

REPORT ON CLIMATE, LAND USE, MINING AND SANITATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE HELD ON 27TH AND 28TH FEBRUARY 2018 AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

1. Introduction

This report covers the two-day International conference on Climate, Land use, Mining and Sanitation for Sustainable Development (CLaMSS) held from 27th-28th February 2018. It was jointly organised by the Institute for Environment and Sanitation Studies (IESS) and the Centre for Climate Change and Sustainability Studies (C3SS). The idea of the conference emanated from meetings with stakeholders in the area of climate change, mining, land use and sanitation. The conference was held on the theme “Climate, Land use, Mining and Sanitation for Sustainable Development”. The conference saw the gathering of academicians and scholars from various fields including environmental scientists, technology specialists, psychologists, industrialists, business men, economists, policy experts, marketers, and students from Ghana, Benin Republic, Liberia, Nigeria, Kenya, Rwanda and USA. The main objective of the conference was to bring together stakeholders involved in environmental sustainability research and practice and policy sectors to discuss and share ideas and research findings on key aspects of climate, land use, sanitation, water, mining and sustainable development, among others. It therefore featured panel discussions and presentations in parallel sessions. In all, over fifteen presentations were delivered.

1. Day one

1.1 Opening

The conference began at exactly 9:00 am with introduction of the Chairman/Master of Programmes for the Conference by Dr. Benedicta Fosu-Mensah. The Master of Programmes was Dr. Benjamin D. Ofori.

Professor Erasmus Owusu, Director of the Centre for Climate Change and Sustainability Studies (C3SS) delivered the opening address. He gave a brief history on the establishment of C3SS and outlined the mission and vision of the centre. He indicated that, the complexity of the environmental challenges we face today require extreme analytical and critical thinking to tackle them.

Dr. Ted Annang who represented the Director of the Institute for Environment and Sanitation Studies (IESS) also gave an opening remark. Dr. Annang indicated that that themes being addressed by the conference, climate change, land use, mining and sanitation were important to national development. His expectation was that, the conference would offer participants a better understanding of these issues. He made a humble appeal to the organisers of the conference to consider making it an annual event.

A message from the Provost of College of Basic and Applied Sciences (CBAS) was delivered by his representative, Professor Kinsford Adabor.

1.2 Conference Overview

An overview of the conference was given by Dr. Daniel Nukpezah, Chairman of the Planning and Organizing Committee. He said the main objective for organizing the conference was to bring together a range of stakeholders involved in environmental sustainability research and practice and policy sectors, to discuss and share ideas and research findings on key aspects of climate, land use, mining, sanitation, water and sustainable development among others. He gave an outline and the format the conference would follow and highlighted the key topics that would be treated at the conference as:

- Climate change and adaptation
- Land use and land cover change
- Mining, water pollution and remediation
- Sanitation and waste management
- Sustainable Development

In concluding, he advised participants who had submitted their abstracts to take note of comments and suggestions that would be made concerning their papers since selected research papers would be published in the West African Journal of Applied Ecology (WAJAE).

The opening session was followed by a group photograph of participants during a short break.

1.3 Panel Discussion

The Panel Discussion Session began with self-introduction of the panelists: Dr. Bob Offei Manteaw - Sustainable Development, Dr. Kwadwo Owusu - Climate Change expert and Senior Lecturer at the Department of Geography and Resource Development; Mr Wellington Baiden, Forestry and Eco-Tourism; Dr. Dzidzo Yirenya-Tawiah – Sanitation and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Environment and Sanitation Studies and Dr. Robert Manford - Urban Planning and City Planner at the State of California, USA. The moderator was Dr. Benjamin D. Ofori, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Environment and Sanitation Studies.

The Moderator set the tone for the discussion by seeking the views of the panelists on the concept of sustainability. Dr. Manford made reference to the myriad of environmental problems confronting humanity and resulting out of various landuse form and activities in the city. ; Dr. Yirenya Tawiah also highlighted that, the concept of environmental sustainability encapsulated the conscious effort of maintaining and living harmoniously in the environment. Mr. Baiden provided two main aspects of sustainability: preserving what we have and having a holistic view of the environment in order to consciously think of the needs of the unborn generation.

The moderator, Dr. Ofori, made an intervention that in view of the enormous capacity of cities and urban centres to impact the environment they must be the building blocks for sustainable development.

Dr. Owusu responded by making reference to urban demand for energy, particularly fossil fuel, construction materials and resources which ultimately affect the environment and impact

on human livelihood. The moderator invited the panelists to comment on the political slogan of “making Accra the cleanest city in Africa”. Dr. Manteaw gave the following reasons why Accra might never become the cleanest city in Africa. He cited the rather low political willingness to deal with sanitation, poor urban planning, nowhere to dump refuse, lack of receptacle bins at vantage points and failure to segregate waste as some of the reasons. He concluded emphatically that, the country’s failure to address the above issues would constantly keep Accra filthy.

Dr. Ofori again posed a question whether the country had standards for sanitation. Dr. Yirenya Tawiah responded “No”, and explained that we could make our own standards by knowing the economic relevance of waste, for example, turning waste to compost.

The floor was thereafter opened for questions and the first was asked by Dr. Rosina Kyerematen who bemoaned the absence of policy makers at the conference as government intervention is crucial in addressing the sanitation situation. Also she commented that the pavements and tiles in our various homes prevent rain water from seeping into the ground, thereby causing flooding.

Dr. Nukpezah responded that, there were government representatives from the Forestry Commission and other sectors who had come to take note. Dr. Annang also added that, because we have destroyed all our wetlands, there was always flooding in most cities in Accra with the little downpour of rain.

Another participant asked whether it would be possible to stop using plastics. The response was “Yes” if the government made it illegal to use plastics. Dr. Manteaw however cautioned that, the nature of our culture may make it difficult if not impossible to stop using plastics. He added that, recycling industries could be built to take care of the plastics. To draw the curtains down on that, Dr. Nukpezah suggested that, plastics could be made very expensive in order to discourage its purchase.

The last question was that, could climate change affect food storage? Dr. Owusu answered that, yes it could but not any significant effect. This is because; we depended mostly on imported foods other than our locally grown foods. In such an instance, the rural folks would badly be affected because they would not be able to purchase them while the urban folks would still survive because they are wealthier and could afford the imported foods.

To close the session for lunch break, Mr. Baiden commented that, sustainability required innovation and a lot of choices that would affect our lives.

1.4 Break into groups and sub-sessions

After the panel discussion, came presentations of the research papers in parallel sessions.

1.5 Oral Presentations

Key research papers and findings were presented by various individuals from different academic backgrounds all focusing on climate change, land use, mining, sanitation and

sustainable development. The presentation was organized in two sessions. Presentations on climate change and adaptation, land use and land cover change and sustainable development were held in Hall A and was chaired by Dr. Opoku Pabi. Hall B had topics on mining, water pollution and remediation, sanitation and waste management and was also chaired by Dr. Samuel Senyo Koranteng and Dr. Benedicta Fosu-Mensah. General contributions were made to some theoretical concepts, adaptations and usage. Suggestions were made by the audience to the presenters. Day one ended with a general wrap up by session chairs and preview of day two.

2. Overview of Day Two

Day two of the conference continued with the presentation of research papers. Papers were presented only in Hall A. The presentation was chaired and moderated by Dr. Robert Manford. The session was brought to an end after series of questions from the audience to the presenters were responded to.

2.1 Coffee Break and Networking

Participants were served breakfast after which they had the opportunity to network with others.

2.2 Key Highlights and Conclusion

Before the plenary session, Prof Abekoe, editor-in-chief for the West African Journal of Applied Ecology (WAJAE), gave a brief remark about the conference. He also spoke about the journal and encouraged participants to submit quality research papers for publication. The plenary session then followed and was led by session chairs and the previous day's panel discussants: Dr. Manford, Dr. Samuel S. Koranteng, Dr. Benedicta Fosu-Mensah, Dr. Selase Adanu and Dr. Benjamin D. Ofori. During this session, the discourses and highlights from the scientific presentations were evaluated in line with the conference aim and theme. This was moderated by Dr. Daniel Nukpezah. Some of the key highlights and findings made include;

- The concept of environmental sustainability encapsulates the conscious effort of maintaining and living harmoniously in the environment.
- The first mind that must be conceived if we needed to maintain the environment was to consciously preserve what we have as a people and then approach the natural environment considering the need of the unborn generation.
- Urban development and settlements are the major drivers of the many environmental problems we face today.
- The need for collaboration between academia and practitioners in working towards a sustainable environment.
- The need for policies or measures to manage the use of plastics.

2.3 End of Conference and Remarks

The conference ended with remarks from Dr. Daniel Nukpezah. He thanked the participants and urged them to submit papers of good quality. Miss Emmanuella Obeng Koranteng, an Mphil I Environmental Science student of the University of Ghana gave the vote of thanks. She expressed her profound gratitude to all for coming and thanked all the organizers and sponsors for their timely support of the conference.