concerns cut across many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, the consortium themselves pointed out, they underpin efforts to achieve not only poverty alleviation and poverty reduction but also address how to achieve food security and gender equity, among others.

"There is now increasing acceptance that modern lifestyles (of the relatively affluent) need to be moderated to reduce environmental "footprints", through cleaner production, energy efficiency, prudent water use and other measures that lessen human impacts on ecosystems. I am also not suggesting that poverty is a good thing. On the contrary, as one of my superiors once admonished, if the last tree has to be cut to cook food for famished people it will be cut and used regardless of the consequences for the world's survival. Thus over-consumption and poverty can threaten the earth's carrying capacity from different angles", the UNEP representative said.

CoPHEI Board Members elected

One of the outcomes of the conference was the election of the board. The elected CoPHEI Board members were introduced at the launching ceremony. They are:

Dr. Gelila Kidane (EngenderHealth) - Chair
Professor Zerihun (Addis Ababa University)
Mr. Ababu Anage (Federal Environment Protection Authority)
Mr. Mogues Worku (Lem Ethiopia)
Mrs. Saba Gebre Medhin (Network of Ethiopian Women's Association)
Dr. Getachew Tekubet (Biofarm)
Dr. Desta Woldeyohannes (Ministry of Health).



President Girma with participants

African Union/ International Events

Environment Issues Surface in Migration Workshop

Report by Bedir Ayderus

Environment issues were mentioned at several points in the recent workshop on migration held at the African Union (AU) headquarters. The workshop, 12-14 May 2008, was jointly organized by the AU, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). It was entitled, "Inter-State and Intra-Regional Cooperation on Migration Management in the IGAD Region".

The new Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) Dr. Jean Ping, who recently assumed his duties after being elected by the AU Summit at the beginning of the year, said that migration needs to be addressed in a "comprehensive and balanced manner" given its cross-cutting nature and global significance. He said environmental factors such as climate change, desertification and land degradation are among the various forces that influence human mobility. Therefore policies need to be equally multifaceted to adequately deal with migration issues.

Migration and environment seminars mooted

According to the organizers, the workshop witnessed the launching of an IGAD Regional Consultative Process (IRCP) for migration. This mechanism, which has been lacking in this region, allows neighboring states to cooperate amongst themselves and with countries of transit and destination. The IRCP framework will also provide opportunities for collaboration to deal with the strong linkages between migration and environment. In this regard, IOM and UNEP have begun discussing the possibility of organizing joint workshops examining these synergies with respect to Africa. Such workshops will benefit from the stakeholders' forum that will provide support to IGAD in its efforts to develop a regional migration policy aimed at harmonizing laws, standards and procedures and share information on migration.

Chairperson Ping, who assumed his responsibilities on April 28, further stressed that any African initiative needs to build on existing strategic instruments adopted by the AU Member States to manage migration. These instruments are (i) AU Migration Policy Framework for Africa (ii) African Common Position on Migration and Development (iii) Joint Africa-EU Declaration on Migration and Development and (iv)

Ouagadougou Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings Especially Women and Children.

One issue that emerged is that Africa has a pressing problem of forced migrants with an estimated 36 million of its citizens classified as such. For instance, over half of all Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) worldwide live in Africa. At the same time, droves of young Africans are emigrating in search of better economic opportunities. The continent has a lot to gain from its burgeoning Diaspora community. In fact according to IOM figures by 2025, 10 percent of Africans will live outside their country of origin. In this respect, the IOM Director General Mr. Brunson McKinley said Africa should strive to institute humane, well-managed and well-informed migration to reap the benefits of this phenomenon. He went on to commend IGAD for opting to use regional dialogue as a tool for managing migration.

Aside from IGAD members, delegations from countries along the East African migration route such as Chad, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen also attended. Participants included representatives of Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Dr. Tekeda Alemu the Ethiopian State Minister of Foreign Affairs, and UN Country Team members led by UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Fidele Sarassoro.



AU Commission chairperson Mr. Jean Ping with Social Affairs Commissioner Adv. Bience Gawanas.

UN in Addis

Experts Review Africa's Mining Regimes

Report by Milha Desta

The International Study Group on Mining (ISG) was conceived during the 2007 Big Table on "Managing Africa's Natural Resources for growth and poverty Reduction", a forum organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). The ISG met 19-21 May, 2008 at the United Nations Conference Center, in what was its second meeting. Dr. Antonio Pedro of UNECA's NEPAD and Regional Integration Division (NRID) welcomed participants on behalf of the Officer in Charge of the division, Dr. Emmanuel Nnadozie.

The overall ISG objective is to review Africa's current mining regimes and determine the degree to which they encourage sustainable development of the mining sector. Furthermore the ISG aims to review the contribution of the mining sector to broad national and regional economies as well as promote discussions concerning the challenges faced in the effective management of natural resources in Africa, with a view to proposing an agenda for future action.

The ISG guiding principles state that the review conducted must be sensitive to Africa's aspirations and expectations, must be independent, fact-driven, and balanced, must factor in the unique features and conditions of particular countries, must acknowledge that the mining industry is global and competitive, and must above all ensure that a wide range of stakeholders is consulted.

ISG products

A progress report was presented on the activities conducted under the aegis of the expert group secretariat at UNECA. Since its inception the ISG has been active and accomplished a survey of African mining sector institutions, compiled environmental and social issues as well as land and mineral rights in selected African countries and reviewed mining and sustainable development indicators from selected Latin American and African countries among many other activities. The ISG also compiled an E-database for ISG group members containing documents like UNECA studies on mining, mining company reports, African mining legislation and many more, in addition to launching an E-forum.

The participants of this meeting range from academia, Ministries of several African Countries, UNECA and ECA South Africa to international institutions such as United Nations Environment Programme and United

Nations Conference on Trade and Development. At this meeting, case studies of Latin America (Chile), Seirra Leone, as well as the Mozambique and other Southern Africa Development Community, were presented.

Resource efficiency and the mining sector

Dr. Desta Mebratu from UNEP's Division of Technology Industry and Economics (DTIE), who runs the Sustainable Consumption and Production Programme (SCP) in Africa, made a presentation on "Resource efficiency/SCP and the Mining Sector". Resource efficiency promotes the production, processing and consumption of natural resources in a more environmentally sustainable manner. When resource efficiency increases pollution is reduced over product life cycles and along supply chains. Public policies and private sector action investment in efficient, clean and safe industrial production methods is increased. He highlighted the major features of the international panel on resource management that is launched by UNEP. He also drew attention to the life cycle approach, which is a comprehensive guide to consumption and production.



Desta Mebratu

The way forward

On the way forward, the meeting decided to carry out the work of the study group in phases, and different organizations took their share of responsibilities. UNEP will be responsible for review of existing environmental management regimes for the mining sector in Africa with a particular focus on policy provisions, institutional arrangements and effective enforcement/implementation. In addition UNEP will be responsible for identifying existing needs and gaps that must be addressed at various levels in order to ensure the development of the sector on a sustainable basis and enhance its impact towards transformation.

Ethiopia Activities

People, Wildlife and Protected Areas in Ethiopia

Report by Bezawit Eshetu



The population of Ethiopia is currently estimated to be about 79.2 million with about 83.3% living in rural areas that are mainly agrarian and forest dwelling. This close dependence of a large part of the population on the land and unprocessed natural resources is a source of strain on the environment, as evidenced by the high percentage loss of forests and natural resources. This contentious but urgent issue was the subject of the fourth public meeting organized by the Forum for Environment in collaboration with its partners on the theme, "Protected Areas in Ethiopia: 50 Years and Beyond". The meeting was held at the Axum Hotel, Addis Ababa, on 30 May 2008.

Population growth and carrying capacity

The high rate of population growth poses a challenge for management of natural resources such as forests, wildlife and water resources. As a result the major goal of the population policy of Ethiopia is the harmonization of the rate of population growth rational utilization of natural resources. According to presentations at the meeting, the policy targets reducing the total fertility rate of 7.7 children per woman to approximately 4.0 by the year 2015, increasing contraceptive prevalence from 4.0 to 44 percent by the year 2015. In order to reach its goal the government in collaboration with local NGOs, civil society organizations and the community is working in the expansion and improvement family planning and reproductive health services. Additional emphasis is also given to population data collection, research, and advocacy.

Ato Mehari Belachew, the first presenter, pointed out that protected areas in Ethiopia are under threat from a rapidly increasing human population which is associated with increased demand of land for human settlement, grazing and cultivation, fuel wood and timber use, among others. Important sites such as Simien National Park,

If we take care of the earth, the earth will take care of us.

Abijatta-Shalla National Park, Nechsar National Park and many other areas that are the abode of endangered and endemic species are under pressure from encroachment. He said that even though the government has succeeded in reducing population growth this has not been on a scale to achieve the desired results and therefore calls for further effort.

It was argued that until recently, development projects gave emphasis to economic and technical feasibility and little or no consideration to environmental protection. The combined effect of such development activities and rapid population increase are partly responsible for high pressure on the carrying capacity of the environment, resulting in natural resource depletion and environment degradation. This was one of the drivers for the setting up of the Federal Environmental Protection Authority as a legally constituted framework. The EPA has taken the necessary steps to establish an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) System for Ethiopia, including the preparation of Procedural and Sectoral Guidelines as a prerequisite for the approval of new development activities and projects. These guidelines are applied only to those projects whose location, nature or scale is believed to have significant impact, and not to every small-scale development project. They are simple and do not create bureaucratic obstacles to progress. The proponent (project developer) is responsible for undertaking the initiative to conduct an EIA study. A team of EIA experts will produce an EIA report after analyzing positive and negative impacts, developing mechanisms to enhance the former impacts and mitigating the later impacts respectively. The EPA has responsibility to reject or accept the project after reviewing the EIA report.

Assessing environmental impacts

The EIA system has helped the EPA and other decision makers to anticipate potential impacts

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of proposed development activities, assisting in the identification of optional alternatives that maximize beneficial impacts and mitigate adverse impacts on the environment. The proponents on the other hand apart from making sound development choices, it enables them to take mitigation measure thereby minimizing risks and unnecessary expense. It enables to identify, address and incorporate specific community needs thus allowing public participation in environmental and developmental planning and monitoring of projects.

Dr. Asferachew Abate, the second presenter, addressed constraints faced in implementing Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) studies in Ethiopia. Past experience has shown that most of the EIAs undertaken by many of the proponents have been at a late stage during the study phase rather than early in the screening phase. This does not fit the EIA objective of influencing the choice of project alternatives before commencement of activities. In addition, limited capacity of EPA to review documents, lack of adequate public involvement and lack of political commitment are some of the problems. Most importantly, EIA Study by project developers is done on a voluntary basis; since it is not a legally binding requirement it loses the force that would contribute to raising the awareness level. Although the guidelines are fairly comprehensive, they are limited in their applicability. For example setting indicators for threshold values for selecting development projects which require partial detailed EIA setting criteria for defining adverse significant impacts of a project,

developing appropriate standards for reviewing the EIA statement reports, reviewing checklists and auditing procedures and using audit checklists. The current status of biofuel production needs a through EIA study before being implemented.

As a way forward both speakers emphasized that the population increment needs to be halted or at least minimized to ensure sustainability of the future natural resource demand. Moreover the practice of EIA is at its infant age both in Africa and Ethiopia but recent progress has shown that it has made some good progress. There is still a lot to be done.



Dr. Asferachew Abate and Ato Mehari Belachew

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