

The LVEMP II Civil Society Watch E-bulletin

A Monthly from the **East African Sustainability Watch Network** comprising: Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD) and Sustainable Environmental Development Watch Network (SusWatch Kenya)

January 2018

With 2017 Confirmed the Second Hottest on Record Worldwide, What Next?



Landscape during a dry season in West Nile
(Photo: UCSD)

The Copernicus Climate Change Service (the first major international weather agency to report on conditions in 2017) reported that 2017 temperatures averaged 14.7 degrees Celsius at the Earth's surface, which is 1.2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times. This qualified 2017 to be the second hottest worldwide on record, just behind a scorching 2016

“It's striking that 16 of the 17 warmest years have all been this century,” Jean-Noel Thepaut, head of Copernicus, told *Thomson Reuters* News Agency, adding there was overwhelming scientific consensus that man-made emissions were stoking the warming trend. The Copernicus study is in line with a projection by the U.N. World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in November that 2017 would be second or third warmest behind 2016.

In Uganda weather patterns have drastically changed, as reflected in the unpredictable rainfall patterns characterized by a mosaic of extended droughts lightning and heavy storms that have led to loss of assets and livelihoods in 2017. For example, in May 2017 heavy downpour accompanied with hailstorms destroyed over 305 gardens of millet, sorghum, cassava and bananas in Katine Sub County, Soroti district. Similarly, Isingiro - one of the leading producers of *matooke* in Uganda remains threatened by extended droughts

In January 2017, the Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA) January 1-10, 2017 forecast indicated “very hot conditions with average maximum temperatures range from 26.4 to 36.3 degrees centigrade,” with Nebbi District recording as high as 38.5 degrees centigrade. “The month of January is still dry as it has been experienced in December 2016 [and] water levels in Lake Victoria basin have been constantly diminishing due to dry spell in most parts of the country,” read part of the UNMA report. This 2017 prolonged drought too pushed both day and night temperature high and reportedly made it uncomfortable for many to sleep or walk. For example, Arua District recorded afternoon temperatures of 34°C, making the district one of the hottest in the country then.



A dry stretch of land in Murchison Falls National Park (Uganda). (Photo: UCSD)

In 2018, a predictable trend of what has happened in 2017 might be in the offing, as temperatures across many parts of Uganda remain high with characterised by water scarcity. In order to cope with these fast changes in the short and medium term, Uganda Government needs to work with other development actors to fast track (the delayed) implementation of the National Climate Change Policy, advance mainstreaming of climate change in the district development planning process as well as the district environment action planning process (ENR CSO report, 2017).

Strategically, Uganda and East Africa need to address the increasing vulnerability of the majority poor that is in line with the Paris Agreement on climate change. Specifically, Uganda needs to expeditiously formulate the National Adaptation Plan through a multistakeholder consultative process. Above all, in 2018 the on-going climate change legislative process should secure delivery of a fair and equitable law to catalyse climate change action at all levels (including taking into account needs and concerns of vulnerable communities and indigenous peoples) as well as improved environmental governance through existing institutions.

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5 things we learned about the environment at the World Economic Forum 2018



The World Economic Forum (WEF) is an International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation. The Forum engages the foremost political, business and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas that has engaged political leaders since 1974. During the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting 2018 in Davos (Switzerland, world leaders had plenty to say about the environment), from the pace of climate action to saving our oceans, Here's a quick recap of some (but by no means all) of the key moments from the WEF sessions.

Under the theme “*Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World*”, the 2018 WEF aimed to make a case for renewed commitment to international collaboration as a way of solving critical global challenges

The greatest threat to civilization

As leader of the fastest growing major economy in the world - as well as the world's largest democracy – Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi started the week by telling the Davos audience that **climate change is the greatest threat to civilization**.

2018: A year to step up climate action

Risalat Khan, a young climate campaigner said: “The previous generation of decision-makers have failed us, have failed our generation. I'm not sugar coating this. I think you have already failed us through the inaction from the previous generation. And the next three years, **from 2018 to 2020, that's the time that you have to redeem yourselves**.

Greenpeace's Jennifer Morgan issued a plea to every leader at Davos to **"connect the dots" on climate change and recognize that incremental change will not be enough**. Leaders needed to catch up with their citizens, customers, and employees in connecting the dots and increasing the pace and scale of climate action.

Leading the charge in setting new climate commitments, **French President Emmanuel Macron** announced France would **shut down all coal-fired power stations by 2021 and would make climate action one of five pillars** in his plans to reform the economy.

Anand Mahindra, Chairman of Mahindra Group, described efforts to address climate change as the century's biggest business opportunity. For his part, he announced that all Mahindra Group companies would commit to the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change by setting science-based targets for reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. He **called on his peers in business to "step up" and align their business strategies with the Paris Agreement**.

A one-man parade?

Governor of Washington, Jay Inslee, said President Trump was out on his own on climate change. “There is only one man in this parade. And no one has followed him in this regard.” He said that **15 states had joined the United States Climate Alliance, which was committed to the Paris agreement** and represented 40% of the US economy.

A window of opportunity

However, despite the commitments and strong words used throughout the week, there was also strong agreement that the environmental challenges facing humanity and our planet are urgent and cannot be ignored. We have a narrow window of opportunity to reverse course before it is too late and 2018 must be the year leaders step up to meet the challenge.

Source: Adapted from the World Economic Forum meeting, 2018: <http://bit.ly/2GptCRZ>

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Bold Step forward on Plastic Pollution: A Case for an International Convention



The Third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-3) convened from 4-6 December 2017 at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, Kenya, under the overall theme “*Towards a Pollution-Free Planet.*” At the opening, UNEA-3 President Edgar Gutiérrez-Espeleta underscored that the most vulnerable are those at greatest risk from the negative impacts of pollution. He also called on delegates to act now to address “*a problem that we all created and that we can all fix.*”

As host, Kenya Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Water and Natural Resources – Prof. Judi Wakhungu, highlighted her country’s recent ban on the manufacture and use of plastic bags. Several other speakers including Civil Society spoke strongly in support of actions to address this challenge that is turning out to be a global threat to the environment and livelihoods.

The final UNEA-3 resolution on marine litter and microplastics among others, urges all countries and other stakeholders to responsibly use plastic while endeavouring to reduce unnecessary plastic use, and promote research and application of environmentally-sound alternatives.

This resolution requests the Head of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to convene meetings, subject to the availability of resources, of an Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group, to meet at least once, but not more than twice, before UNEA-4, enabling the participation of developing countries, to examine barriers and options for combating marine plastic litter and microplastics by identifying, inter alia: the range of national, regional, and innovative approaches, and voluntary and legally binding governance strategy and approaches; and environmental, social, and economic costs and benefits of different response options.

But a commensurate and action-oriented intervention is the call for an international Convention to stop global plastic pollution. Henrich-Boll- Stiftung’s paper (authored by Nils Simon and Maro Luisa, 2017) boldly propose to launch negotiations on a plastics convention and begin to end this irresponsible disaster.

Too much plastic waste that goes uncollected domestically eventually flows into the ocean. There it breaks down into ever smaller pieces, and these microplastic particles can now be found in every larger water body including remote mountain lakes, rivers, and even in polar ice and deep sea sediments. It is ingested by fish and enters the food chain, so we shouldn’t be surprised when one day we end up eating our own plastic trash.

Plastic pollution remain a mounting challenge in East Africa despite efforts by Rwanda, and more recently by Kenya. For example, due to profit- oriented motives, Uganda’s efforts to curtail this problem has to date ended in futility. What Nils Simon and Maro Luisa Schulte propose in this Paper would be a bold step forward: **Negotiating a global convention that tackles plastic pollution where it originates, fosters innovation for more sustainable plastics, and supports countries in enhancing their domestic waste collection and recycling systems.**

It is the **necessary next step** and should have priority, rather than focusing on **the never ending task of cleaning up entire oceans while millions of tons of plastic waste keep streaming into them.**

A **plastics convention is not assumed to replace all other existing efforts**, but to complement them: To establish a legally binding roof on top of the many strategies, action plans, and partnerships out there. The form of a treaty will need to reflect both great ambition and political feasibility.

Read the Henrich-Boll- Stiftung’s paper: ‘Stopping Global Plastic Pollution: *The Case for an International Convention* by Nils Simom and Maro Luisa Shulte (2017): <http://bit.ly/2Blicyq>