

## THE FUTURE OF BIOS - AFRICAN DIMENSION

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There is no doubt in my mind that bios (life) will have a better future in the next millennium when eminent people from various nations, drawn from every continent, have commenced action towards its protection and preservation. It all started in Athens. However, Africa is not left out of this struggle to protect bios, thanks to the United Nations and its agencies working in various parts of Africa. The various governments in Africa, as well as some voluntary groups have been making efforts towards the improvement of bios. The threat posed by desertification in some African countries cannot be overlooked, thus they have embarked on ways and means of checking this disaster in order to protect bios for the future. Pollution, which became an adversary due to industrialization, is still posing a threat to human life. One is inclined to say that the technology of handling industrial waste so that it will not affect the human and natural environment still needs to be perfected in order to ensure a healthier future for life.

### WILDLIFE

Most African countries have embarked on the preservation of wildlife by creating more game reserves and zoological gardens. Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, to mention just a few, have rich animal collections in their forest reserves. In Kenya, for instance, the Department of Wildlife Conservation and Management has made tremendous progress in the field of conservation and management of its wildlife resources in the last 20 years. Government policy has made it possible for a constant review of conservation options. The goal is to manage and conserve wildlife resources so as to yield the maximum in terms of cultural, scientific and economic gains which are incidental to wildlife conservation and management. Kenya has expanded its wildlife conservation so that about 74% of her total land surface has been used as National Parks and Forest Reserves. The expansion of the Game Reserves is intended to provide and protect the wildlife for future generations.

In Nigeria, a group known as the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF), has taken up the challenge with the aim of handing over to future generations a land that would be worth living in. The group helps the Nigerian government to monitor the environment and conserve natural resources by fighting deforestation and desertification, drought and flooding, soil erosion, illegal bush-burning, illegal hunting and poaching, waste of natural resources and pollution.

The NCF puts research workers in the field and makes an inventory of the natural resources. It assesses the priority areas for conservation and develops resources management programs. The Wildlife Conservation Society of Zambia also plays a tremendous role in the conservation of the natural resources of Zambia.

The Federal Military Government of Nigeria has embarked on some programs to preserve wildlife in Nigeria up to the year 2000 and beyond. The program includes the expansion of the various national parks, wetlands and forest reserves. It is considered that other unique and suitable ecological zones will be developed as national parks between now and the year 2000. The government has also embarked on the feasibility of multiplying wildlife for protein supplement so as to reduce the pressure on wildlife species. Such wildlife include guinea fowl, giant African snails (Archatina), crocodiles and various types of antelopes. There is also a legislation to protect endangered species. Plans are on the way to breed in captivity some of these species and to encourage their possible return to the wild. The National Wildlife Inventory will provide basic data and information on wildlife resources in Nigeria such as their occurrence, number, and location, as well as their utilization and contribution to the Nigerian economy.

### LEGAL PROVISIONS

Nigeria and most African countries have taken steps towards the preservation and protection of wildlife. By Decree No. 11 of 1974, Nigeria became a member of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Wild Species of Fauna and Flora. The decree aims at ensuring, through international cooperation, the protection of certain species of wild animals and plants against over-exploitation through trade. In 1977, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger signed an agreement on the joint regulation of fauna and flora in the Lake Chad Basin. In addition to the above, all member states of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) are required to observe Article 11 of the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources which requires the various African states to take necessary measures to conserve, utilize and develop soil, water, flora and fauna in accordance with scientific principles, and with due regard to the best interest of the people.

Article VIII of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora specifically provides for national legislation by all member states of the OAU to enforce the provisions of the above-mentioned convention. Thus, in Nigeria, there is the

Endangered Species-Control of International Trade and Traffic - Decree No. 11 of 1985. The decree prohibits the hunting, capture of and trading of animals ranging from insectivore, primate (chimps), rodent (squirrels), carnivore (lions) to artiodactyla (hippopotamus) and cetacea (whales). The government is committed to improving the existing infrastructure for preserving these animals until the year 2000 and beyond.

## **WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

Water is a basic necessity for life. Pure and drinkable water still eludes the Third World countries. Most African countries still find it difficult to make accurate assessment of water resources available in their countries. Nigeria has only reached the first stage of studies for the development of underground water resources. A National Hydrological Network Programme for data collection of the country's major river system, has commenced and it is hoped that this project will bring sufficient information and data for water resources development and conservation in Nigeria. When the above is achieved, it will decrease the number of deaths caused by water-borne diseases which occur through drinking impure water.

## **PROGRAMME FOR DESERTIFICATION PREVENTION**

Certain factors are responsible for desertification in Africa, such as deforestation for the purpose of agricultural development, collection of fuel wood, annual bush-burning, over-grazing, low rainfall, long periods of drought, improper land use coupled with poor land and water resource management. In Nigeria, the above problems are compounded by food shortage and lack of adequate water supply. The resultant effect of the above problems is that life itself remains under constant threat. The United Nations Sahelian Office (UNSC), the World Bank and the European Economic Community (EEC) have indicated interest in combating desertification through rural development activities in Nigeria. These activities range from the improvement of cooking stoves (to save on the use of fuel woods) to the production of shelterbelts, farm woodlots and trees on farm lands. Records show that over 3,680 hectares of plantation and woodlots have been established and about 24 boreholes have been sunk in the arid states of northern Nigeria for irrigation purposes.

## **POLLUTION**

Environmental pollution is now a common phenomenon in Africa, with dangerous chemicals in the air, pollution in water, etc.. By polluting the environment, man is destroying himself and all on which life depends. In 1968 the UN General Assembly held a world conference on the human environment. They stressed the fact that all living and inanimate things are part of a single interdependent system and 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 taken steps towards creating awareness of the danger of deteriorating environment and its relation to development. Pollution in water, air, earth, the undesirable disturbance of the ecological balance of the biosphere and the destruction of resources, are characteristic of our era.

In most African countries the main sources of water pollution have been identified as domestic, industrial and agricultural. The polluted water contains bacteria, viruses and other pathogenic organisms that can cause diseases. Water-borne diseases, which occur in most African countries, have been attributed to the pollution of water with human wastes. Toxic pollutants discharged by industry into the water courses can result in serious health hazards. Many lives have been lost as a result of diseases caused by pollution and a lot of money and other resources have been used in curing some of the diseases which result in economic draining of the society. Money which should have been used for development is diverted to the cause of fighting diseases. Aquatic lives are also threatened by the foul water containing these organic and inorganic pollutants.

Air pollution causes acute respiratory diseases. Statistics from epidemiological studies show that there are high cases of respiratory infections, and lung cancer in heavily polluted urban areas.

Industrial pollution is now a big threat to the survival of mankind because "there is nowhere on earth that is free from chemical pollution". This quote was made by Dr. Peter Raven, the Director of the Missouri Botanical Garden during a conference entitled "Agenda 2000 - Reasonable Goals" in Wingspread, Racine, Wisconsin, USA. According to Dr. Raven, the world's atmosphere already contains 700 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide and 3 billion additional tonnes of this harmful chemical is pumped into the atmosphere yearly. With this development, Dr. Raven said that the earth's biosphere stands the risk of warming up annually by about 5 degrees centigrade and of doubling the carbon content of the atmosphere by the year 2030.

Dr. Raven also said that the effect of polluted water is mostly felt in developing countries where one out of every two persons drinks unsafe water. The rapidly growing human population is consuming, co-opting or wasting a major proportion of the total biological productivity that comes to us from the sun. Up to a quarter of the total number of species of plants, animals and micro-organisms is likely to disappear forever by the early years of the next century. How do we reverse the situation?

## **WOMEN AND THE FUTURE OF BIOS**

Women should be seen as agents of this awareness. They should be helped, through education, to understand advantages of conserving our natural resources. From statistics produced by the UN, "women in Africa produce and prepare 80% of the continent's food and carry 90% of its

water. They provide basic health care inside and outside the home; they gather most of the fuel for stoves and fires and they have primary responsibility for the care of children." The future of bios would be greatly improved if women become active partners in the decision making organs of their various governments. Through participation, women would mobilize themselves to fight against a dirty environment by keeping their individual surroundings clean. They would also be shown the hygienic and safety advantage of using cooking stoves in order to reduce the production of carbon in the air, as well as reduce the depletion of the forests.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Biopolitics International Organisation (B.I.O.) should support the use of fossil fuel as a first step in controlling the excessive pollution of the atmosphere through holding seminars, symposiums and public lectures which will inform people of the hazards of air pollution.
2. B.I.O. should support the view of William Clerk, a Harvard University Environmental Researcher, for the need to establish a "planetary trust for the conservation of living resources with particular concern for endangered habitats and the preservation of bio-diversity."
3. The UN should be requested through the World Federation of United Nations Association (WFUNA) to increase its support of Africa by the construction of more artificial dams, polders and dykes at suitable sites in order to hold sufficient water to support seedling development for a reforestation program in Africa.
4. African countries should be advised, through a communique, to recruit and train forestry expansion workers who will train farmers on forestry matters in order to check desertification.
5. African countries should be advised through this medium to monitor the usage of the seedlings planted so as to achieve the required reforestation results.

In conclusion, it is necessary to observe the efforts so far made by some countries and voluntary groups in Africa towards the preservation of bios and urge them to intensify their activities.

Technology has opened avenues which, if properly used, will brighten the future of mankind. Man should endeavor to seek the protection of nature now and beyond the next millennium.

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