

The Uganda NGO Rio+10 Coalition's Position Paper on Good Governance and Participation for Sustainable Development in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development of Johannesburg (26th Aug. – 4th Sept. 2002)

At this time when Governments and Leaders of the World are preparing for the historic World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) of Johannesburg this August.

Concerned that a decade after Rio, non-implementation of the outcomes of Rio continues to undermine the vision and promise of the international community; and that generally sustainable development as a mainstream process of societal transformation still seems elusive; and recognizing that the successful implementation of Agenda 21, which was adopted at the Rio Summit, requires the total involvement of all individuals, groups, communities and institutions (both in Government and outside).

Concerned that the level of corruption in Uganda that erodes the capacity of Government to shoulder its responsibility towards social and economic development.

We, the representatives of the NGOs and civic groups of Uganda that have formed The Uganda NGO Rio + 10 Coalition¹ sincerely appeal to the minds, hearts and conscience of our Government and Non Governmental actors, as good governance at all levels is one of the main pillars of building a strong society, we call for the following changes in our beautiful country, Uganda:

Good Governance and participation for sustainable development in Uganda

- **MINDFUL** of the fact that a number of comprehensive laws and regulations have been developed to take care of our natural resources but enforcement is still too weak, we call for the immediate implementation and enforcement of these regulations.

NOTABLY

- **Polluter tax:** The companies and individuals that are causing environmental degradation should pay for the clean up.
 - **Environment Impact Assessments (EIA):** The current system whereby the developer has the responsibility for choosing consultants of his/her choice to carry out the EIA has often resulted in contestable and non-comprehensive EIA's. There must be a certification system of EIA consultants, ensuring quality work, professionalism, and transparency.
 - **Compliance with the national and international rules and regulations** governing research and trade (such as medicinal plants, wildlife resources, etc).
- **IT IS OF CONCERN** that Government of Uganda must harmonize existing environmental policies and streamline the various institutions in environmental management, to avoid institutional rivalry.

¹ The Uganda NGO Rio + 10 Coalition, made up of up to 50 NGOs has as its backbone, the NGO focus groups. The Coalition has since October 2001, been carrying out assessment of Uganda's progress in implementing Agenda 21 and other commitments of the Earth Summit (1992), Rio de Janeiro – Brazil.

- **MOST IMPORTANT** government should stem the trend of corruption and political interference in natural resources management especially forests, water, wetlands and other issues concerning sustainable development at national, district and lower levels.
- **CONCERNED ABOUT** the need to balance environment and development priorities, we call upon the Government of Uganda to start the process of developing National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSD) which was a commitment in Agenda 21 and as stated in the UN Millennium goals (by 2005). These strategies ought to be integrated into the current Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP).

Meaningful public participation.

As agreed by the World leaders at the Earth Summit in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, the only way to achieve sustainable development is by including the public in planning and decision-making at all levels (Chapter 27 of Agenda 21).

MINDFUL that this has only been achieved to a certain extent in Uganda, we recommend the following:

- Government of Uganda must cultivate confidence in partnership with civil society organisations in order to ensure meaningful public participation.
- The public must be involved in decision making beyond consultations at workshops, where the public is called in just for approval.
- Government must involve public and civil society in decision-making that affects resources, which are central to their livelihoods.
- The Government of Uganda should enact laws, regulations and policy frameworks that promote coexistence with civil society organisations to enhance sustainable development. The impending NGO bill should be finalised in line with the above.

Global governance for sustainable development.

RECOGNIZING that we are living in a globalised world, we call for global governance across all sectors including the fast growing private sector. We therefore call on the Government of Uganda to adopt the following:

- The WSSD must work to achieve a binding international agreement on corporate accountability for all citizens and communities.
- Transnational companies (TNC) must respect fundamental human rights, international labour standards and multilateral agreements.
- WSSD must come out with clear targets including timeframes, roles and responsibilities. Enough pledges have been made since 1992 and it is **NOW** time to act!
- WSSD must clearly distinguish between Government and private sector responsibilities.
- WSSD must reaffirm the role and responsibility of governments to fulfil their sustainable development obligations by implementing the commitments under the UN Summit Action Plans and the Multilateral Environment Agreements.
- The Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue (MSD), while positive in some ways, cannot substitute the rights approach to citizens' effective participation in decision making at all levels.

Considerably more public debate and consultations with Civil Society are needed before the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is endorsed by the WSSD.

- The WSSD initiate an analysis on the effects of military production and consumption on sustainable development, with a view to reallocating resources for combating poverty and environmental harm.
- The WSSD reconfirm commitment to Principles 24 and 25 of the Rio declaration, and underline that war and armed conflict as well as military production and consumption cause death and human suffering and /or are a serious impediment to sustainable development.
- WSSD should promote increased awareness of the dangers of child labour and total elimination of child labour of all forms, and for friendly international labour regimes.

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