

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

Beating Plastic Pollution in East Africa Calls for Concerted Efforts and Commitment



Photo: Alice Hooffmans
@Green_Earth2022

Plastics have become a necessary evil in our lives to the extent that we cannot avoid using them. On the contrary, pollution arising from the growing plastic use is rapidly becoming one of the most pressing environmental threats to the people and the planet.

With over 6.5 billion tones circulating on the planet, plastic pollution has been found in every ecosystem, from the highest peaks to the deepest depths. Micro- and nano-plastic particles have also been observed in human placenta, blood, and breast milk, posing threats to human health due to the toxic additives in plastic products (IISD, 2023).

This has prompted the United Nations to take action. Hence, in recognition of the impacts of plastic emissions to both human health and the environment, in March 2022 the world welcomed the historic resolution 5/14 adopted by the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) to “End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument.” This decision followed many years of increasing concern about this growing challenge and efforts to build consensus for how to address it at the global level.

A second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France, from 29 May – 2 June 2023, is a step in this direction. It aims to discuss a document containing potential options for elements towards an international legally binding instrument (ILBI) on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastics.

A 2022 Report by Nipe Fagio in collaboration with BioVision Africa in Uganda, Global Initiative for Environment & Reconciliation in Rwanda, and the Centre for Environmental Justice and Development in Kenya noted that, ‘the state of plastic pollution in East African countries can be described as one where countries are struggling with increasing amounts of single-use plastics that invade the markets and consequently the environment and waterways. Waste management systems are insufficient to handle the single-use plastic produced and most of the single-use plastic cannot be recycled locally, increasing the environmental harm’.

Rwanda, Kenya and Tanzania have implemented legislation to restrict single-use plastics. In the case of Rwanda, the legislation is comprehensive, restricting several kinds of single-use plastics. In Kenya, single-use plastic carrier bags have been banned and other kinds of plastic restricted. In Tanzania, plastic carrier bags have been banned as well as plastic bottle seals, while Uganda is still grappling with effective ways to enforce its laws on plastic.

While the current negotiation for a Global Plastics Treaty is plausible, efforts at local level to counter plastic pollution will determine the success or failure in overcoming challenges it poses to people’s health and ecosystems.

IPEN – the global network forging a healthier world where people and the environment are no longer harmed by the production, use, and disposal of toxic chemicals, summed it up when it calls for a Global Plastics Treaty that: **Protects health and the environment; Ends the production and use of toxic chemicals in plastics; Removes toxic impacts at all stages of the lifecycle of plastics; Bans recycling of plastics containing hazardous chemicals; Protects the public’s right to know about chemicals in plastics and information on plastic production and waste exports; Charges plastic producers to finance the treaty; and Curbs toxic and climate pollutants.** **Read more about IPEN and plastics from: https://stoppoisonplastic.org/?utm_source=pocket_saves**

Civil Society and Private Sector Call for Action on Bottlenecks to Movement of Renewable Energy Products in East Africa



Workshop Participants
Photos: WWF Tanzania

From May 17 to 19 May, 2023, the Pan Africa Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA), WWF and TaTEDO organized a workshop with East African Community (EAC) at the Giraffe Beach Hotel in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania that aimed at identifying a roadmap for addressing bottlenecks on transboundary movement of Renewable products within the East African Community. The workshop brought together participants from Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, DR Congo, and Uganda, drawn from civil society, customs & Taxation, National Renewable Energy Federations and Networks like the East Africa Civil Society Organization Forum and Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development. The focus of the workshop was to create and build a constructive dialogue between the EAC and stakeholders within the Renewable transboundary trade spaces, to discuss existing concerns and agree on appropriate solutions to advance energy access.

This followed a multi-stakeholder forum held in 2022, co-hosted by PACJA and WWF in Arusha, Tanzania where the EAC was represented, that highlighted challenges faced by traders in importing and exporting renewable energy products across the region. These include: the lack of harmonization of customs procedures and documentation requirements across the region, lack of clear rules and regulations for import and export, misclassification and incorrect levying of duty, and high cost of compliance with customs requirements to facilitate the ease of trade. In this meeting, participants agreed that addressing customs-related issues was critical in promoting the use of renewable energy sources in the region and enhancing regional integration.

The Dar es Salaam workshop was a follow up on the above proposals made from the 2022 multi-stakeholder forum. Hence, this workshop was to create and build a constructive dialogue between the EAC and stakeholders within the Renewable transboundary trade spaces and to discuss existing concerns and agree on appropriate solutions that will help to advance energy access. Participants highlighted the need to enhance customs-related capacity and promote harmonization within the region. Additionally, the role of CSOs in fostering socio-economic development through partnerships with the private sector was emphasized. The renewable energy authorities of the EAC member countries stressed the importance of capacity building on customs-related issues, specifically trade facilitation and customs valuation. Speaking during the workshop, Ndayisaba Edouard from the East Africa Renewable Energy Federation noted that, 'civil society have a multifaceted: being a vital source of information for both citizens and governments and acting as a bridge between various stakeholders, facilitating dialogue and generating valuable insights necessary for evidence-based decision-making'.

Elsam Byempaka, an Energy Expert from the EAC Secretariat, emphasized the focal importance of access to energy for Africa's development. He highlighted the critical role of CSOs in the energy sector and acknowledged their active participation in policy-making processes and their contribution to generating relevant evidence to advocate for clean energy laws and strategies. 'CSOs provide the necessary support and expertise to ensure that the energy sector's growth aligns with sustainable development and climate action goals. Their collaboration with the private sector and CSOs has the potential to drive positive change at the grassroots level', he concluded.

As a way forward, CSOs agreed to create a WhatsApp platform for regular and continuous discussions on the above issues.

East Africa is endowed with resources capable of generating vast amounts of renewable energy, such as wind, hydro and solar power, thus making it a key area of interest in the region. Despite solar irradiation levels estimated to be 1500 - 3000 kWh/m²/year, over 140 million people in the region are still without access to energy according to Falchetta et al., (2020). All EAC member states have committed to increase their share of RE in their energy mix to mitigate climate change and achieve sustainable development. To achieve these commitments, efforts for promoting RE transboundary trade should be increased by for instance reducing taxes, bottlenecks and bureaucracy at the borders.

INFORSE East Africa to Highlight 100% Renewables for East Africa and Local Climate Solutions at the UN Climate Session in Bonn



The aim of the intersessional sessions is to prepare for the next COP in Dubai in December 2023. The "SB58" conference will take place from 5 to 15 June in Bonn at the UNFCCC headquarters.

According to IISD, this event represents the last big milestone in climate negotiations before the culmination of the first Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement at COP 28 in Dubai.

The Bonn talks are taking place against the backdrop of climate extremes across the globe. For example, scorching heat wave across many Asia, Africa and Europe, in part, global heating. In the horn of substantial harvest failure, poor decreased surface water leaving 4.35 million people in (NDMA, 2022). At least 180,000 Sudan crossed into the drought-Ethiopia (UNHCR).

On Thursday June 8, 2023 from 5:45 to 7:00 pm EAT, join the SB58 side event on 100% Renewables, Local Climate Solutions in East Africa, South Asia organized by SusWatch, INSEDA and the Nordic Folkecenter for Renewable Energy

parts of the world, including from Africa, drought has led to pasture conditions, livestock losses, availability and human conflicts, need of humanitarian assistance refugees from Somalia and South stricken areas of Kenya and

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) notes that, “global temperatures are likely to surge to record levels in the next five years, fuelled by heat-trapping greenhouse gases and a naturally occurring El Niño event”.

Organization (WMO) notes that,

Climate action demands more ambition, financial resources and commitment from all the actors. East Africa. Despite solar irradiation levels estimated to be 1500 - 3000 kWh/m²/year, over 140 million people in the region are still without access to energy according to Falchetta et al., (2020). It is against this background that the SusWatch Kenya, Integrated Sustainable Energy and Ecological Development Association (INSEDA) and the Nordic Folkecenter for Renewable Energy, are organizing a side event on *Thursday June 8, 2023 from 17:45 to 19:00 Hours (EAT)*, titled: *100% Renewables and Local solutions in East Africa, South Asia*. This is based on recently on the Reports on 100% Renewable energy scenario and plan by 2050 in Kenya and Uganda, and the online databases on sustainable solutions in East Africa and South Asia

Kenya’s 100% Renewable Energy and Scenario Plan focuses on how to supply the energy for the country’s development with renewable energy and how to increase energy use with modern, energy efficient technologies. The report also includes a business-as-usual scenario for how Kenya might develop without focus on renewable energy. A comparison of the cost of energy supply of the two scenarios shows an economic benefit of the renewable energy scenario. Uganda’s 100% Renewable Energy Scenario and Plan highlights the urgent need to address affordability of electricity connections, internal wiring and tariffs. In addition, it calls for models for more uptake of clean cooking technologies and options like solar home systems, LPG, biogas and improved cook stoves, for lighting, heating and clean cooking for residential/institutional users. The Catalogue of Local Sustainable Solutions – East Africa with over 80 cases (on cooking, cooking fuels, light, electricity, water, gorwing food and oils, transport, solar, heat and others, will be presented as well.

South Asia’s Eco-Village Development Concept (EVD) concept, which is more than a collection of sustainable Solutions will be presented. It emphasizes planning right for solutions for each area and each village, to be chosen according to climate, livelihood, and other issues; Local ownership of development model, pace and scale.; building capacity of community to design, implement, and maintain the solutions including establishing finance mechanisms such as self-help groups and micro-finance for long-term sustainability. **Join the Side event via Facebook event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/3605276673049109> or on the UN live link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lNvoChyS5c>**