

COMMUNIQUE OF THE STAKEHOLDERS' SUMMIT ON THE ENVIRONMENT ORGANIZED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF CROSS RIVER STATE FROM THE 25 - 28th JUNE, 2008 IN CALABAR, NIGERIA

PREAMBLE

Cross River State is blessed with abundant natural resources and unique ecosystems, which have given the state an identity of global significance. The state biodiversity is unique in Nigeria, and is part of a larger forest block stretching into southwest Cameroon and considered as one of Africa's biodiversity "hotspots". It is acknowledged as one of the most valuable stores of biodiversity on earth.

In order to conserve the rich biodiversity and other natural endowments of the State, a Stakeholders' Summit on the Environment was held on the 25th – 28th June, 2008, at the Cultural Centre, Calabar, Cross River State. The theme of the Summit was "Developing and Sustaining a Green and Safe Environment for Present and Future Generations". The Summit focused on the following four (4) sub-themes:

- Forests and Biodiversity;
- Urban Environmental Management;
- Climate Change, Energy and Industrial Ecology; and
- Environmental Governance.

The Summit was declared open by the Executive Governor of Cross River State, His Excellency, Senator Liyel Imoke who also gave the key note address, while the State Commissioner for Environment, Dr. Julius Okputu gave the welcome address. Goodwill were also delivered by Representatives of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), British Council and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The Summit was well attended by representatives from Federal and State Governments, National and State Assemblies, Members of the Diplomatic Corp, Development Partners, the Academia, Non-Governmental Organisations, Community-Based Organisations, the Media and the general public.

OBSERVATIONS

The Summit met in plenary and participants were grouped into the four (4) sub-thematic groups for the technical Session accordingly.

After extensive and rigorous discussions and deliberations on several topical issues within each of the four sub themes, participants observed as follows:

1. The ecological endowment of Cross River State provides the opportunities for present and future societal wellbeing.
2. Through aggressive and well planned sustainable forest management, involving private sector, government, communities, Cross River State may be able to benefit from the global carbon credit scheme.
3. The abundance of medicinal, aromatic and pesticidal plants provides a veritable resource base for production of new generation medicinal and pesticidal substances. This will provide opportunity for development of eco-agriculture and the promotion of a viable local pharmaceutical industry.

4. The abundant water resources available in the state including, natural waterfalls provide opportunities for the development of micro-hydropower stations through effective private sector participation.

5. The land and mineral resources endowment provide the raw material base for eco-tourism and industrial development.

6. The promotion of human health is an investment strategy which would among others, produce the largest population health gains, help reduce health inequalities in line with human rights, and contribute to economic and social development in an equitable and sustainable manner.

7. The environmental problems of the State include:

Flood and erosion;

- Industrial, Marine and Oil Pollution;
- Land degradation;
- Deforestation and forest degradation;
- Biodiversity loss;
- Watershed destruction; and
- Invasive species encroachment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants call on the State Government to take the following actions:

- Halt revenue target setting based on timber exploitation and focus on forest conservation and regeneration for possible carbon finance.
- Declare a two year moratorium on logging, timber cutting and sawing in forest reserves and also put in place adequate measures to halt deforestation and forest degradation.
- Identify and implement short and long-term adaptation and mitigation measures to reduce the impacts of climate change due to global warming.
- Develop framework to attract carbon credit for its forest renewable energy projects and waste management plants.
- Promote the use of renewable energy sources to complement the conventional energy supply such as micro hydropower, biomass, energy efficient woodstoves, solar, etc.
- Promote Sustainable Forest Management and reforestation at the State, Local and community levels since most of the forest reserves of the State have been either completely heavily cleared or deforested.
- Facilitate the change from harmful agricultural practices to eco-agriculture.
- Establish sustainable integrated waste management system including a recycle village through public, private and community participation.
- Implement an improved water supply scheme in the State, with centralized sewage system in new settlements.
- Promote the establishment of waste water/effluent treatment plants in all industries and conduct environmental audits in industries.

- Establish a State Environmental Sustainability Fund or Eco-fund as a more coordinated, holistic and focused approach for managing environment for sustainable development.
- Establish a Museum of Natural History to support eco-tourism and environmental education.
- Adopt a multisectoral approach to review and harmonize all legal frameworks and institutions dealing with environmental issues in the State.
- Set up an institutional mechanism to facilitate compliance monitoring and enforcement of environmental standards and regulations, and to partner with the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA).
- Integrate Gender and youth issues into the State environmental policy of clean, green and safe environment.
- Mainstream environmental education into the school curriculum at all levels and in collaboration with Stakeholders particularly NGOs and CBOs identify more effective ways of arousing the interest of children and youths in environmental issues.
- Enhance the development of environmental governance, advocacy and sustainable livelihood options, especially at the community level.
- Set-up a **technical team** to develop a Strategic Action Plan (SAP) to enable the implementation of the outcome of the Summit within the next four (4) weeks.

APPRECIATION

The participants commended the Executive Governor, His Excellency, Senator Liyel Imoke and the Government of Cross River State for their foresight, political commitment and excellent dedication in the planning and organization of the Stakeholders' Summit on the Environment. The participants expressed their appreciation and gratitude to the Government and people of Cross River State for the warm reception and hospitality extended to them during the Summit. They further expressed the need for effective follow-up and implementation of the outcome of the Summit.

