

UCSD News Bulletin April 2009

Monthly News Bulletin from the Secretariat of Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD)

Rio and beyond.....

Sweden invites East African Youths to a UN Conference in New York

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was established by the UN General Assembly in December 1992 to ensure effective follow-up of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The CSD is a forum to: inform, lobby, and influence the UN; stimulate debate by providing new information, innovative solutions, and new ideas; network and build partnerships; raise awareness on the challenges and obstacles that you face and; identify policy options that best address the issues of sustainable development. The 2002 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) reaffirmed that the CSD is the high-level forum for sustainable development within the United Nations system.

The CSD meets annually in New York, in two-year cycles, with each cycle focusing on clusters of specific thematic and cross-sectoral issues, outlined in its new multi-year programme of work (2003-2017). At the UN CSD 17 that is to take place May 4 -17, 2009 in New York, focus is on agriculture, rural development, land, desertification, drought and Africa, where the Commission is expected to take decisions on policy options and practical measures to expedite implementation in the selected cluster of issues.

The Swedish Ministry for the Environment has invited two East African SusWatch Network members – **Kikandwa Environment Association (Uganda) to be represented by Mr. Kiranda Mwesige** and Lake Victoria Sunset Birders c/o Wildlife Clubs of Kenya **to be represented by Ms Caroline Achieng**. Sweden has a special interest in the sustainable development of the Lake Victoria since the mid 1990's, and is a long time partner in development with the countries around Lake Victoria. The East African SusWatch Network (Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development, Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development and Kenya SusWatch Network c/o Kenya Organization for Environment Education) is one of the partners in the Swedish support for poverty reduction and sustainable development in the Lake Victoria basin, as a one of the Initiatives taken at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg 2002, by the three EAC countries at the time, and Sweden.

The invitation to two youth activists from the Lake Victoria Basin to the UN CSD in New York is based on this long-term Partnership. A Swedish youth activist has also been invited to share experiences, participate and cooperate with his/her peers from Lake Victoria Basin during this UN Conference as part of this Partnership.

Sustainable Development: East African Countries Fault on Reporting to the UN

According to its Multi-year programme of work (established in 2003 in the wake of the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit), the CSD encourages Member States to provide national reports, on a voluntary basis, that reflect developments in the five areas: *Chemicals, Mining, The 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns, Transport, Waste management*. These thematic areas will be addressed holistically, taking into account economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

To assist in reporting process, **Guidelines for National Reporting** have been developed and circulated to all Member States, both through their respective permanent missions to the United Nations and their national focal points for reporting to the CSD. In the Guidelines, Member States are also asked to provide updates on national sustainable development strategies (NSDS) and indicators for sustainable development.

Although member States are requested to report only once during the two-year cycle (2008-9), **none of the East African Countries** (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) has submitted a national report for CSD -16 / 17 as of March 2009. This is in spite of the fact that such reports are hard evidence to inform and influence decisions on policy options and practical measures to expedite implementation in the selected cluster of issues (agriculture, rural development, land, desertification, drought and Africa), where the Commission is expected to take decisions on policy options.

For example, the UN Secretary General's Report to the UNCSO 17 on **Policy options and actions for expediting progress in implementation: Africa** (December 15, 2008), notes that in spite of recent economic growth in many countries of the region, **poverty continues to be Africa's overwhelming sustainable development challenge**. This is associated in most cases with **inadequate access to modern energy and other basic infrastructure such as safe drinking water and sanitation, irrigation for crops and well-maintained rural roads**. In spite of successes during the last decade, poverty remains widespread. In many countries **there is little evidence that the poorest are seeing an improvement in their circumstances**. The effects of food price increases on the poorest populations in Africa are threatening to reverse recent progress in combating poverty.

This is also **contrary to the spirit of Bali guiding principles on transparency and accountability** (where sustainable development is expected to be developed and implemented in an open and transparent manner and in good faith; and performance monitored and reviewed against objectives and targets and is reported in regular intervals (self-reporting -where such Reports are accessible to the public). *Follow the Seventeenth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 17) 4 - 15 May 2009 UN Headquarters, New York, US from IISD Reporting services: <http://www.iisd.ca/csd/csd17/>*

Civil Society's Alternative Water Forum Declaration

The 5th World Water Forum held in Istanbul, Turkey 6-22 March 2009 adopted a declaration calling for "new and adequate resources" for the water sector but the final declaration made no mention of the hotly contested issue whether water is a human right or a commodity to be traded like oil, gas or gold. It only described access to safe drinking water and sanitation as "a basic human need."

This led to a **counter declaration by delegations from Bolivia, Uruguay, Spain, Guatemala, Ecuador, Cuba and Chile, drawing support also from Bangladesh, Benin, Chad, Ethiopia, Honduras, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Panama, Venezuela, Sri Lanka, Switzerland and South Africa**. "We recognise that access to water and sanitation is a human right and we are committed to all necessary actions for the progressive implementation of this right," the dissident statement said.

Civil society organizations and social movements also gathered in an Alternative Water Forum and produced a Declaration that reaffirms and strengthens all the principles and commitments expressed in the **2006 Mexico City declaration**: we **uphold water as the basic element of all life** on the planet, as a fundamental and inalienable human right; we insist that **solidarity between present and future generations** should be guaranteed; we **reject all forms of privatization and declare that the management and control of water must be public, social, cooperative, participatory, equitable, and not for profit**; we **call for the democratic and sustainable management of ecosystems and to preserve the integrity of the water cycle** through the protection and proper management of watersheds and environment.

In addition, the Civil Society statement **opposes the dominant economic and financial model** that prescribes the privatization, commercialization and corporatization of public water and sanitation services; notes the **conflict of interest as a result of corporate-controlled water forums** instead of the UN as a neutral body; identifies **major loopholes in the Ministerial Statement** which among other things, does not recognize water as a universal human right nor exclude it from global trade agreements, promotes the use of water to produce energy from hydroelectric dams and the increased production of fuel from crops, both of which lead to further inequity and injustice.

On Climate Change, the Civil Society statement calls on **non acceptance of responses to climate chaos** in the energy sector that follow the same logic that caused the crisis in the first place. This is a logic that jeopardizes the quantity and quality of water and of life that is based on dams, nuclear power plants, and agro-fuel plantations. *Read more about the Alternative Water Forum - Istanbul Declaration from the link: http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/7412.html*

Resources and Upcoming training events

OSIENALA Scholarship opportunities

OSIENALA (Friends of Lake Victoria) with financial support from Swedish International Development Cooperation (Sida) is inviting applications from citizens of East Africa for post graduate scholarships at a Master's degree level in Environmental Studies, Community Development, and Renewable Energy Technologies. Applicants must have proof of admission into any of the Public Universities in Kenya, Uganda or Tanzania together with details of fees payable in respect of the course to be undertaken. Application details can be got from Page 35 of *The East African Newspaper* No.754 April 13 – 19, 2009 or by contacting The Executive Director (OSIENALA) – Kisumu on email: osienala@osienala.net

IIRR training courses

The International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) is a rural development organization with 80 years experience, working in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It promotes people-centered development through capacity building for poor people and their communities, development organizations and agencies.

These courses focus on IIRR's practical field experiences and participatory approaches, along with the experiences of participants and other development organizations.

Upcoming courses in 2009 include: Participatory Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (PPM&E) - November 2009 in Kenya; Facilitating Community-Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) - September 2009 in Uganda and Local Governance and Rural Development (LGRD) June / July 2009 in Kenya. For More information about these courses and more training opportunities and eligibility, visit: <http://www.iirr.org/intlcourses.htm>

EARTH SUMMIT 2012: 'Sustainable Development - The Peace of the Future'

Since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, there has been a dramatic increase in threats to peace and security caused by social, environmental and economic crises.

In light of the new and immense challenges faced by the sustainable development agenda, **Stakeholder Forum** – an organization working on sustainable development and supporting the increased involvement of stakeholders in international processes, is **supporting the call for a World Summit in 2012**, which is steadily gaining international attention. *Read more the Outcome Document of Earth Summit 2012 Workshop in San Sebastian of November 13 – 14, 2008, where representatives from governments, civil society and the UN were invited to San Sebastian in Spain, to consider the possibility of a World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2012 and the [Non-Paper](#) prepared on the possibility of a 2012 Earth Summit: <http://www.stakeholderforum.org/>*