

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NIGERIAN MAJOR GROUPS ON RIO + 20 AT A ONE DAY WORKSHOP HELD ON THE 6TH SEPTEMBER 2011, BOLTON WHITE HOTEL, ABUJA, NIGERIA

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE WORKSHOP

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) is being organized in pursuance of General Assembly Resolution 64/236 (A/RES/64/236). The Conference will take place in Brazil on 4-6 June 2012 to mark the 20th anniversary of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in Rio de Janeiro, and the 10th anniversary of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg.

In order to ensure high quality inputs to the Conference, the Second Committee of the General Assembly called for efficient and effective preparations at the local, national, regional and international levels by Governments and the United Nations system and encouraged the active participation of all major groups at all stages of the preparatory process.

Against this background, Women Environmental Programme in Partnership with Clean Energy and Safe Environment Initiative, International Center for Energy, Environment and Development, Friends of the Earth, Nigeria/Environmental Rights Action and the Nigerian Climate Action Network organized a One Day National Consultative Workshop of the Nigeria Major Groups at Bolton White Hotel, Abuja on the 6th of September, 2011. The consultative workshop aimed at creating awareness and soliciting inputs and contributions for inclusion in a compilation document of the Nigerian government serving as basis for the preparation of zero draft of the conference outcome document.

The workshop drew over 70 participants from across the major groups which consisted of business and industry, children and youth, farmers, civil society organizations, farmers, local authorities, indigenous people, women, the scientific and technological community and trade unions, government representatives, international non-governmental organizations, donor agencies and the diplomatic missions in Nigeria.

2.0 TECHNICAL AND PLENARY SESSIONS

The workshop plenary sessions, covered a broad spectrum of issues related to Rio+20, with presentations made by renowned and professionals on different thematic areas such as; Achieving Sustainable Development in Nigeria Rio+20 years by Ambassador Adamu Emozozo, Director with the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Green economy and environmental governance, the Nigerian perspective's- Professor Chinedum Nwajuiba, Synergies between the Rio conventions: Assessing Implementation-Huzi Mshelia, Climate Change and the success of Rio+20- Mr. Nnimmo Bassey, New and Emerging issues- the Energy Crisis- Mr. Ewa Eleri and Gender Perspectives in the Green Economy and the Poverty Eradication in Nigeria by Ms. Lesley Agams.

During the plenary, participants deliberated and took stock of the alarming state of the environment, poverty and inequalities that exist in Nigeria and expressed its disappointment with the widely perceived failure of Nigerian government to live up to the commitments taken at the 1992 Rio Conference. They also noted the new and emerging threats to the environment and people, such as the global warming, energy crisis, threatening food security, water and sanitation, technological innovation as “green economy” which could cause irreparable damage to nature and human health, as well as create new sources of poverty and inequalities.

Participants noted that the concept of green economy is characterized by widespread inequalities and which are viewed as inefficient, unsustainable and inequitable with economic policies that advance rather than promote the concept of sustainable development and therefore agreed that there is the need for the concept of the green economy to be properly understood based on our national circumstances, so that it does not cause dislocation or shock to the national economy.

One of the major outcomes of the Nigerian Major Groups recommendation is that the concept of “green economy” should not replace “sustainable development” and advocated for social equity, economic sufficiency as a framework within which to pursue more sustainable production and consumption patterns.

On the institutional framework, the group noted the failure of global environmental governance to push ideals of the original Rio for sustainable development. The group advocated a coordinating mechanism and parallel institutions at the national level, empowered to pursue system-wide policy coherence, accountable and truly participatory decision-making processes.

Some of the other recommendations include;

1. Participants argued that creating a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication will need to be built through the bottom up approach, responding to national and local priorities and challenges and therefore called on government to ensure that policy formulations are based on the use of bottom up approach involving all critical stakeholders especially women and youths as well as community participation.

2. The UN estimates that approximately 70% of the 1.3 billion people living on less than one dollar a day are women, and these figures are rising with current environmental and climatic changes resulting into food crisis, flooding, famine etc in Africa. We need an economy that provides incentives for zero-waste, low-carbon economies that enhance and restore the natural environment, thus providing new green livelihoods, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for women as well as men.

3. Food and Agriculture: Push for ecological, non-chemical the implementation of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) report and demand for follow-up process to ensure a rethink of the model of industrial agriculture. This will involve policy work up to and beyond Rio+20. The IAASTD clearly showed that genetic engineering will not occupy a significant niche in feeding the world in the years to come and that effort should be focused on enabling small scale family farming. This is a clear way for securing livelihoods in Nigeria where the majority of our people are small-scale farmers, fishermen or pastoralists.

4. Gender sensitive policies can best be achieved through gender mainstreaming; an approach which ensures that concerns and needs of both men and women are considered in all planning and policy-making is critical. Therefore, government officials and staff members need targeted training and capacity building workshops to raise their awareness of gender disparities and discrimination against women.

5. Nigeria is naturally endowed with human and natural resources, there is ample evidence that small businesses, with its resources and capabilities, can play a vital role in helping achieve the goals related to sustained economic growth in an environmentally and socially responsible manner, and therefore call on government to create an enabling environment (energy, security etc.), where small scale businesses can thrive.

6. The private sector can play a key role in achieving the goals of sustainable development, especially in poverty reduction. Most of the people in Nigeria work in the private sector, either as self-employed, small entrepreneurs, farmers, small and medium size enterprises, employees of larger corporation etc. They generate employment, goods, food and most of the items and services that people use every day. The participants therefore call on government to create an enabling environment for the private sector to be engaged to fill the implementation gaps that have limited achievements of the goals of sustainable development and to address the new and emerging challenges.

7. The Nigerian participation in Rio +20 is critical as a leader and largest country on the African continent, therefore the workshop participants called on the Nigerian government to make its positions available to the major groups so that inputs can be made to enrich it.

8. The nine major groups needs to have a more and better coordinated networking, advocacy and sensitization mechanisms involving governments and other stakeholders in the preparation for Rio +20 and implementation of the outcomes of Rio conference is imperative and therefore called for the establishment of a national coordinating council comprising of all the major groups and government representatives.

9. The participants called on the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Jonathan Ebele Goodluck for the signing into law the National Climate Change Commission bill.

10. The need for government, ministries, department and agencies (MDAs) to create an enabling environment framework that are critical to effective and successful implementation of sustainability policies and conventions at national level.

11. The participation and involvement of youths, the disabled, aged, physically challenge in environmental policies/ decision making issues, participation and financing of these category of persons to programs and events.

12. The government of Nigeria should make adequate budgetary provision for the major group's participation at the Rio + 20 and the implementation of its outcome.

Signed for and on behalf of the Nigerian Major Groups

1. Priscilla M Achakpa- Women Environmental Programme
2. Huzi Mshelia Clean Energy and Safe Environment Initiative
3. Ewa Eleri- International Center for Energy, Environment and Development/Nigerian Climate Action Network
4. Nnimmo Bassey- Friends of the Earth, Nigeria/Environmental Rights Action



Group Picture of Participants



Mr. George Akor Programmes' Manager representing Executive Director Ms. Priscilla Achakpa.

