

UNU-ONY BOOK LAUNCH, 23 MARCH 2011

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OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

I greatly appreciate the invitation extended to me to take part in this book launch. In particular, I thank the host and Sponsor of this event for their untiring efforts and commitments towards its success.

2. The book on *Coping with Global Environmental Change, Disasters and Security - Threats, Challenges, Vulnerabilities and Risks* – is a volume of immense value to major institutions and governments. It is as significant to the United Nations, as it is valid to academic, Governmental and Non-Governmental institutions and to individual countries. It deals profoundly with the issues that engender global climate change, and takes a deep look into its daring consequences in an attempt to proffer solutions to this major challenge.

3. *Coping with Global Environmental Change, Disasters and Security – Threats, Challenges, Vulnerabilities and Risks* is the fifth volume in the *Hexagon Series on Human and Environmental Security and Peace*. I am pleased that one of the coeditors is a Kenyan lawyer and 16 contributors to the volume are from various parts of Africa, including Egypt, Tunisia, and Mauritania (North Africa), as well as from Nigeria, Ghana, Niger, and Burkina Faso (West Africa). This situation ensures that the diverse security challenges in Africa and how they have been confronted are adequately addressed in the book.

4. This scientific volume contributes to crucial global dialogue and learning, based on topical new evidence from several disciplines. In the 20th century, Africa has suffered severely from the effects of global environmental change resulting from desertification, drought, famine, floods and heat waves. Millions of Africans have either been killed or forced to flee their homes.

5. The fourth IPCC Assessment Report of 2007 estimates that climate change will have several negative impacts on Africa, especially regarding access to clean water, sufficient food, stable health conditions, ecosystem resources, and security of settlements. It further estimates that many semi-arid areas in North and Southern

Africa, will become severely water-stressed, and by 2020, between 75 and 250 million people are projected to experience increased water stress.

6. During the same period, yields from rain-fed agriculture in some African countries could be reduced by up to 50 per cent, thus affecting food security and exacerbating malnutrition. Indeed, several African mega-deltas, due to large populations and high exposure to sea level rise, storm surges, and river flooding, will suffer from the impacts of global environmental and climate change. Although Africa has historically contributed little to climate change, the limited adaptive capacity of the countries on the continent has increased the impact of climate change on the continent.

7. This huge volume of excellent scholarship from all parts of the world helps to sensitize, not only policy makers but also enable the young generation of professors and students globally but specifically, in the most affected countries in the South. It calls for proactive and concerted action and for a global science partnership to reduce the most debilitating impact of the projected trends in 'business as usual' strategies. This book deserves many readers in all parts of the world, even in the countries where university and research libraries are unable to afford such books.

8. It is my sincere hope that this high-quality, multidisciplinary study and reference book, and its key messages will again be made available to university and research libraries through the support of private foundations and public donors. The young generation in the South that must cope with these challenges to their security in the 21st century must be availed of this book. I wish the book-aid project renewed success for the benefit of university libraries and research institutes and their readers in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

9. For us in Africa, the book is exceedingly relevant. As several studies have confirmed, the impacts of the global environmental challenges have been severe on the continent, with immeasurable implications for the livelihood of its people and its development. It is an irony that a continent, which contributes the least to global warming is, today, bearing the most burden of its devastating effects. Various studies have indicated that the continent is at the verge of 'dangerous extremes' as the arid or semi-arid areas in northern, western, eastern and parts of southern

Africa are becoming drier, while its equatorial region and other parts of southern Africa are getting wetter.

10. Many coastal low-line cities across the continent have experienced frequent mud slides and ocean surges, signaling serious danger to livelihood as the possibility of submergence of shelters looms.

11. The rapidity in the expansion of desert frontiers, with accompanying degradation of arable lands has severely challenged the countries located within and around the vicinities of the Sahara and Kalahari deserts. Combined with the frequent incidences of prolonged drought periods across the continent, there have been resultant shortages of freshwater and accentuated large-scale perishing of livestock and loss of bio-diversity. In fact, it is estimated that about 250 million people in Africa would be exposed to increased water stress due to climate change by 2020 and yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 59 per cent in some African countries by same year.

12. These mutually reinforcing challenges constitute a major impediment to efforts at development and provide a motif force behind the migration of displaced vulnerable populations in search of sanctuary in other less affected locations. This has generated frictions and conflicts over territory.

13. With economies largely dependent on agriculture for employment, household incomes and food, the longer these challenges endure, the more potent they become in draining the capacity of Africans to meet the basic benchmark for socio-economic development as encapsulated in the MDGs. Experts assert that “poverty cannot be eliminated while environmental degradation exacerbates malnutrition, disease, and injury.

Chair,

14. The severity of the impact of the global environmental change and climate change is no less on Nigeria. The sheer size and population of the country, among others reasons, exposes her to greater vulnerability.

15. The country is already experiencing erratic weather conditions: unprecedented rainfall in the southern parts with its attendant flooding and soil erosion in parts of the country while lakes are drying rivers declining drastically in

volume in other parts of the country. The advancement of the desertification in the northern parts of the country has been accelerated by high temperatures leading to declining land productivity for agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing human conditions and shift in the ecological boundaries.

16. Nigeria is also projected to face shortage of potable water supply. Insufficient rainfall harvest, low ground water recharge rate and low volume of water in the rivers may even impair hydroelectricity generation. Similarly, the rise in fresh water and marine temperature will affect fishery in estuaries and lagoons, which support artesian and industrial fisheries that account for over 75 percent of fishery landing in the country. Salt water intrusion will also cause much damage to inland fisheries in lakes and aqua-cultural installations.

17. In response to these challenges, Nigeria has taken a number of measures. These derive from national initiatives that mainstream environmental issues into development policy formulation and implementation, as well as the implementation of regional and global environment frameworks. Realizing the nexus between sound environmental policy and practices, national security, good governance, health and sustainable development, the present government has accordingly embarked on an intensive exercise to preserve Nigeria's natural resources: improving soil quality checking excessive flooding and erosion, promoting and implementing sustainable water and energy management and reversing desertification.

18. Nigeria is actively participating in the discussions and implementation United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNCCD) and Convention on Bio-diversity (CBD), which provide the global platforms for concerted actions in stemming the adverse impacts of the accelerated changes in environment and climate.

19. I wish to underscore that the increasing impacts of global environmental change and climate change remain the greatest threat to humanity in the present world. These threats are overwhelming the already dire situations in most developing countries, particularly in African. Unless concrete genuine steps are taken to reduce emissions and implement clean environment standards, we stand the risk of condemning millions to perpetual hunger, starvation and death.

20. As we proceed towards COP 17 at Durban at the end of the year, it is hoped that the entire world will be guided by the urgency of the situation and muster the necessary political will and determination to ensure a better world for posterity. Leadership and commitment are needed for a successful outcome in Durban. I thank you.