



ANNUAL REGIONAL PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY IN EASTERN AFRICA

CONCEPT

13th – 14th October 2009

**SPEKE RESORT MUNYONYO, KAMPALA,
UGANDA**

Background:

Environmental security is a term that can refer to the relative public safety from environmental dangers caused by natural or human processes due to ignorance, accident, mismanagement or design and originating within or across national borders. It thus incorporates a range of concerns which can be organized into three general categories to include; a) concerns about the adverse impact of human activities on the environment, b) concerns about the direct and indirect effects of various forms of environmental change (especially scarcity and degradation) on national and regional security and, c) concerns about the insecurity individuals and groups experience due to environmental change including water scarcity, air pollution and global warming.

Besides being crucial to our existence, the way we utilize our environment is also a determinant of several securities. These include food security issues, security from exposure to hazardous waste, contestations over limited natural resources, impact of climate change on livelihoods, deforestation, water scarcity, environmental crimes, loss of biodiversity and environmental degradation among others. Incidentally, these are the major underlying and multiplier causes of conflicts in the region.

The magnitude and diversity of these risks, associated with environmental security, could also trigger a sequence of cascading events, involving environmental degradation, economic decline, social unrest and political instability that could threaten human security and societal stability.

Environmental related insecurity and conflict:

Security of the environment is an important dimension of peace and human rights and is central to national, regional and global security issues. While the precise roles of the environment in peace, conflict, destabilization and human insecurity may differ from situation to situation, there are growing indications that it is increasingly an underlying cause of instability, conflict and unrest. This arises from the fact that environmental security comprises the dynamics and interconnections among the natural resource base, the social fabric of the state, and the economic engine for local, regional and global stability.

The relation of various aspects of environmental security to conflict can be summarized as follows:

- *Food security:* The notion of food security depends on four main factors: food availability; access to sufficient food; stability of food stocks; and utilization of food. Security of food is inextricably linked to the utilization of the environment and thus increased uncertainty about its supply resulting from disruption of agriculture (from tempering with the environment) will force communities to find alternative strategies. These strategies often clash with the needs of other communities also facing increased livelihood pressure thus leading to conflict.
- *Resource exploitation:* Conflicts may also emerge from situations of resource and environmental scarcity (overuse and depletion of resources), which are mediated and sometimes exacerbated by the social and economic repercussions of environmental

degradation. On the other hand, tensions and violence can also arise out of a context of contested resource wealth. This is only partially about access to and control over lucrative resources. Resource extraction often leads to severe environmental and other impacts on local communities. If the benefits and burdens of extractive projects such as oil production, mining, logging, and large-scale dam construction are distributed unequally, the result may be protracted conflict.

- *Climate change*: Climate change is becoming a focal point for security and conflict research and poses a challenge for the world's policymaking and governance structures. The magnitude and diversity of risks associated with global warming could trigger a sequence of cascading events, involving environmental degradation, economic decline, social unrest and political instability, which could threaten human security and societal stability and lead to violent conflict. In regions worst affected by climate change, conflicts may spread to neighbouring states, e.g. through refugee flows, ethnic links, environmental resource flows or arms exports. Such spillover effects can destabilize regions and expand the geographical extent of a crisis, overstressing global and regional governance structures.
- *Environmental crimes*: these crimes can be broadly defined as illegal acts which directly harm the environment and include: illegal trade in wildlife; smuggling of ozone-depleting substances (ODS); illicit trade in hazardous waste; illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing; and illegal logging. Perceived as 'victimless' and low on the priority list, such crimes often fail to prompt the required response from governments and the enforcement community. In reality, however, the impacts of these crimes affect all of society. For example, if the livelihood, well being and integrity of communities are compromised as a result of the crimes, then this could lead to prolonged periods of instability and mass suffering even short of armed violence. The task, then, is to enhance the understanding of the interactions and dynamics among different factors and the combinations that are likely to bring about destabilizing results.

Why a parliamentary regional meeting on environmental security?

There are several motives that should drive efforts to address issues related to environmental security in the region. First is the *need to maintain peace and security*. The link between environmental security and conflict is hard to ignore especially when viewed against the backdrop of the volatility of the region. If not promptly addressed, the effects of environmental insecurity could mean dire consequences for the region that is infamous for its inter and intra protracted conflicts.

Second is the *need to support sustainable development*. This is because, as a mutually reinforcing factor to environmental security, sustainable development ensures environmentally sound development that is economically, financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable. This will consequently reinforce a condition of environmental security in which social systems interact with ecological systems in sustainable ways, where all individuals have fair and

reasonable access to environmental goods, and mechanisms exist to address environmental crises and conflicts.

The above drivers to action on environmental security are mutually reinforcing in that, just as the misuse of environmental resources contributes to conflict, the sustainable use of natural resources contributes to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Third is *the need to engage the key actors who are responsible for legislating*. There are many actors, who, in their separate ways seek to promote security and peace. They include Government, civil society organizations, private sector, and community leaders among others. Within Government, Parliament remains a key pillar in promoting state and human security resulting from natural or man made causes. Parliamentarians, while undertaking their legislative, oversight and representative roles, constitute an effective means of governmental outreach to the people. They have a duty to explain government actions to the citizenry, and collect inputs from them to ensure that various policies enacted are targeted to respond to the needs of the people especially human security.

Their role on matters of security transcends beyond the traditional definition of ensuring provision of state security. In Essence, the role of MPs as people's servants addresses all the key aspects of human security. Therefore, the collective experience of regional MPs will be essential in mobilization of political good will and effective response mechanism from national and regional parliament as well as other actors to curb or mitigate the negative effect of environmental mismanagement. It will also aid in enacting legislation for environment protection as well as harmonization of environment policies and legislation.

Objectives:

The proposed meeting is therefore aimed at discussing some of the environmental security issues resulting from or exacerbated by among others protracted conflicts, environmental crimes and climate change impact. The specific objectives are:

1. Increase awareness of the environmental security concerns in the region and their link to conflict.
2. Provide an opportunity for experience sharing on environmental security related issues among lawmakers.
3. To address environmental security concerns in the region through enhanced collaboration between lawmakers and other stakeholders
4. Share EAPCCO/ ISS major findings of studies conducted in the region on the extent of environmental crimes
5. To foster solidarity among regional MPs as aimed at harmonizing policies and laws in the region

The Forum, hosted under the initiative of AMANI Forum, EAPCCO and ISS, will bring together Members of Parliament (MPs) from nine Eastern African countries and the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA). The countries are Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. The regional

approach has been informed by the trans-boundary nature of environmental security which therefore calls for a regional and multilateral approach so as to effectively deal with the ensuing challenges.

In addressing the above objectives therefore, the Forum will continue AMANI Forum's objective of fostering peace, EAPCCO's efforts to combat environmental crimes and ISS dialogue on the relationship between environment and human security.

Profile of the organizations:

The **Great Lakes Parliamentary Forum on Peace – AMANI Forum** is an initiative of African Parliamentarians in the Great Lakes Region which aims to eliminate armed conflict and promote peace and democratic governance through peaceful resolution of conflicts, both within countries and in the region as a whole. The **Institute for Security Studies (ISS)** Environmental Security Programme is geared towards addressing a wide range of issues including environmental crimes, climate change adaption, energy security, natural resource conflict and gender related issues in environmental and human security. The **Eastern African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (EAPCCO)** was founded as a regional practical response to the need to join police effort against transnational and organised crime. ISS and the EAPCCO are implementing the Environmental Crimes Project to address environmental crimes in the Eastern Africa region. The project is intended to improve the protection of Eastern African Flora, fauna and environment through among others, carrying out in-depth studies of the extent and nature of environmental crimes, and support implementation of existing environmental legislation and formulation of new legislation in the EAPCCO member states.