

THE EAST AFRICAN SUSWATCH E-BULLETIN

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Reflecting on the East African Community Secretary General's 100 days in Office



Hon Dr. Peter Mathuki
- Sec. General. Photo:
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The East African Community (EAC) Secretary General, Hon. (Dr.) Peter Mathuki held a virtual discussion on his 100 days in office (he assumed on 27th April, 2021), and his priorities for the region for the next 5 years. He touched on a number of socio-economic and political issues affecting the region.

Dr. Mathuki disclosed that he had already held consultations with the members of the Summit of Heads of State to seek their views on how the Community should be run.

The Secretary General also said that he had also held discussions with the Chairman of the East African Civil Society Organizations' Forum (EACSO) on modalities to revive the EAC SG forum to ensure the active participation of the civil society in the integration.

But one of the missing issues in his presentation (only after a prompt by one of the online participants) was the issue of what the EAC is doing to prioritize climate action.

According to the East African Community Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan (2018 – 2022), the changing climate patterns and extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, and extended periods of extreme temperatures pose major challenges to global food security, necessitating new food production practices along with enhanced monitoring and response to the growing threat of agricultural pests and diseases. Exacerbating the climate challenge is continued stress on ecosystems, marine environments, fisheries, land, water, and natural resource base upon which productive agriculture relies, and the complex intrastate governance challenges related to water resources.

Climatic change directly affects livelihoods in the EAC region due to the high dependence of households on rain-fed agriculture. Pastoral livestock production systems, and hence pastoralist communities, in mostly northern Kenya and South Sudan are generally viewed to be the most vulnerable to climate change impacts. Analysis of climate-related impacts on staple crops such as; maize, beans, rice, cassava, sorghum, millet, and bananas, as well as the cash crops like tea, coffee and cotton show a reduction in production and productivity of up to 30-50% across the continent, and will need some kind of adaptation plan

So, as the UN Climate talks (UNFCCC COP26) draws near, it is vital that political stake remains high at the EAC secretariat to support regional coherence (Africa Group of Negotiators and other negotiating blocks) to push for prioritization of pro-poor adaptation and mitigation actions and international support of the Partner States' National Climate Actions (Nationally Determined Contributions). In addition it is important that the EAC lays bare the full climate finance needs to ensure that these NDCs (that are conditional to international support) are fully implemented to address the above climate related impacts.

However, it was gratifying to see the high office come down to report back on progress, achievements as well as future plans. We hope that this action is replicated by the EAC institutions – as this helps to strengthen ownership of the Community by citizens, generating ideas from the bottom – up, while ushering in a long-term and effective accountability mechanism.

The September 2021 Global Food Systems Summit: What is it in for East Africa?



The month of September 2021 is packed with many global events and discussions related to sustainable development including the UN Food Systems Summit to be held on Thursday, September 23, 2021. It seeks “to launch game-changing solutions and bold new actions to transform the way the world produces and consumes food, delivering progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”.

Despite the COVID19 pandemic, a number of (buildup) National Food Systems Summit (FSS) dialogues and pathways for food systems to deliver the SDGs have been held across the globe. This is driven by the fact that desirable transformation of food systems comes with multiple benefits that include empowering vulnerable groups such as women and smallholder farmers out of poverty and related inequalities, improvement in food supply and distribution, reduced stress on the environment, improved consumer behavior patterns with minimum food loss and waste, and improved resilience to risks that disrupt the economy (UN Human Security Handbook, 2016).

The East African (EAC) region is endowed with a wide range of resources including land, water, favorable climate, human resources and market outlets that provide for potential food security within the region. However, food insecurity caused by both natural and policy related factors remains rampant. According to FAO statistics, more than 20 million people in the Eastern Africa region are currently food insecure and are depending on food relief. Vulnerable population groups such as women and children continue to bear the heaviest burden of malnutrition caused by, but not limited to, food insecurity.

In line with the idea of coming up with bold new actions, the dialogues have generated a lot of information that now informs the September 2021 UN Summit, as well as future national policies and plans. For example, in one of Uganda’s Civil Society FSS dialogues under Action Track 3 Boost nature positive (protection, sustainable management and restoration of productive system) food systems for food security, the main thrust is to "produce more from less" and set aside some land and water for nature. Similarly, an independent FSS Dialogue convened by ICLEI Africa, Entebbe Municipality and Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development, titled: *The Significance of Lake Victoria to Entebbe’s Food System: Exploring the Opportunities for Food Security, Improved Livelihoods and Environmental Sustainability Outcomes* focused on the track: shift to sustainable consumption patterns. Among the overarching conclusions, the Dialogue noted a need to: Address land management and ownership issues like individuals ‘owning’ land in the Lake Victoria buffer zones, so that Lake Victoria resources can be sustainably conserved; Promote agro ecology / urban agriculture as part of urban planning in Entebbe Municipality to increase food security while conserving the Lake Victoria ecosystem in light of the increasing food, fuel and water demands; but also given Entebbe’s position as a bird sanctuary for ecotourism development / promotion; Support nature-based solutions including tree belts, buffer zoning for Lake Victoria to protect wetlands, forests, river and lake banks so as to sustain the fisheries sector and protect water resources for various uses

The Food Systems Summit will be convened along 5 Action Tracks: ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all; shifting to sustainable consumption patterns; boosting nature positive production; advancing equitable livelihoods, and building resilience to shocks. **Read more about Entebbe City Independent Food Systems Dialogue from: <https://tinyurl.com/nv9cytfb> & follow the UN Food Systems Summit from: <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/news/un-food-systems-summit> and the hashtag: #FoodSystems4SDGs**

Uganda People's Climate Manifesto: Citizens Speak Out!



On August 27, 2021 Uganda's first People's Manifesto to tackle the Climate change crisis was launched. This comes at a time when the world is grappling with two significant crises, climate change and the COVID19 pandemic. In addition, Uganda's public debt has grown significantly in the recent past, exacerbated by among others, the COVID19 impacts.

The People's Manifesto is launched after release of the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC WG1) that states with certainty that unprecedented human influence is wrecking the climate system, causing, in some instances, irreversible damage; and that the window of time to prevent warming beyond 1.5°C is rapidly closing in.

The Manifesto is also a result of wide consultations (involving over 500 citizens), spearheaded by the Climate Action Network Uganda and its partners (including one jointly by UCSD and JEEP) supported by CARE Germany, CAN International and the German Cooperation. Four regional consultations were held in Mbale, Mbarara, Gulu and Kampala, while additional information was provided by citizens who reside in the climate change frontline communities of Katakwi, Kasese and Bulambuli.

During the consultations participants from across board revealed that, frontline communities of climate change in Uganda are grappling with the socio-economic losses due to floods and flood risk, they are as well faced with the adverse impacts of COVID-19 that include job losses, distortion to education and health system. Their livelihoods are faced with a double jeopardy and therefore require accelerated efforts by key players to enable them recover from the crises.

For example, on May 10th 2020, amidst the first total lockdown and restrictions that were established by the government of Uganda in order to curb the spread of COVID-19, communities living around Mt. Rwenzori suffered a double tragedy when heavy rains caused a massive destruction to property and lives. The banks of rivers Nyamwamba and Mubuku burst and caused flooding to nearby households, hospitals, gardens and destroyed livelihoods. Kilembe mines hospital too was destroyed and a number of households were displaced. Today over 1500 households from Kanyangeye village are displaced and live-in makeshift arrangements in Muhookya camp. Many more climate related disasters have hit communities in Uganda since the first COVID-19 case was spotted in Uganda including locust invasion, droughts in Karamoja region, landslides in Bududa and severe flooding in areas of Teso and Bunyaruguru.

Hence, the Manifesto calls for action to address the climate change, COVID19 and unsustainable debt levels in the period 2021-2026. Among others, the Manifesto calls for investment in protection of critical ecosystems and conservation of the natural resources including wetlands, forests and water resources; increasing the efficiency in use of biomass (the dominant source of energy), promoting renewable energy; and sustainable exploitation of Uganda's hydropower resources as part of the a clean energy transition.

Uganda experiences extreme weather events which lead to mudslides, landslides and flooding, particularly for the country's mountain regions and related districts such as Mbale in the Mt Elgon region. Extreme events leading to disasters such as floods, droughts, and landslides have increased the last 30 years. According to the World Bank 2020 Climate Risk Profile for Uganda, over the past two decades, an average of 200,000 Ugandans are affected each year by disasters. **For more information about the Uganda's first People's Manifesto to tackle the climate change crisis, contact: Ms. Miriam Talwisa, National Coordinator – CAN Uganda Email: mtalwisa@yahoo.com**