



CO-OPERATION THAT COUNTS



STATEMENT

BY

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COMMISSION**

AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARIAN COLLOQUIUM

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- Your Excellencies,
 - The Right Honourable Speaker of Parliament of the Republic of Uganda
 - Honourable Minister of State for Environment and Chair of the Opening Session
 - The Head of Delegation of the European Union to Uganda
 - The Director for Africa Region at the United Nations Environment Programme
 - Honorable Members of Parliament,
 - Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure and an honour to be associated with this important event. First and foremost, I would like to convey the best wishes of the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, H. E. Dr. Jean Ping, to you, Rt. Hon. Speaker of the National Assembly of Uganda and through her to the entire Government and People of Uganda. I also wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Commission of the African Union to express deep appreciation to the European Union for supporting, among other programs, the ACP-Capacity Building Project on Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements (commonly referred to as the MEAs Project) and the African Monitoring of the Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD) Programme, both programmes coordinated at continental level by my Department, Rural Economy and Agriculture. My gratitude and appreciation further go to the United Nations Environment Program for providing technical assistance and oversight to the MEAs

Project. I wish to acknowledge the presence of all you eminent personalities; your coming here today is eloquent testimony of the importance you attach to this Colloquium and an indication of your commitment to the noble cause of environmental sustainability and poverty reduction in Africa.

At this juncture, I wish to thank in a special way the Speaker and your team for your collaboration with us. I also wish to salute the Government of Uganda for giving equal opportunity to people who are capable. I applaud your presence and thank you for the great work and also for having successfully hosted the Inter-parliamentary Union Conference recently.

As you are aware, environmental concerns and disasters have emerged since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro as the most serious threats to the existence of humanity. This is more so in Africa, a continent identified as the most vulnerable, because of its low levels of economic development, awareness and capacities. Africa is most vulnerable and yet least responsible for this. We, therefore, have to put in more. For Africa, failure to address environmental disasters will result in dire consequences both in terms of socio-economic development and human health. Impacts of climate change and desertification are creating additional demands on Africa's challenged economies, and draining our limited resources. Many countries in Africa will not present a favorable picture at Rio +20 because they will not have met the targets and goals set by the international community. For Africa, we have a Consensus Statement which has emerged from a progressive consultative process. I would like to applaud UNEP for supporting and working with Africa. We would like the world to support Africa's common position.

Your Excellencies, Honorable Members of Parliament, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

In response to the need to address these disasters, the international community has put in place various conventions and agreements. For example, the problems of climate change are being dealt with by the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol, those of desertification by the UNCCD, those of biodiversity by the Convention on Biodiversity and its Nagoya Protocol, those of pollution and hazardous waste by the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. At the continental level we have the **Bamako** Convention on the ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Waste, **Maputo** Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources , **Abidjan** Convention for Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region, and the **Nairobi** Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region. This is to name but a few. Most African countries are signatories to the international conventions. We would like countries to be signatories and, therefore your presence here is very important. Despite the fact that continental conventions have been established to offer Africa the opportunity to address specific regional and sub regional needs to address environmental issues, most African countries have still not ratified them or adopted protocols related to them. One such example is the Maputo Convention that addresses a continent-wide spectrum of issues ranging from sustainable management of land and soil, water, air and biological resources, and seeks to integrate conservation and better environmental management strategies into social and economic development aspirations

of Africans. The African Union Commission and partners consider awareness creation as key to triggering the ratification and adoption of these Conventions. Hence, the convening of this important Colloquium of AU Parliamentarians. Mechanisms are required to be established at national and regional levels to educate and raise awareness at all levels on the importance of MEAs, particularly the regional (continental) MEAs and their links to developmental and poverty reduction issues. I am sure you will agree with me that it is also important to sensitise all stakeholders, particularly policy and decision makers on the importance of ratifying and implementing the continental conventions. These and other conventions important to Africa need to be mainstreamed into developmental plans and policies by policy makers. I hope that there will be more Parliamentarians from Uganda as it is the host country, so that we can hear about your environmental policies and programmes. Mainstreaming and implementing MEAs have been recognized as some of the priority challenges to meet sustainable development targets on the continent, and we count on you, Honourable Legislators, in our pursuit to overcome these challenges.

Your Excellencies, Honorable Members of Parliament, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this juncture, I wish to inform you that the AUC in collaboration with partners such as the UNECA, UNEP, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), is implementing various programs geared towards the promotion of environmental sustainability on the continent. We will have the opportunity to go through this during the course of these three coming days.

I believe that this Colloquium is apt and timely in the sense that we are all preparing for Rio+ 20 which will take place next week and this forum will serve as an opportunity to take stock together of our achievements and to be reminded of our shortcomings and gaps. The African Union Commission's Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture which I head, and in collaboration with partners, particularly the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), is working diligently to ensure that Africa's representation at Rio+20 is adequate and meaningful. We have done as much as possible to ensure adequate preparations for Rio+20.

We look forward to seeing this colloquium as very participatory, lively and constructive. We expect ideas to be exchanged on approaches to sustainable development in general and MEAs implementation, in particular.

Your Excellencies, Honorable Members of Parliament, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen I commend the AUC/EC/UNEP/RECs partnership and I can assure you of many other initiatives in future where this partnership would be made visible.

Before I conclude, I would like to recognize Helen the Assistant Secretary general of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) with whom we work closely on issues of weather, environment and climate change and she will be sharing with you her perspectives.

Finally, I look forward to productive outcomes of this Colloquium and I thank you all for your attention!