

A LEAD PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ON UNITED NATIONS URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL ACCORD (UEAs): PLANNING FOR THE GREEN CITIES

By

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The Roundtable Discussion on United Nations Urban Environmental Accords (UEAs), in commemoration of 2005 World Environment Day Celebration – Organised by Development Initiatives Network (DIN) in Lagos, Nigeria.

PREAMBLE: On the 5th of June 2005 during the commemoration of the world Environment Day celebration, Mayors of cities around the globe gathered in San Francisco USA to write a chapter in history of global cooperation. They recognized that majority of planet's population now lives in cities, and as usual, the continued urbanization will lead to a new set of environmental challenges and opportunities. The mayors also acknowledged the importance of the obligations and spirit of the 1972 Stockholm conference on the Human Environment, the 1992 Rio Earth Summit (UNCED), the 1996 Istanbul conference on Human Settlement, the year 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. While recalling that 50 world leaders gathered in San Francisco in 1945 to sign the charter of the United Nations.

The mayors world over present (I am not sure if any mayor in Nigeria attended the San Francisco meeting) at San Francisco on the 5th of June 2005, therefore resolved to promote collaborative platform and also build an ecologically sustainable, economically dynamic and socially equitable future for their urban citizens, and also called to action their fellow mayors around the world to sign the Urban Environmental Accords and collaborate with them to implement the 21 Action Accords.

This Initiative by DIN in Lagos, Nigeria today is not a misplaced priority, because most of the Environmental problems identified by the Mayors which the implementation of the 21 Action Accords seek to remedy are presently facing Lagos State, which happens to be the commercial nerve center of the country and the entire West African Sub-region, the state is the smallest in size with a land area of 3,600 square Km, it has an approximated population of about 15 million people. The state presently has a very high population density of over 4,000 persons per square kilometer. According to United Nations' estimation by 2015; going by 6% growth rate, Lagos will be the 3rd largest mega city in the whole wide world.

I therefore commend DIN for this very important initiative, I hope that donor agencies and Foundations will continue to fund projects like this, that can bring about sustainability of clean healthy and safe environment, foster vibrant economic dynamism, promote social equity and protect the planet's natural system.

I am to lead discussions on 6 vital Action Accords, which are broadly categorized under two major topics namely: (i) waste reduction and (ii) Environmental Health.

The above topical issues are to be looked into through the following:

- i. The relevance of the allocated actions in the citywide (urban) setting in Nigeria
- ii. Possible strategies and key actions for local implementation
- iii. Perceived constraints or obstacles to bringing about positive change within the Accords planning framework of 7 years.

WASTE REDUCTION: This is one of the components of Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM), it is also called waste prevention or source reduction, as a matter of fact, it is adjudged to be the best form of waste management, (as they say, prevention is better & cheaper than treatment/cure). Waste prevention as the name implies seeks to prevent waste from being generated at all. The strategies for this include using less materials, it can as simple as switching from disposable to reusable products, or as complex as redesigning a product to use fewer raw materials or to last longer. It helps reduce handling, treatment and disposal cost, protect the environment, and also prevent the formation of Greenhouse gasses (GHGs) like methane, carbon dioxide etc.

Lastly, waste reductions also include waste recycling activities and composting. **Recycling** is the conversion of inorganic waste materials into valuable raw materials that can used in several other applications for either industrial or personal consumption. On the other hand **Composting** is the conversion of organic of organic waste materials into valuable soil conditioner/fertilizer for agricultural usage.

THE RELEVANCE OF WASTE REDUCTION (ACTIONS 4-6) IN URBAN SETTING IN NIGERIA

1. The scenario described of Lagos state in the preamble of this paper/discussion of high population density (over 4,000 persons/Km²) which is typical of most urban cities in Nigeria, makes waste reduction very relevant in Nigeria cities today because of land constrains for landfills construction.
2. High population in the cities also brings about high generation of waste in the urban cities. The range of waste weight generated per person per day is usually between 0.25 and 1Kg.
3. High industrial activities also bring about very high generation of industrial/commercial waste.

4. The inability of Government owed agencies and some contractors to adequately and effectively manage the overwhelming waste being generated in most of the Nigerian cities made it very important to implement programmes/policies that support **Zero Waste Initiatives** as being proposed by the Action Accords.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES & KEY ACTIONS FOR LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION OF WASTE REDUCTION

- ❖ Review of the Existing System - How is waste currently managed? Is there any waste reduction policy/programme? Are all the identified stakeholders carried along?
- ❖ Review of the Existing laws and, or regulations on waste management – Are the existing National, State and Local regulations adequate for waste reduction practice?
- ❖ Organise Decision-making Framework - Designate one agency to oversee waste reduction programmes of Government to avoid overlapping and confusion among various government agencies.
- ❖ Massive and sustained public enlightenment & education on the programme's objectives through Radio, Television, Print Media, Town Hall meetings, Motorised P.A campaigns etc.
- ❖ Government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and public collaboration on the projects.
- ❖ Government should support programme that can achieve the set objectives like:
 - i. Source separation of waste.
 - ii. Buy Back Programmes.
 - iii. Wastewise
 - iv. Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) programme. Our own Polluter Pay Principle (PPP).
 - v. Funding/establishment of waste reduction and recycling demonstration centres.
- ❖ Ultimately, NGOs in Nigeria should take the bull by the horn, by championing advocacy programmes on waste reduction, recycling and composting as it is being done in the Developed countries, including Egypt in Africa.
- ❖ NGOs in collaboration with funding agencies and Foundations should also embark on the establishment and running of Demonstration recycling and composting centres that are environmental and user-friendly.

PERCEIVED CONSTRAINTS/OBSTACLES OF ACHIEVING THE GOALS WITHIN THE ACCORD PLANING FRAMEWORK OF 7 YEARS.

- Lack of political will on the part of Government.
- Funding.
- Level of Education/Illiteracy.
- Instability in government which leads to inconsistency in waste management policies.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: Implies a healthy or otherwise condition of the mind or body caused by the effect of the immediate environment. These effects or factors could be natural e.g cold, excessive heat etc, or man-made like air pollution, water pollution and other human activities that alter the natural eco balance.

Most ill-health conditions are direct consequences of human exploration of the planet earth – the Environment. For instance urbanization and industrialization brings about serious industrial pollution through the generation of Greenhouse Gasses (GHGs) like **carbon dioxide**, which is released to the atmosphere when solid, fossil fuel (oil, natural gas and coal) wood and wood products are burned.

Methane – is emitted during the production and transportation of coal, natural gas and oil, the decomposition of organic waste in municipal solid waste landfills. **Nitrous Oxide** – is emitted during agricultural and industrial activities as well as during the combustion of solid waste and fossil fuel. Other greenhouse gasses (GHGs) that are not naturally occurring include byproducts of foam and asbestos production, refrigeration and air conditioning gasses that are called **chlorofluorocarbons** (CFCs), as well as **hydro fluorocarbons** (HCFs) and **per fluorocarbons** (PHCs) generated by industrial processes.

Each GHGs differs in it's ability to trap heat in the atmosphere. It is pertinent to mention here that some products when they go through different processes generate air borne cancerous toxic fumes such as dioxins and furans and a range of other dangerous air pollutants which causes variety of human health problems like cancer, immune and reproductive system defects, spontaneous abortions, respiratory diseases, diabetes and hormone disruption etc.

Some of these gasses also cause great damage to the ozone layer too, and I am sure you all know the implications of that.

THE RELEVANCE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH (ACTIONS 16-18) IN URBAN SETTING IN NIGERIA

As to whether the Accord Actions 16-18 are relevant to the urban setting in Nigeria, they are indeed very, very relevant; Lagos lagoon flooding is an example, more frequent and intense storms and over flowing of the Lagos beaches, the Eastern gully erosion problems, the Northern desertification problems, strange distribution of certain infectious disease etc are all testimonies

to the effect of these problems in Nigeria. The only Action that is of less relevant to the Nigerian situation is Action 17 of the Accords, which support locally grown organic foods. (*This is an African practice.*)

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES & KEY ACTIONS FOR LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

- ❖ Public enlightenment education and awareness programme aimed at sensitizing the general public on Environmental health issues.
- ❖ Review and strengthen the laws on the usage and production of certain products, chemicals and compounds that poses great risk to human health like gas flaring, ban on importation of used air conditioners and refrigerators, with CFCs, HFCs and PFCs.
- ❖ Outright ban on the incineration (burning) of plastic products/waste which is capable of producing dangerous air pollutant that causes variety human ill-health.
- ❖ Encouragement of the establishment of plastic recycling centres in the country.
- ❖ Establishment or re-invigoration of the agencies for policy implementation, monitoring, compliance and enforcement purposes.
- ❖ Banning vehicles with high emissions.
- ❖ Government in collaboration with NGOs should establish incentive funds to encourage companies and individuals to either change their production line or way of life that constitute environmental ill-health to new technologies that are pollution free.

PERCEIVED CONSTRAINTS/OBSTACLES OF ACHIEVING THE GOALS WITHIN THE ACCORD PLANINIG FRAMEWORK OF 7 YEARS.

The perceived constrains and obstacle of achieving the goals within the Accord planning framework of 7 years for Environmental Health are the same one highlighted under Action 4-6 of waste reduction.