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UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

Integrative Highland to Ocean (H2O) Action for Disappearing Deltas: Towards a UN Convention on Conserving River Deltas

March 23, 2023; 12:30 pm – 13:45pm, United Nations (UN)
Headquarter, Side Event Room A

Organized by: African Centre for Climate Actions and Rural Development Initiative in collaboration with Nigeria's Bayelsa State Government, the Institute for Environmental Diplomacy and Security at the University of Vermont, the Centre for Capacity Building at the University of Colorado, Transboundary Water In-Cooperation Network (TWIN), Akassa Development Foundation, Water Environment Forum Pakistan, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam, Centre for Environment and Sustainable Livelihood projects (CESLP), Institute of Environmental Diplomacy and Security (IEDS)

Background on the event

The growing impact of climate change on water resources will continue to top global discussion – as the main driver and cause of most water-related challenges across the globe leading to human migration especially among young people, to poverty, hunger, and communal conflicts as well as to new disease outbreaks. The foregoing has serious implications for the future peaceful coexistence of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), South Asian and South-East Asian countries with shared transboundary water resources. Sadly, indigenous peoples and local communities especially women, young people, and the elderly – remain the most vulnerable and mostly affected by these impacts. Conservation of inland and ocean facing deltas is critical to offsetting the deadly impacts of worsening climate crises and saving the lives of millions of vulnerable people facing these crises. The displacement of ~33 million people in Indus, and ~ 1 million people in the Niger Delta region as well as livelihood losses is just a little foretaste of what is to come, if necessary immediate, midterm and long-term actions to build climate resilience at the regional and global scale is not implemented.

Water Action Agenda / commitment

We are hopeful this dialogue will help individual and regional governments and the United Nations (UN) to better understand the concerns of the highlands to lowlands watercourses (corridors) and river deltas' communities worldwide, to steer their interest on the need to scale-up climate ambitions, with a foreseeable UN recognition of the world's river deltas and other low-lying coastal areas through a convention or some sort of special recognition to be called "Deltas UNite".

Key Issues discussed

1. Understand the causes and consequences of global climate change on integrated water resources management.
2. Challenges, policy deficit and investment opportunities in the countries spanning transboundary Niger, Indus, and Mekong River deltas with a focus on Nigeria, Pakistan, and Vietnam
3. Policies, collaboration including academic and community support in integrated water resource protection and development.
4. Regional, continental, and global benefits from the conservation and protection of river deltas.
5. Identify areas for capacity building and science knowledge development for gathering social- scientific data and identifying community centric solutions.

Key recommendations for action

1. Promote environmental protection and sustainability of water resources.
2. Enhance indigenous knowledge and local people participation in water resources governance and data gathering.
3. Promote gender particularly young people and women in global water dialogue, planning and development.
4. Achieve regional to global collaboration for the protection of highlands to lowlands communities for the protection of river deltas.
5. United Nations recognition and designation of special status for deltas, globally or approval of a Convention for the Conservation of River Deltas UNCCRD).
6. Early warning systems should be provided within the Niger Delta area to intimate residents of imminent adverse effects of climate change.