

## **THE ROLE OF THE IUBE: AFRICAN DIMENSION**

### **Tina Uwechue**

Vice-President  
United Nations Association  
Nigeria

### **Environmental Problems**

Africa's environment has been subjected to various forms of threats. There are dangerous chemicals in the air, pollution in the water and land, which result in the destruction of humanity and all that life depends upon.

In 1968, the UN General Assembly held a World Conference on human environment. The UN stressed the fact that all living and inanimate things are part of the single interdependent system and that man will have no place to turn to if he subjects his environment to careless or thoughtless abuse. Thus, the UN Agency on Environmental Protection has initiated steps to create awareness of the danger of a deteriorating environment and its relation to development. The Fifth Biopolitics International Organisation Conference is therefore extremely timely since our environment is facing serious threats of disintegration. Members of this gathering will be given the opportunity to deliberate on the bio-environment and work on the possibility of devising additional methods of integrating environmental concepts in University teaching, which will lead to the ultimate enhancement of bios. Members of the B.I.O. should focus on preservation and protection, especially today when it has become characteristic to pollute the land, water, and air and cause undesirable disturbance to the biosphere resulting in the destruction of our natural resources.

### **The Role of the International University for Bio-Environment (I.U.B.E.)**

Technology no doubt, has the power to provide a better future for humankind if the knowledge so acquired is given proper application. The International University for the Bio-Environment in this regard, at its formative stage, should set goals that will propagate the preservation and protection of the bio-environment using the technological capability available to it. The conception of the I.U.B.E. was based to a large extent on the fact that the B.I.O. goals would become more meaningful if the goals were geared to the benefit of humanity. In this regard, the I.U.B.E. would become a university of 'New Ideas', that would be charged with the function of propagating educational reforms leading to greater appreciation of bios. It is therefore of paramount importance that the operators of the I.U.B.E. should work in harmony in order to achieve the required objectives which, among other things include understanding, appreciating and preserving bios which is the basic link of humanity. The I.U.B.E. should be a university for international understanding which will ultimately lead to uniform global understanding of bios. One may imagine that there are many subjects relating to the environment at present but more comprehensive study is still needed on the bio-environment which will lead to greater appreciation of nature. Technological advancements geared towards destruction should be slowed down, so that preference can be given to such useful technology that will lead to the preservation of bios. The I.U.B.E. could serve as an international center for further research on bio-technology if adequate and proper learning systems are made available to meet the global demand.

### **Pollution**

Pollution has been a major detriment to the environment. The source of pollution in most African countries has been identified as domestic, industrial and agricultural. Polluted water contains bacteria viruses and other pathogenic organisms that can cause diseases. Toxic pollutants discharged by industries into the water can result in serious bios hazards. Polluted water is mostly felt in developing countries where one out of every two people drinks unsafe water. The Department of Human Ecology of the Vrije University, Brussels, has extensively introduced environmental subjects like ecotoxicology, and environmental genotoxicology into their curricula. Students of Human Ecology at the Vrije University would be exposed to the dangers posed to the environment by hazardous materials and perhaps the possible preventative knowledge of such pollutants and their effects on bios would form part of the study. In recent times, the University of Ankara, Turkey, has included Biopolitics in its University curricula. By this action, one can hopefully say that the beginning of the expansion of the Biopolitics International Organisation (B.I.O.) has commenced and with international cooperation, which Turkey has demonstrated, the goals of the B.I.O. would soon become a reality.

Air pollution causes acute respiratory diseases. From statistics of epidemio-logical studies, it is shown that there are high cases of respiratory infection and lung cancer in heavily populated urban dwellings. The I.U.B.E. information network can be used to propagate the adverse effect of over-population to bios with a view to creating awareness of the danger and bringing a solution for its improvement.

Industrial pollution has posed a big threat to the survival of humankind. In fact, an environmentalist was once quoted as saying that "there is no place on earth that is free from chemical pollution." He further stated that the world's atmosphere already contains 700 billion tons of carbon dioxide and with the yearly supply of an additional three billion tons, the earth's biosphere stands the risk of warming up considerably every year. The operators of the I.U.B.E. should not see only environmental problems common to Europe, but should also extend their vision globally with particular reference to developing countries.

### **International Cooperation**

The B.I.O. is already enjoying a membership of decision-makers from many parts of the world. Greater ties of understanding should be established between the different members for the uplifting of the B.I.O. goals. The UN Agencies like UNESCO, UNCED, and UNDP should be used to attain some minimal balance of environmental development among the various countries of the world, while the I.U.B.E. can serve as a research center that will feed the UN agencies on bio-environmental issues. When the I.U.B.E. is fully established, it will be the first university of its kind, and through international cooperation, communication with universities from different parts of the world would be maintained for the dissemination of the bio-syllabus. When this level of understanding is achieved, the youth of tomorrow would be exposed to greater knowledge about the environment, such as the consequences of environmental disorder and more especially, of the bio-environment.

The I.U.B.E., as an international research center, should serve as a link with universities worldwide in order to achieve a minimum but uniform level of understanding of the bio-environment. Through international co-operation, multi-disciplinary bios subjects would evolve and would be integrated into the curricula of all universities. A close study of subjects offered at the Vrije University of Brussels and the University of Lagos in Nigeria, shows that environmental subjects are already being taught, but there is still the need to increase the existing efforts with emphasis on the bio-environment.

The above subjects notwithstanding, the I.U.B.E. can improve on the existing potentials through its educational reforms in order to safeguard the bio-environment and its sustainable development. Furthermore, the I.U.B.E. ultimately should co-operate with other university councils through the appropriate UN Agencies in order to design and restructure courses on the environment to reflect the importance and the preservation of the bio-environment.

#### **Courses Available, Vrije University, Brussels**

1. Biosphere structure and processes
2. General Oceanography
3. Water quality
4. Waste, water and treatment
5. Pollution: Problem solving strategies on environmental matters
6. International Environmental law

**Table 1**(Source: Department of Human Ecology, Faculty of Medicine, Vrije University)

#### **Courses Available, University of Lagos, Nigeria**

1. Environmental Science
2. Bio-geography
3. Hydrology, landscape, climatology
4. Geography
5. Water and drainage
6. Land law

**Table 2**(Source: Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Department of Architecture and Geography, University of Lagos)

### **References**

1. Working with Africa, UNA-UK.
2. Nature Periodical by the Nigerian Conservation Foundation.
3. Guideline for Admission to First Degree Courses in Nigerian Universities.
4. European Contribution to the Aims of the United Nations in the Nineties, WFUNA.

The principal Administrative Officer in the Federal Civil Service of Nigeria, **Justina Nkiru Uwechue** is a barrister-at-law of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. She is also Vice-President of the UN Association of Nigeria, a member of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, and an ex-member of the Board of Trustees of Southern Africa Relief Fund (SARF).