

Remarks/Talking Points by the Country Director at the Renewable Energy Civil Society Organizations (RECSO) Network Annual General Meeting

Date: 30th October 2019

Venue: Eureka Hotel Ntinda, Kampala

Time: 8:30 am - 3:20 pm

Protocol:

The Executive Director, Environmental Alert,
The Chairperson of the Renewable Energy CSO Network,
The Steering Committee of the Renewable Energy CSO network,
All representatives of civil society and other distinguished stakeholders,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I greet you all in your distinguished capacities.

Greetings and Introductory Remarks:

- First, I congratulate all the network members upon this milestone of having the first Network AGM since its inception. I thank Environmental Alert, the Secretariat for the network for having made this possible.
- I would also like to thank the leadership and staff of Environmental Alert for partnering with WWF-Uganda Country Office (WWF-UCO) in coordinating civil society engagements in promotion and development of renewable energy in Uganda.
- WWF-UCO recognizes your contribution and is committed to strengthening this collaboration even further to build a vibrant and pluralistic civil society that can influence government policy and private sector decisions on sustainable and renewable energy access.
- WWF-UCO is now at a point of evolving into a strong independent National Organization, fully rooted in the Uganda civil society, while maintaining its critical contribution to the global WWF Network.
- This is in line with our vision, which is **“To be an influential and respected conservation organization in Uganda and Africa thereby making Uganda a model in demonstrating a sustainable relationship between humans and nature.”**

Why we work with civil society on energy issues in Uganda

- WWF-UCO envisages delivering this vision through a programmatic approach under two priority areas; Forest, Wildlife & Fresh Water and Climate, Energy and Extractives.
- Achieving this vision will involve changing the behaviour, policies and approaches of government, businesses, civil society and local communities. However, **WWF-UCO cannot do this alone**, but has an important role to play in helping to catalyze change through awareness raising, providing credible information to decision makers, supporting multi-stakeholder dialogue and

working with key actors across society to demonstrate approaches that **support a shift to low carbon energy development pathway.**

- We see a critical role for civil society, especially in addressing the underlying conservation challenges that have a direct linkage to renewable energy access. Some of these include the **high dependence on biomass due to the limited access to sustainable and renewable energy alternatives.** Over 90% of Uganda's population depends on biomass fuels as their primary source of cooking fuel. This has and continues to drive extensive deforestation across Uganda. It is also a major contributor to Uganda's Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, constituting 75% of Uganda's total emissions.
- On the other hand, there is **ineffective natural resource governance in the country.** Policies, laws and institutions are weak while implementation and enforcement is poor. If energy policies and legislation are poorly planned and implemented without regards to environmental and social concerns and standards, there is potential for wide scale pollution, further environmental degradation and disruption of habitat connectivity.
- In order to bring about sustainable long-term change, meaningful participation of civil society in influencing government policy and business practices is essential. Civil society can act as a trusted intermediary between government, the private sector, and energy users on the ground, as well as having expertise in designing and delivering energy services, particularly for poor and vulnerable groups. Therefore, civil society can use evidence to inform policy, present opportunities, challenges, lessons and best practices to shift Uganda towards a low carbon development pathway.
- However civil society participation also comes with challenges and it is important to manage and understand our mandate as well as the entry points for constructive engagements with government and private sector. The capacity (institutional, technical and financial) of civil society is generally limited, and this is further weakened by decreasing space for civil society to hold duty bearers accountable and influence policy processes.

WWF's Contribution to Strengthening Civil Society in the Renewable Energy Sector in Uganda

- In line with the implementation of our Strategic Plan (2019-2023), we build capacity of civil society at both national and sub-national levels & support piloting of interventions to improve access to sustainable energy solutions at grass-roots in the Albertine Graben. Most of the funding to support this work is provided by our development partners, including Norad, Sida, Danida, World Bank and EU.
- The collaboration with Environmental Alert at national level is a step in the right direction in building strong civil society voices and convening power to ably hold decision makers accountable and meaningfully contribute to policy and practices on sustainable and renewable energy. This is evidenced by the meaningful participation of civil society in the energy policy review, sector dialogue discussions during the Annual Energy Week and the Joint Sector Reviews to mention but a few.

- WWF-Uganda has supported the formation and institutionalization of sub-national CSO networks which bring together civil society to effectively complement government & private sector efforts in promotion of renewable energy in Uganda. Through the civil society networks, we are facilitating bottom-up planning with issues and views from local communities and leaders documented to feed into district as well as national policy and planning processes. A total of 65 CSOs have also been brought together to undertake last mile distribution of renewable energy technologies (RETs) for cooking & lighting.
- Our work with CSOs at grassroots has resulted into distribution of 42,600 stoves and 11,200 solar home systems to households in the Albertine Graben. This has led to improved quality of lives for the communities, especially women and youth who are mostly exposed to the traditional & in-efficient sources of energy.
- Employment opportunities have been created for the youth (446 women and 323 men) in the RET supply chain at community level. This has resulted from the technical and business skills development extended to CSOs and local communities in the Albertine Graben.
- In collaboration with civil society in the Albertine Graben, the capacity of technical & political leaders in 20 districts in the region has been built on energy planning. Out of these, 3 districts have developed their District Renewable Energy Access Strategies while 7 districts are in the process of doing so. The districts would not have embarked on such a strategy development process if it were not for WWF and its work in organizing experience sharing & learning visits, as well as other capacity building initiatives, perhaps most notably the gap analyses done by WWF and CSO partners on district energy planning, with recommendations.
- In collaboration with civil society in Kasese, WWF-UCO piloted a district led-initiative dubbed Champion District Initiative (CDI) to demonstrate approaches for increasing energy access to off-grid communities. Kasese is now one of the three districts selected by Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development to pilot Sustainable Energy for all (SE4ALL) Action Plans at district level, with lessons learnt expected to be scaled-up to other districts in Uganda.

Call to Action

- With our support, we see the space for civil society engagement on sustainable and renewable energy improving. The network and its members should use this opportunity to meaningfully engage in key policy processes that are currently happening. Some of these include: on-going review of energy policies (Energy Policy for Uganda (2002) and Renewable Energy Policy for Uganda (2007), finalization of the National Development Plan III, development of standards on renewable energy and the budgeting process.
- The Network provides a platform for civil society to have one voice and forge concerted efforts through structured engagements to address the energy challenges as a way of contributing to government efforts since we are also

stakeholders in the energy sector. Let us not only play a watch dog role but also join efforts.

- Resource mobilization is key to ensure sustainability and impact of the activities of the network. The network and its members should develop strategies to diversify mobilization of resources and not just be dependent on the support from WWF.

Conclusion:

- I would like to pledge our continued commitment in working together with the Renewable Energy CSO Network in the promotion of renewable energy access in the country.
- To the new steering committee elect, I congratulate you all! Being the pioneers, you need to set the bar high for the network so as to deliver on its mandate and achieve its aspirations, goals and objectives.
- Finally, I thank Environmental Alert and the interim committee over the last two and half years for the good work done in building and steering the network.

Ladies and gentlemen, with these remarks, I would like to wish you a splendid afternoon and wish all of you journey mercies and greater commitment towards the network's engagements. Thank You for Listening!

Mr. Duli David, Country Director; WWF-Uganda Country Office