

COMMUNIQUÉ

SEMINAR MARKING 2015 WORLD METEOROLOGICAL DAY IN GHANA

Accra 27, March 2015 – The John A. Kufuor Foundation in partnership with NYCOB Enterprise Consortium under the patronage of HE John Agyekum Kufuor, UN Special Envoy on Climate Change hosted a seminar to commemorate the 2015 World Meteorological Day on the theme; Climate Knowledge for Climate Action. The occasion which was chaired by Professor Alfred Oteng-Yeboah, Chairman of the Ghana National Biodiversity Committee and winner of the 2014 MIDORI Prize for biodiversity award, also witnessed the inauguration of a new market-based initiative for climate change adaptation and nature conservation, named the “Biodiversity, Ecosystem and Natural Capital Investment (BENCI) Programme”.

The five-year green investment programme will mobilize financial resources for the promotion of innovative indigenous green enterprises and biodiversity-based enterprises in Ghana and the West African sub-region against the backdrop of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (2011-2020) and the post MDG sustainable development agenda.

The event brought together key stakeholder from Government, UN agencies, Civil Society Organizations, Non Government Organizations, Business Associations, Press media, Banking Sector and Youth groups to reflect on the impact of climate change on biodiversity against the backdrop of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (UNDB 2011 -2020).

In a welcome address by Professor Baffour Agyeman-Duah, Chief Executive Officer of the John A. Kufuor Foundation, he reiterated the foundation’s commitment towards accelerating actions for climate change adaptation and mitigation especially in Africa. Professor Agyeman-Duah mentioned some of the positive actions being taken by the Foundation to address climate change which included promoting climate smart agricultural practices, supporting renewable energy projects, providing clean drinking water and investing in biodiversity conservation.

Dr. William Derban, the Director for Financial Inclusion at the Fidelity Bank Ghana Ltd, who presented the keynote address stated that sharing climate knowledge among all stakeholders cannot be over emphasized especially at this time when there is increasing global demand for raw materials, energy and infrastructural development in Africa. He indicated that these demands are obviously putting pressure on natural capital, ecosystems, biodiversity resources and forest covers, resulting in land degradation, water, soil, and air pollutions, destruction of habitats and ecological systems and loss of biodiversity.

Dr. Derban reported that according to analysis from the New Climate Economy Project, the global economy will require a cumulative \$89 trillion of investment by 2030, with an incremental investment of \$14 trillion over that same time to achieve low-carbon growth. He pledged the commitment of Fidelity Bank Ghana Ltd in partnering the John A. Kufuor Foundation and NYCOB Enterprise Consortium in the establishment of a Biodiversity Enterprise Fund (BEF) and also supporting the BENCI Programme over the period of its implementation.

The inaugural speech for the launching of the BENCI programme was presented remotely by the Special Guest of Honor, former President John A. Kufuor, who is also chairman of the Foundation. He emphasized that the fight against climate change must be seen as a struggle for life. He entreated all to accept responsibility and play a role in the fight. He stressed the need for increased resource mobilization for investments in science and technology towards addressing climate change and called for more efforts towards the promotion of research, education and awareness among all stakeholders especially the uneducated in our societies about climate change including its causes and impact.

In launching the BENCI programme, the former President Kufuor used the occasion to call on members of the business community, civil society organizations, governments etc to support the initiative which his foundation is committed to sponsoring. This ended the first session of the program

The second section of the program focused on the theme; Creating practical ways that will help businesses contribute to the Aichi Biodiversity Strategic Goals and Targets. It started with the presentation on “Biodiversity Business” by Mr. Paul Peter Hammond, President of NYCOB Enterprise Consortium to justify the relevance for the deliberation.

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Mr. Hammond made reference to the fact that in 2006 parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted decision VIII/17 in Curitiba, Brazil to further engage the Private Sector and enlist businesses in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, which eventually resulted in the conception of “Biodiversity Business” which is defined as ‘commercial enterprise that generates profits via activities which conserve biodiversity, use biological resources sustainably, and share the benefits arising from this use equitably.

Mr. Hammond made reference to a 2011 Ecosystems Marketplace report which indicates a growing biodiversity market with a global annual market size of an estimated USD 2.4 - 4.0 billion at minimum and likely much more, as 80% of existing biodiversity compensatory mitigation programs are not transparent enough to estimate their market size. He opined that enlisting both the purchasing power of consumers, the productive capacity of businesses and re-orienting the economic incentives that drive private investment, production and consumption are key to making biodiversity conservation a viable business proposition in its own right.

A panel discussion on “Ghana and the Aichi Biodiversity Strategic Goals and Targets” featured Dr. Ameyaw Kwakye of the Forestry Commission; Mrs. Jewel Kudjawu of the Environmental Protection Agency; Dr. Baffour Awuah of the Ministry of Environment Science Technology and Innovation and Mr. Namho Ho of the United Nations Development Programme. They shared the efforts and contributions of their respective organizations to Ghana’s achievement of the UN targets on biodiversity by 2020.

In a lively questions and answers session, suggestions and recommendations were made by the participants to the panellists as to what strategies could be considered in engaging the business community in reducing Ghana’s biodiversity loss. It was agreed that stronger engagement was necessary with the private sector towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Strategic Goals and Targets.

In his closing remarks, Professor Alfred Oteng-Yeboah who chaired the seminar expressed satisfaction with the success of the event and commended the John A. Kufuor Foundation and NYCOB Enterprise Consortium for the initiative. He noted that the involvement of the banking sector and for that matter Fidelity Bank Ghana Ltd in biodiversity conservation efforts indicated a paradigm shift in Ghana’s approach to biodiversity conservation. Professor Oteng-Yeboah, who chairs the Ghana National Biodiversity Committee called for more of such platforms for idea generation that will help shape government’s policy on the environment. He reiterated the need to advance the “Biodiversity Business” concept in Ghana as a strategy for green economic growth and sustainable development in Ghana.

After the deliberations all participants visited the biodiversity enterprises exhibition stands which showcased some products of the exhibitors. The few exhibitors included the Ghana Mushroom Growers and Exporters Association of Ghana, the Ghana Flower Growers association, the Cocopeat Producers and Marketers Network and the Ghana Bamboo Bikes.