

A *Monthly* from the East African Sustainability Watch Network and INFORSE East Africa

Deliberations on Relationships Between Biodiversity Protection & Climate Change Important at the AMCEN 2023 Session



The 19th ordinary session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) will convene in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 14 to 18 August, 2023 under the theme, ‘Seizing Opportunities and Enhancing Collaboration to Address Environmental Challenges in Africa’.

This year’s session will serve as a platform for delegates to provide policy guidance for the effective participation of Africa in upcoming key global environmental events, including the UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP28) in the United Arab Emirates. Delegates will also discuss Africa’s response to implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) adopted at the UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 15).

Climate related challenges loom large across Africa. From changing rainfall patterns and extreme heat to water scarcity, rising food insecurity, loss and damage arising from hurricanes, floods and droughts, Africa is on the losing end on an annual basis. Therefore, when the world gathers at COP28 in the United Arab Emirates, it is an opportunity for AMCEN to flag out the continent’s vulnerabilities despite its minimal contribution to the global climate change challenge, and never to get tired of demanding for a commensurate and clear global response.

Already, there are several issues on the agenda of the two-week COP28 summit in the United Arab Emirates, including a review of the Paris Agreement, an agreement on a global goal for climate adaptation, and the establishment of a finance facility for loss and damage due to climate change. But COP28 needs to transit from mere multilateral negotiations to bold decision-making to advance climate action – as time for ambitious climate action was yesterday! For Africa, it is absolutely necessary to unite with one voice, demanding that leaders marshal the political will to ensure that past pledges (more so the promised climate finance) are met and new ones are made.

The Kunming-Montreal GBF’s four goals and 23 targets represent a crucial turning point in international efforts to combat rapidly increasing rates of biodiversity loss. Hence, AMCEN needs to ensure that this Framework is well-implemented across all sectors, contributing to sustainable development and recognizing the rights of Africa’s Indigenous People and Local Communities’, women, and youth, with a human rights-based approach to conservation, elevating the role that sustainable use plays in conservation. Furthermore, AMCEN should task African Governments to set up legal administrative and policy frameworks that hold businesses to account in fulfilling their commitments towards safeguarding biodiversity in relation to agriculture, health, water, energy, respect for human rights and other key development sectors.

It is also equally important for AMCEN to discuss the linkages between biodiversity protection and climate change as these two processes are intrinsically linked in Africa. For example, loss of forest cover, biodiversity and land degradation remains high and widespread owing to deforestation for farming and grazing, and climate change. Land degradation affects 46% of Africa’s land and 65% of the population, costing the region US\$9.3 billion annually (ADB, 2022). Hence, more public and private partnerships are critical to mobilize and channel funding to scale up agro ecology in order to increase resilience in Africa’s food systems, conserve forests and biodiversity.

The AMCEN session 2023 aims to strengthen collaboration among institutions and enhance implementation of global and regional environmental frameworks to address environmental challenges facing Africa. AMCEN’s recent policy direction focuses on supporting implementation.

Time for Clean Cooking to be Part of the Political Agenda in Africa!



A three-stone stove
Photo: UCSD

In Africa, more than 850 million people still depend on wood and charcoal for cooking. Recent tensions in the international gas and oil markets, whose prices have increased sharply has worsened this further. According to UNDP (2022), the use of inefficient stoves is a leading cause of indoor pollution, which has devastating effects on the health of women and children, and causes nearly half of pneumonia deaths among children under 5 years of age.

This is worsened by the environmental impact that the widespread dependence on wood and charcoal for cooking breeds. The traditional three-stone cooking places that remain extensively used, are inefficient in terms of combustion, and use much more wood than necessary. In addition to threatening forest resources, their use cumulatively leads to avoidable greenhouse gas emissions.

Therefore, promoting clean cooking energy solutions can help address a series of environmental, social and health challenges in a holistic way in Africa.

The new report launched by the International Energy Agency (IEA), an autonomous intergovernmental organization that provides policy recommendations, analysis and data on the entire global energy sector titled: *A Vision for Clean Cooking Access for All*, offers a practical guide to bring the tools and fuels needed for every household worldwide to have access to clean cooking by 2030.

“Clean cooking is a topic that rarely hits the headlines or makes it onto the political agenda,” said IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol. “And yet, it’s a cornerstone of global efforts to improve energy access, gender equity, economic development and human dignity. This report shows universal clean cooking access could be reached worldwide by 2030 with annual investment of USD 8 billion, which is just a tiny fraction of what the world spends on energy each year. Tackling this injustice is affordable and achievable.”

To achieve the universal access target laid out in the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 7, nearly 300 million people need to gain access to clean cooking means each year between now and 2030. People in sub-Saharan Africa represent half of this amount, highlighting where international efforts need to focus.

“Solving access to clean cooking does not require a technological breakthrough,” Dr Birol said. “It comes down to political will from governments, development banks and other entities seeking to eradicate poverty and gender inequality. But today, we are failing women in some of the most vulnerable areas of the world.”

Whereas China, India and Indonesia all halved their populations without clean cooking access through providing free stoves and subsidized canisters of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), during the same period, the number of people without clean cooking access continued to grow in sub-Saharan Africa, where clean cooking campaigns did not to keep pace with population growth. Part of what is needed is scaling up local solutions that women and other affected people can adopt. Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development, TaTEDO, JEEP, SusWatch Kenya and INFORSE have jointly put together a *Catalogue of 80+ Local Sustainable Solutions - East Africa* that is available online, offline and in print for urban and rural people and change makers, to increase biomass use efficiency, promote clean cooking options and other sustainable solutions. More: <https://localsolutions.inforse.org/>

The IEA Report presents country-by-country assessments and an outlook for clean cooking under existing policies, offering a roadmap towards universal access. It pays special attention to the needs in Africa, where they are most pressing. By identifying the required policies, technologies, investments and implementation efforts, the report seeks to galvanize international support for clean cooking initiatives, informing conversations ahead of the UN Sustainable Development Goal Summit, the African Climate Action Summit, and the COP28 Climate Change Conference taking place later in 2023. Read the full IEA Report: *A Vision for Clean Cooking Access for All* from: <https://www.iea.org/reports/a-vision-for-clean-cooking-access-for-all>

Tanzania to Transform Charcoal Subsector to Improve Efficiency, Economic Contribution & Community Livelihoods



An Improved Basic Earth Mound Kiln (IBEK) (Photo: TaTEDO)

Reliance on charcoal or firewood is highest in Africa and Asia, with some African cities almost entirely dependent on charcoal for cooking according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (2018). However, charcoal in most of East Africa is produced in a wasteful way. Whereas charcoal accounts for up to 90% of energy consumption in the East Africa, it is unsustainable as demand has long outstripped supply. For example, a household study by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) in 2021 found that charcoal provides the primary energy of up to 80% of Kampala's fast growing population. Combined, charcoal, wood, and other forms of biomass together contribute a staggering 90% of the total primary energy consumed in Uganda.

According to the Global Initiative Against Transitional Crime (2021), Kenya has since 2018 used sporadic bans on charcoal production. In Uganda, a number of bylaws against trade in charcoal have emerged, but there has not been a national moratorium. In South Sudan, a national moratorium on the export of Charcoal exists, but has hardly been enforced. In Tanzania, the Export Control (Prohibition) order No. 663 of 1986 prohibits export of charcoal. However, charcoal is produced and transported illegally across borders using trucks and motorbikes, and informal harbors using canoe and other vessels. For example, charcoal is exported to Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Kenya, Oman and Comoros.

Charcoal production is also widely informal and unregulated, despite being a key economic activity that engages millions of people across East Africa. For example in Tanzania, it has been established that inefficient production, pricing and use of charcoal is among the factors that contribute to forest degradation and deforestation, where the annual deforestation rate is estimated to stand at 469,420 ha. Furthermore, more than 90% of households in Tanzania rely on illegal and unsustainable sourced biomass (charcoal and firewood) for domestic cooking and heating energy.

Nevertheless, various improved charcoal production technologies that exist in Tanzania, are being pioneered by the Government and various stakeholders. Examples of these technologies are: Improved Basic Earth Mound Kilns, Half Orange Kiln, Pit Kiln, Metal Kiln - Mark 5, Modified Metal Channel Earth Kiln, Casamance Earth Kiln and Simple Retort. Most of the technologies have recovery rate of more than 25%, but face challenges including: low availability, affordability and appropriateness of the technology to majority of the charcoal producers; and low awareness and adoption of the technologies especially the Improved Basic Earth Mound Kilns which is considered to be technology of choice to different environments.

The above challenges prompted the Government of Tanzania to take actions that aim to provide strategic direction and guidance to the charcoal subsector in order to improve efficiency along the charcoal value chains and enhance the contribution of the sub-sector to the national economy and community livelihoods. This is guided by a vision that 'the charcoal value chains in Tanzania become sustainable, economically viable, and environmentally sound while improving livelihoods'.

Based on this Vision is a Tanzania National Charcoal Strategy that contains sub-sections that closely follow identified strategic objectives from issues raised in a situational analysis. Under each of these sub-sections, several strategies, targets and outcome indicators for improving charcoal value chains in Tanzania are elaborated.

The strategic objectives in the Tanzania National Charcoal Strategy are: enhanced sustainable charcoal production and utilization, enhanced production and use of alternative charcoal, increased market niche for sustainable charcoal, enhanced adoption of alternative cooking energy, enhanced institutional, human resource capacity and coordination, impact of HIV & AIDS infections reduced in the charcoal subsector, mainstreamed gender equity and equality in the charcoal subsector, and enhanced good governance in the charcoal sub-sector.