

1st African Regional Youth Green Summit

Concept Note

Youth perspectives on promoting green economy in south and east Africa:

Options and opportunities



Kampala, Uganda
1-3 October 2014



Background and Context:

Africa's vulnerability to climate change impacts have been underscored by the severe droughts experienced recently in the Sahel in 2012 and the Horn of Africa in 2011. All these bring into focus the serious impacts of climate change in the continent and highlighting the urgent need for adaptation as a priority in providing sustainable solutions to reduce the vulnerability of a great majority of Africa's one billion citizens. Africa is the world's youngest continent, as the proportion of youth in the region total population is higher in any other continent. In regard to future trends, it is estimated 93% of urban growth will occur in developing nations, with 80% of urban growth occurring in Africa and Asia. Yet, few opportunities do exist for active youth participation in the decision making process due to limited skill, tools and resources among both young people and Governments that are required to engage in meaningful consultative processes and implement action plans. Often, government lack understandings of the benefits of youth involvement in consultation processes, and advocacy based groups have limited capacity to maintain momentum of continued actions. Climate change is considered to be one of the greatest threats facing humanity. Following the energy poverty challenges in this region characterized by highly depleted trees for wood fuels and high carbon emissions among other social economic vulnerabilities, adaptation and mitigation approaches need to be major components of young people discussions. Rural- urban migration and climate change impacts can be undermined by a country's efforts to achieve the goals of sustainable development, in particular, through worsening poverty levels in developing communities. Likewise, poverty remains a key driver posing serious threat in harnessing opportunities evolving in the context of green economy. Researchers, especially the youth lack capacity, knowledge, networking skills and financial resources to enable them to work effectively. We understand, though a bit gradually, the need to live in harmony with nature. The importance of cleaner and greener technologies cannot be over emphasised. The act of selecting, planting and caring for a tree can also send a powerful message that one cares about the environment. These acts are also excellent ways to bring people together and focus on environmental issues.

Sustainability is an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation involving a holistic approach and understanding of issues which are best handled with the participation of all concerned. It also involves changing of attitudes and lifestyles, to minimise and reduce the impacts on environment. Young scientists have power to change, which is possible only if we develop an enabling environment with better education, exposure and linkages. Local authorities have the potential to influence both the causes of climate change and the solutions to advance climate protection. The obligation consequently rests on cities to take responsibility, provide leadership and direction, and implement practical initiatives for the communities and citizens they represents by developing local strategies towards a sustainable future, addressing climate change prevention, mitigation and adaptation through urban planning and management.

Indigenous peoples, in particular youth and women, feel they have been largely excluded from decisions about climate change and urbanization at all levels, yet they will have to experience the long-term impacts of the today's crucial decisions.

Workshop Scope and Objectives:

The summit is an opportunity young people to focus on sustainable development as the green economy offers newly created centres of excellence a motivation to create useful knowledge in this regard. As a Strategic youth meeting in partnership with institutions, it will be possible to tailor programmes that enable youths to access resources and opportunities in green businesses/markets, sustainable urban development. The spin off to this will be accurate knowledge green technologies and documentation, nurturing of quality standards by expert groups, and policy makers and in turn lead to youth empowerment. Efforts to involve youth in policy formulation have increase over the few years at all levels. Youth participation across Africa occurs through various fora, such as through organizations, national youth councils, youth parliament set up the National and Regional level. Youth are also getting engaged in Regional youth based advocacy groups and are consulted in national processes such as those related to developing Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans (PRSPs).The effective implementation of youth policies in these areas across the region requires that youth-related issues be given high priority in national development agendas. Youth-related issues are often marginalized due to challenges such as internal conflicts or poverty yet require more critical thinking and strategic planning. To date, many relevant issues have been responded to in an ad-hoc manner without adequate consideration for their long-term implications on youth populations. With pressures mounting due to climate change, energy, food and water issues, solution seekers emphasize that young people are the missing link if these challenges are to be addressed comprehensively. All natural resources have to be harnessed in a sustainable manner to ensure the well-being of our future generations. Therefore, this summit will reflect concerted efforts to draw young people in theory and practice across many disciplines to trigger various reactions across the age divide. Even though it is premature to determine the rate and extent of progress, the sometimes eye-brow-raising political attention young people receive signifies that there are stakes involved with this age group. The meeting aims to offer a right platform to capture and share youth concerns in order to promote links between science, policy and industry.

The key **objectives** of the workshop are:

- Aggregate the lessons shared into common solutions for food security and climate change adaptation across country application, in building the capacity of the practitioners, supporting policy processes at all levels as well as empowering countries in undertaking bigger actions.
- Share information on targeted ecological actions that provide opportunities for addressing perennial food insecurity, cleaner Energy, and sustainable public Transport in Sub Saharan Africa.
- Identify key challenges and bottlenecks hindering the scaling-up of sustainable public transport, cleaner energy, ecosystem based adaptation practices, and how can they be overcome

Format of the Conference:

The summit will take place over three days, and will consist of a combination of plenary and panel group discussions. This mixture of plenary and panel discussions will provide participants with an outstanding opportunity to interact and learn about the latest ideas and practices in harnessing ecosystems services for food security, transport, energy and climate change adaptation.

Expected Outcomes

- Improved understanding of renewable Energy, smart cities, and harnessing ecosystem services for food security and adaptation to climate change in agriculturally dominated landscapes in East Africa and the Southern Continent.
- Policy options and innovative approaches explored for increasing the role of ecosystem based approaches in food security and climate change adaptation
- Engage key regional partners and policy makers within the continent on, renewable energy, green transport , food security and climate change adaptation

Expected Outputs

- Compilation of concrete ecosystems based actions for food security, cleaner energy, sustainable public transport and climate change adaptation under different scenarios from a regional perspective
- Identification of key challenges and bottlenecks hindering the scaling-up of public transport, cleaner energy technologies, ecosystem based adaptation practices, and how can they be overcome
- Suggestions and plans for upscaling and replicating ecosystems based adaptation actions within the bigger framework of national and regional development programmes in Africa
- Action-oriented recommendations that identify concrete steps to promote increased youth participation and financial investment, regional and national levels, for incorporating green economies and ecosystem based adaptation approaches in food security portfolios
- Summit report

Organizers and Participants

The workshop is convened by Teens Uganda in collaboration with AIESEC, UST Network and other youth support UN Agencies, governments, research institution, NGOs, scholars, Donors, Local governments etc.

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