

A Monthly from the East African Sustainability Watch Network founded by Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD) and SusWatch Kenya

Kenya Shares Experience On the Single-use Plastics Ban at UN Environment Meeting



Hawkers at Wakulima Market in Nakuru County sell reusable eco-friendly carrier bags on August, 27, 2017, a day before the ban on plastic bags took effect. (Online photo by Ayub Muiyuro | Nation Media Group)

A side event during the Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA4) highlighted the global challenge of marine plastic litter and microplastics. UNEA4 was convened from 11 to 15 March 2019, under the theme; “Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production.”

The side event was an opportunity to hear experiences and plans on regulating single-use plastics from countries and other stakeholders from different regions of the world. It was organised by UN Environment and the Global Partnership on Marine Litter. Carole Excell (Project Director- World Resources Institute) provided an overview based on the finding of a Report titled, ‘Legal Limits on Single-Use Plastics and Microplastics: A Global Review of National Laws and Regulations’.

She noted that there is a “surging momentum” for addressing plastic bags while other harmful single-use products, such as micro beads, remain “largely overlooked.” Globally, 127 out of 192 countries (66 percent) have adopted some type of legislation to regulate plastic bags

Hugo Shally (Head of Unit Circular Economy Strategy - European Commission) noted that in the EU, wet wipes, cigarette tubs and sanitary towels remain a major challenge in addition to recyclable bottles without tops. ‘The EU is planning to discourage dealing in bottles without tops’, he added.

Prof, Geoffrey Wahungu (Director – General, National Environment Management Authority – Kenya) gave a background of Kenya’s action to ban single-use plastics in 2017, achievements and challenges faced including court actions, and lack of public and business the accept the ban. He emphasized that citizens have ben key preparedness to in this initiative. ‘Nobody believed it would work, but citizens were supportive,’ he underlined. Wahungu concluded that Kenya still faces a challenge in implementing the single-use plastic ban due to neighbors with ‘porous borders’ that are not cooperative in supporting it. In addition, there are claims of ‘biodegradable plastics’ that need to be approved.

‘Nobody believed it would work, but citizens were supportive,’ - Prof. Wahungu (NEMA – Kenya)

Julie Duffus (Sustainability Manager - International Olympic Committee), noted that the Olympics has a huge global following and hence, is opportunity to promote responsible resource use through its global events. For example encouraging recycling, collection of old fishing nets into volley ball nets, and working with athletes as ambassadors inspiring youths and other actors.

Read the WRI report: ‘Legal Limits on Single-Use Plastics and Microplastics: ‘A Global Review of National Laws and Regulations’ from here: <https://bit.ly/2TDeo13>

UN Environment Assembly Adopts a Gender Environmental Governance Resolution



Activists at UNEA4 (Photo: IISD RS)

The Fourth session of UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-4) convened in Nairobi, Kenya, from 11-15 March 2019 adopted a Ministerial Declaration, 23 resolutions and three decisions.

While UNEA resolutions are not legally binding, and the content may be repetitive from one session to the next. Nevertheless, they represent the joint aspirations of the international community, frame consensus around actions to be taken, and help coordinate development aid and technical assistance. A resolution on gender equality, human rights and the empowerment of women and girls

in environmental governance (UNEP/EA.4/L.21) that was sponsored by Costa Rica, requests UNEP to facilitate the collection of disaggregated data on progress made in achieving gender equality in environmental policies and programmes, and to report back to UNEA-5. It also invites Member States to strengthen and implement policies aimed at increasing the participation and leadership of women in environmental decision making and to recognize their role as managers of natural resources and agents of change in safeguarding the environment – aims that are relevant to SDG 5 (gender equality), especially its target 5.5 on women’s participation and equal opportunities for leadership, and target 5.A on women’s access to ownership and control over land and natural resources.

The gender resolution acknowledges that women’s knowledge, and collective action have a huge potential to improve resource productivity, enhance ecosystem conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, and create more sustainable, low-carbon food, energy, water, and health systems. The resolution notes that the role of women as agents of change could receive more emphasis as advocated in UNEP’s Global Gender Environment Outlook

Summary: The UN Environment Assembly invites Member States to:

- Provide UNEA, in accordance with their capabilities, with info on the progress at the national & local levels in gender mainstreaming in env’tal policies programmes;
- Prioritize the implementation of gender policies and action plans, developed under other Multilateral env’tal agreements to which they are a party;
- Establish social and gender criteria in national level project implementation and financing mechanisms for environment-related projects and programmes; and
- Support training and capacity-building efforts for women and men on gender mainstreaming and enhancing all women’s active & meaningful participation in global processes, as a contribution to realizing the goal of gender balance.

Summary: The UN Environment Assembly requests UNEP to:

- Report at UNEA5 on the implementation of UNEP’s Policy and Strategy on Gender Equality and the Environment (2014-2017);
- Enhance collaboration with UN-Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, and civil society organizations to mainstream gender equality and empowerment of women and girls; and
- Continue to support initiatives to encourage and support the participation of women delegates and their leadership in UNEA and in related intergovernmental meetings”.

Read the UNEA4 outcome from here: <https://bit.ly/2HXo309>

Civil Society discuss Just Energy Transition and Access in Africa at UNEA4



A cross section of participants at the Side event at Trade Mark Hotel – Nairobi. (Photo: PACJA)

A One-day side event through the partnership of Pan African Climate Justice Alliance, African Coalition for Sustainable Energy and Access, African Union, African Development Bank, UN Environment, the Society for International Development, Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Christian Aid was convened at the Fourth session of UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-4). The event discussed the energy landscape in Africa which presents challenges and opportunities for low carbon economies and sustainable development. It brought together over 80 participants from private and public sector and representatives of key civil society organizations, academia, national governments, multilateral development financial institutions and regional economic

and integration bodies engaged in energy transition and climate action. The meeting sought among other things to develop and agree on recommendations and key messages to be highlighted during the *One Planet Summit* and UNEA4; and to inject a sense of urgency in the search for viable solutions to accelerate renewable energy development in Africa and ensuring that political will is harnessed to attain energy justice in Africa. Speaking at this event, Somorin Olufunso (Principal Officer Green Growth Programme, African Development Bank) informed the meeting that the Bank has prioritized clean energy among its High Five projects ('New Africa') built on five mutually reinforcing raising aspirations to challenges; ii) Transformative Deal on Energy for inter-related and principles including (i) solve Africa's energy establishing a Partnership on Energy for Africa; (iii) mobilizing domestic and international capital for innovative financing in Africa's energy sector; (iv) supporting African governments in strengthening energy policy, regulation and sector governance; and (v) increasing African Development Bank's investments in energy and climate financing.

'The African Development Bank has prioritized Clean Energy among its High Five Projects'

Harsen Nyambe (Head of Division, Environment, and climate change - African Union Commission) stressed the need for Africa to mobilize domestic resources, explore climate finance and green financing options to fund its development agenda. He noted that Africa has to pursue a low carbon development path despite having the lowest Green House Gas contribution globally.

Benson Ireri (World Resources Institute) warned that rapid population growth across the African continent means a growing demand for energy, where currently more than 50% of the population does not have access to electricity. He added that worse still, the rural to urban population migration means that in future, energy demand will be skyrocket in cities and urban centers.

Noting that about 730 million African rely on traditional biomass sources for cooking, Mr. Frank Turyatunga (Regional Coordinator, DEWA/Africa at United Nations Environment Programme) pointed out that clean energy uptake could unlock job opportunities for youths and women, as energy poverty is a 'jeopardy' to attainment of the rest of the SDGs

After the group discussions, a number of recommendations were made including need for guidelines for foreign investors to collaborate with local private sector stakeholders; need to simplify and easy regulatory procedures so as to encourage more investors in the sector; capacity strengthening through technology knowledge and business skills for development and implementation of renewable energy projects; strengthening institutions and dedicate financing schemes for supporting renewable energy deployment.