

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE 2011

Press Release

The College of Environmental Resources Management of the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (UNAAB), held an Environmental Management Conference between September 12 and 15, 2011. The theme of the conference, "Environmental Management in Coastal and Wetland Areas of Nigeria", drew participants from Universities and Research Institutes from Nigeria and abroad; stakeholders from Federal and State Ministries and Agencies were equally present. The sub-themes of the conference included physical development and biodiversity; flood and erosion problems and mitigation; waste management and health implications; environmental policy, legislation and implementation; land degradation, water and air pollution (e.g. acid rain, coastal subsidence, and seawater intrusion); climate change, human responses and adaptation; environmental, socio-economic, health impact assessment; coastal mining and potential hazards.

In his opening remarks, the Vice chancellor of the institution, Professor Oluwafemi Olaiya Balogun, made reference to the recent reports of flooding in Lagos, Abeokuta and Ibadan, which were due largely to reclamation of coastal areas, solid waste dumps into water channels, absence of canals and faulty urban planning. He also noted that problems of industrial and domestic pollution of surface and groundwater, land degradation, loss of biodiversity, air and noise pollution, are all very prominent in our environment.

The keynote address was delivered by Prof Bola Okuneye (UNAAB), who prescribed the adoption of SMART model to arrest the degradation of the coastal and wetland environments in Nigeria. Scholarly papers presented at the Conference reported on the current status of the environment and its challenges in Nigeria, highlighting the fact that vast areas of the country are being subjected to one form of environmental degradation or the other - from flooding, effects of oil exploitation, surface and groundwater pollution in the southern areas, to deforestation, over-grazing and erosion problems in the north. Increase in population and accelerated urbanization of cities have made severe flooding a perennial occurrence in the south, while increased rates of erosion are gradually silting up dams and reservoirs everywhere, thereby reducing their efficiency and shortening their life-span. Also of note is the wanton disregard for established land-use patterns, leading to loss of fertile lands and wetlands to urbanization, particularly in the south. There were indications that most rivers and streams are polluted due to frequent discharges of domestic and industrial wastes, and since there are hydraulic connections between surface and sub-surface waters, shallow ground waters (between 0 and 3m) are no longer safe for drinking in most parts of the country.

Some of the papers presented at the conference have been selected for publication in a special edition of Africa Geoscience Review, Paris, France, - a co-sponsor of the conference- whose Editor-in-Chief, Professor Cornelius Kogbe, delivered a lead paper in which he emphasised the need for environmental monitoring and performance assessment in the country; these should focus on

1. detecting short and long term environmental trends,

2. recognising changes and analysing causes,
3. improving the monitoring system after analysing environmental trends within specific periods, and
4. measuring impacts and comparing them with predictions.

In a communiqué signed by the Chairman, Local Organizing Committee, Professor Olasumbo Martins (UNAAB), and the Chairman, Technical Sub-committee, Dr. E. A. Meshida (UNILAG), the following recommendations were made:

1. Experts in environmental and urban development should generate and make use of appropriate maps in developmental projects of fragile environments like the coastal and wetland areas;
2. Reclamation and regeneration of coastal and wetland areas of Nigeria;
3. Promotion of ecotourism to boost the economy of the country;
4. The government should be proactive in providing information on natural disasters like flood, seismic and volcanic activities by providing adequate number of seismic monitoring and hydrometeorological stations for sustainable monitoring and forecasting of natural hazards;
5. Enforcement of environmental policies to curb dumping of solid wastes and discharge of industrial effluents into the natural ecosystems by the advocate of polluter-pays policy;
6. The need to control the increasing encroachment of farming and building activities around the wetland to avoid soil erosion, removal of the vegetation and degradation of the ecosystem ;
7. Development of a mandatory localized sustainability reporting framework for deforestation, and land degradation due to oil and gas exploitation in line with international best practices;
8. Observation of high degree of surface water and shallow groundwater pollution calls for immediate action with respect to governmental operation of regulatory laws in respective local government areas in the country;
9. The inability of surface water development alone to satisfy the future water demand of water users was recognised. To reduce unmet demand, waste water treatment, introduction of water meters to check wastage, building of new dams or increasing the capacities of existing ones, groundwater development, information dissemination and development of manpower in the field of water resources are recommended.

These recommendations are specifically made in good faith for the attention of the relevant arms of government whom we consider as the direct stakeholders.



Prof. O. Martins
Chairman, Local Organising Committee



The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Oluwafemi Olaiya Balogun, declaring the Conference opened



Group Photograph of Conference Participants



The Publisher, Africa Geosciences Review, Prof. Cornelius Kogbe and co-sponsor of the Conference discussing with the Director of Public Relations, Mr Somoye, at the Conference