



RIO+20

United Nations Conference
on Sustainable Development

Progress Towards Sustainable Development in Eastern Africa Summary for Policy Makers



Economic Commission
for Africa



Progress Towards Sustainable Development in Eastern Africa Summary for Policy Makers

Prepared with the financial support of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank.



Economic Commission
for Africa



East African Community



Intergovernmental Authority
on Development



African Development
Bank

Ordering information

To order copies of *Progress towards Sustainable Development in Eastern Africa: Summary for Policy Makers* by the Economic Commission for Africa, please contact:

Publications:

Economic Commission for Africa
P.O. Box 3001
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Tel: +251 11 544-9900

Fax: +251 11 551-4416

E-mail: ecainfo@uneca.org

Web: www.uneca.org

© United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2012

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

All rights reserved

First printing May 2012

Material in this publication may be freely quoted or reprinted. Acknowledgement is requested, together with a copy of the publication.

Edited, designed and printed by the ECA Publications and Conference Management Section (PCMS).

Cover photos: From top left UN Photo/Tim McKulka, Stock.xchng/Lars Sundstrom, Robert Parzychowski, Nate Brelsford, UN Photo/Fred Noy, Stock.xchng/Patrick Hajzler, UN Photo/Martine Perret, Stock.xchng/Robert Linder.

Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....	1
II. Overall subregional performance on priority sustainable development issues	2
III. New and emerging challenges.....	3
IV. Transition towards a green economy in the context of poverty reduction and sustainable development in the subregion	6
V. Institutional framework for sustainable development in the subregion...	6
VI. Means of implementation.....	8
VII. Conclusion and Key Messages	9
Bibliography	10

I. Introduction

This summary statement is a concise and well-informed report on progress made in implementing Agenda 21 and the various commitments, programmes and time-bound targets adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in the Eastern African subregion. The statement was prepared as part of Africa's regional preparatory process for Rio+20. A number of sustainable development issues and the need to promote closer convergence among the three pillars of sustainable development are highlighted in the statement. Specific attention is given to overall performance on priority sustainable development issues; new and emerging challenges; transition to a green economy within the context of poverty reduction and sustainable development in the subregion; institutional frameworks for sustainable development; means of implementation; and conclusion and key messages.

The subregion commends the objectives of Rio+20, which include securing renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assessing progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and addressing new and emerging challenges. The subregion acknowledges the relevance of the two conference themes - *a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development* - to advancing the subregion's sustainable development agenda.

The subregion calls on Rio+20 to re-invigorate political will and international commitment to the goals and ideals of sustainable development, to move the sustainable development agenda forward and raise the level of commitment by countries, regions and the international community to a common cause for sustainable development, including the need to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The subregion therefore calls for the conference to adopt concrete measures supported by adequate means of implementation that will ensure speedy implementation of sustainable development commitments, including those to be adopted at Rio+20. The subregion further calls on the developed countries to fulfill their previous commitments and pledges to help the subregion to achieve sustainable development.

II. Overall subregional performance on priority sustainable development issues

The subregional preparatory process for Rio+20 assessed the subregion's performance on nine priority sustainable development issues, including economic growth and wealth creation; agriculture, food security and climate change; poverty, inequality and social deprivation; energy and energy poverty, environment for sustainable development; environment for peace and security, sustainable consumption and production, including the issue of waste management; the role of regional integration and regional, national and local-level partnerships for sustainable development.

The Eastern African subregion registered commendable economic growth and wealth creation since 1992. It has some of the fastest growing economies in the world, with the GDP estimates of a large number of its countries tripling since 1992. Poverty has also significantly reduced. The average GDP rate of the best performers in the subregion (Ethiopia, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda) was 9.6 per cent and the poverty rate reduced from 57 per cent in 1990 to 47.5 per cent in 2010.

The economies in the subregion have also significantly transformed with the share of GDP contributed by agriculture declining from about 70 per cent in 1990 to 22.5 per cent in 2010 and that of services doubling to more than 50 per cent. The economies have also become more self reliant. The share of the budget funded from domestic tax revenue has significantly increased. For Uganda, for instance, the share of domestic resources funding the budget increased from 31.7 per cent in 1992 to over 70 per cent in 2010.

With regard to the social pillar, life expectancy has improved across the subregion. Djibouti has a high life expectancy level of 54.8 while the life expectancy for Rwanda improved to 46.2 in 2010. Adult literacy levels across the subregion have also improved with the rise in school enrollment following the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE). However, challenges persist with regard to the quality of education and other dimensions of equity.

Access to safe water in rural areas has also improved across the subregion. The level of access to safe water in Burundi, for instance, increased from under 20 per cent in 1990 to over 70 per cent in 2010. Household sanitation in the subregion also improved steadily with the proportion of households with safe sanitation facilities increasing from 57 per cent in 2005 to 69 per cent in 2009. Performance on child and maternal health has, however, been less impressive. Infant and maternal mortality rates remain high and severely undermine progress towards achieving the relative MDGs.

With respect to the environmental pillar, following the Rio Conference in 1992, a number of countries in the subregion developed and implemented a range of legal, policy and institutional reforms on environment and waste management as well as water, wetlands, forests, rangelands, lands, fisheries, climate change and biodiversity management. The implementation of the various reforms is progressing though slowly, as depicted by the poor performance of several key environmental indicators.

The Eastern African subregion recognizes the importance of democratic governance to sustainable development. In this vein most of the countries in the subregion have pursued measures to promote democratic and accountable governance by introducing and entrenching a decen-

tralization policy, implementing participatory planning and budgeting approaches, promoting transparency in public management, conducting regular elections at the national and local levels, strengthening the rule of law, and voluntarily acceding to the African Peer Review Mechanism. All the countries in the subregion in one way or another are actively participating in regional integration and are contributing to regional and international peace endeavours under the United Nations, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

III. New and emerging challenges

A number of challenges deter the rapid progression towards sustainable development in the subregion. The challenges emanate from three key sources. The first is poverty and low economic growth. The second is the high-level of environmental degradation coupled with climate change. And the third is lack of technical implementation capacity and the slow response by the international community to address the subregion's development problems, including the HIV/AIDS pandemic, conflicts, institutional and policy failures. The following discussion highlights the key new and emerging challenges to sustainable development in the subregion.

The first emerging challenge to sustainable development in the subregion is climate change. Climate change is one of the greatest environmental challenges facing the world today. It affects many sectors and the livelihoods and socio-economic development processes of many individuals and communities across the subregion. The key challenges posed by climate change include changing rainfall patterns, disruption to the farming calendar, extreme weather conditions, prolonged droughts, floods and landslides. Rising temperatures have led to the melting of the permanent glaciers on the region's highest mountains leading to unprecedented changes in local micro-climatic cycles, crop yields and river flows. Increased river flow in the Semliki, for instance, has led to river bank erosion, shifts in the course of the river and eventual siltation of Lake Albert into which the river flows.

Most countries in the subregion formulated National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) to guide them on the resource requirements for implementing mitigation and adaptation measures. The NAPAs indicate the need for about \$US8 million per country for 3-5 years to address some of the most pressing challenges of climate change. Most of these financial resources have not been obtained and, therefore, the subregion's adaptation situation remains poor.

However, some funding opportunities have been leveraged in some countries to address some climate change challenges. The Municipal Solid Waste Composting project in Uganda is one example. This World Bank led project involved construction and operation of 9 solid waste composting plants in the nine municipalities of Mukono, Jinja, Soroti, Mbale, Lira, Fort Portal, Kasese, Kabale and Mbarara. The project is based on the premise that by composting the solid waste into manure, it will be possible to control green house gases, like methane, emissions and thereby be able to participate, through emission reductions (carbon trading) in the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol.

Water Scarcity is another big challenge that many countries in the subregion have to grapple with. In addition to domestic water needs that include drinking water, water is required by several sectors – mining, agriculture and power generation to name a few. Access to drinking water, while important and urgent, is in direct competition with other sectors requiring water. The drop in water levels of a number of lakes and rivers in the subregion has meant cutbacks in electricity

generation resulting in loss of revenue and jobs. Limited water storage capacity is a major factor influencing access to water in the subregion. The Eastern African subregion is one of the least developed regions in terms of water storage, with a per capita storage capacity of less than 100m³ compared to the global average of 1,000m³. Increasing storage options and improvements to existing storage will address the challenges associated with infrastructural water scarcity.

The impact of the global financial crisis of 2009 is well documented. Economic growth rates in the subregion dropped and fuel prices and inflation sky-rocketed. Many economies in the subregion initially weathered the impacts of the crisis which, however, came back with full force in 2010. The slowing of growth in the subregion is due to a number of reasons, including declining trade flows, pressure of high fuel prices, low agricultural productivity due to prolonged droughts and limited internal movement of food products due to high transport costs and poor infrastructure. Capital inflows and remittances that had been another driver of economic growth also declined, further contributing to declining growth rates. Tourism receipts that contribute to revenues also declined significantly as potential tourists cut back on spending.

The other sustainable development challenge is halted progress towards some MDGs. The specific MDGs that remain challenging are MDG1 Target 1C on hunger and MDGs 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. Hunger spiked in 2009 as a direct consequence of the global food and financial crisis. Food price increases and falling incomes due to the financial crisis worsened the food situation in the subregion. Although aggregate food availability was relatively better in 2010 and 2011, higher food prices, reduced employment and incomes meant that the poor had less access to food. The subregion was also hit by drought resulting in serious famine in the greater horn of Africa.

The other key emerging challenge in the subregion is the energy crisis largely precipitated by the unprecedented volatility of energy prices. The subregion, though endowed with abundant energy resources, including hydropower, geothermal, solar and bio energy, has to import most of the commercial energy it uses. This has exposed it to high energy prices, particularly in comparison to incomes. Furthermore, electricity supply is insufficient and unreliable, power cuts are frequent and rarely scheduled. The situation has been worsened by climate change and the associated lowering of water levels in most of the power generation reservoirs.

Access to sustainable and affordable energy is essential for development and critical for improving livelihoods. It is used for cooking, for production of goods and services and for heating, lighting and transportation. Energy also contributes to better public services. Clinics and schools function better. Drugs that require refrigeration can be made accessible to more people and schools can offer improved services. Access to energy facilitates development and helps to meet several MDGs, halves extreme poverty, reduces hunger, reduces child and maternal mortality and promotes gender equality.

The other challenge is the persistent loss of biodiversity. Expanding agriculture, clearing of forests for charcoal and firewood, climate change and desertification are the primary causes of this. Addressing biodiversity loss requires permanent and long-term solutions in the form of resources, capacity and appropriate policies.

Desertification is one of the serious challenges affecting sustainable development in Eastern Africa. It is closely linked to poverty and impacts health, food security, natural resources and the environment. Desertification makes an area susceptible to land degradation. And this is likely to increase as a result of climate change. Under a range of climate change scenarios, it is projected that there will be an increase of 5-8 per cent of arid and semi-arid lands in the subregion.

Invasive alien species (IASs) have emerged as one of the major threats to sustainable development, at par with global warming and the destruction of life-support systems. They are plants, animals and microbes introduced into an area from other parts of the world and able to displace indigenous species. The major IASs of economic concern in the subregion include; *Lantana camara*, *Parthenium spp*, *Sena spectabilis*, *Eichhornia crassipes* and *Lates niloticus* (Nile perch). IASs undermine development and livelihood opportunities and increase human vulnerability while threatening human well-being. Thus IASs have a direct bearing on the subregion's ability to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and targets. This calls for a clear policy approach because of the potentially wide-ranging impacts of IASs and the difficulties of eradicating them.

Disasters are an increasing challenge to sustainable development in the subregion. They have increased in frequency and adversity and now undermine the subregion's prospect of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Climatic and hydrological hazards, in particular drought, water scarcity, floods and landslides dominate the disaster profile in the subregion. This is in addition to other natural and man-made disasters such as volcanic eruptions, epidemics and conflicts. The high incidence of disasters, particularly droughts and floods threaten agriculture, food security and infrastructure.

Multiple and interdependent forms of vulnerability are likely to transform even minor hazardous events into human disasters. Especially for the poor who directly depend on agriculture for both subsistence and income, climate change increases the risk and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities by increasing the likelihood, frequency and severity of extreme weather events.

Overall, the new and emerging challenges to sustainable development in the subregion revolve around the three pillars of the economy, society and the environment. This calls for smart ways of designing and implementing sustainable development options that harness the integrated total sum of the benefits from all the pillars. More emphasis should be put on good governance, building on existing successes in policy, regulatory frameworks and participative management of the subregion's natural resource base. Future progress will depend on how the subregion's natural resources, including forests, land, biodiversity, mountains, tourism, minerals and water resources, are managed for social equity, economic prosperity and environmental integrity.

IV. Transition towards a green economy in the context of poverty reduction and sustainable development in the subregion

The green economy offers considerable opportunities for mobilizing resources towards a low-emission, climate-resilient development. But this is not without challenges. The key challenge is how the green economy will contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction objectives while improving welfare and the quality of life for the subregion's poor. The green economy will necessarily require an increase in the levels of consumption, in particular of food, energy and water. Policies and investments to sustain and enhance the natural capital assets - the soils, forests and fisheries on which many poor people depend - will be instrumental. At the same time, the economic system needs to develop, enabling the subregion to improve its terms of trade and to increase its productivity. The pathway towards a green economy will require mobilization of new financial resources from public and private sources. This implies a re-alignment of policy goals and priorities and related allocation of capital, while addressing the immediate and pressing development concerns and poverty alleviation objectives. Overall, the Green Economy is a welcome development that the subregion is willing and ready to embrace. However, the transition will entail additional costs which require new and additional financing, access to technologies and capacity building, meaning that scaled-up, adequate and predictable international support must be provided to the subregion. The transition, on the other hand, should also not be used as a justification for new barriers to trade, aid or access to finance.

V. Institutional framework for sustainable development in the subregion

Agenda 21 and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) both called upon countries to establish National Councils for Sustainable Development and National Strategies for Sustainable Development. The purpose of these institutions and strategic frameworks is to reduce fragmentation and foster integration of the three pillars of sustainable development. There is evidence that sustainable development and related national and regional governance arrangements have improved in the subregion. Further strengthening of these mechanisms, particularly to further improve the monitoring and integration of the three pillars of sustainable development in an integrated and balanced manner needs to be undertaken.

The presence and effective operation of institutions serves to promote the common interests of the present and future generations in accordance with the following principles of sustainable development;

- (a) The subregion upholds the right of nation States to self-determination and believes in the principle of people-centered development. In light of this, the subregion calls upon Rio+20 to reinvigorate support and respect for national democratic and accountable governance processes, the rule of law and the planning processes associated with determination of national development objectives. The subregion calls for the re-affirmation of the principles of the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness and those of the Accra Agenda for Action. The subregion urges the conference to expedite support for the establishment and promotion of National Councils for Sustainable Development;

- (b) At regional level, the subregion affirms the maintenance of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as Africa's Sustainable Development framework. It recognizes that NEPAD requires revitalization of its implementation frameworks and calls on the conference to lend its support to this cause. The subregion emphasizes the need to expand the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) process to include the monitoring and evaluation of the balanced integration of the three pillars of Sustainable Development;
- (c) The subregion also stresses the need for a strategic and proactive framework for rapidly responding to shocks arising from the increasing natural disasters and new challenges such as migration, piracy and trafficking, as they affect the achievement of Sustainable Development;
- (d) Recognizing the trans-boundary nature of some of the natural resources pertinent to sustainable development, the subregion calls on the conference to support and strengthen subregional initiatives for trans-boundary natural resource management. This also applies to the globally common environment and natural resource mechanisms including the Kyoto Protocol and its successor mechanism, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD);
- (e) The subregion acknowledges the role so far played by the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development (UNCSD) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in focusing international attention on the Sustainable Development agenda. The subregion however believes that there is need for an effective global framework for coordinating international action on Sustainable Development and, therefore, recommends the establishment of a specific global institution to spearhead the coordination of international action on Sustainable Development based on the review of the current framework; and
- (f) With respect to international environmental governance in the context of Sustainable Development, the Eastern African subregion upholds the African Union's position as contained in the Malabo Declaration, to transform the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) into a specialized international institution for environment based in Nairobi, Kenya. The subregion therefore enjoins the conference to support this transformation of UNEP for greater operational presence and impact in member countries.

VI. Means of implementation

The main means of implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (PFIA21) of 1997, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) and other internationally- agreed development goals, including the MDGs are: financing sustainable development, technology development and transfer, capacity development, globalization and trade, regional integration and South-South cooperation. The key elements of the means of implementation are also highlighted in the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action on aid effectiveness and the ongoing discussions between individual countries and development partners on development effectiveness. The achievement of set goals under the various internationally- agreed sustainable development instruments requires substantially increased development and poverty reduction effort by the subregion and the various development partners.

All the countries in the subregion are classified by the United Nations as Least Developed Countries (LDCs), which are characterized by low per capita incomes, feeble human capital and a high degree of economic vulnerability. However, all the economies in the subregion transformed remarkably in recent years. According to the World Bank, GDP per capita has grown faster and at a higher average rate since the late 1980s. Macroeconomic reforms across the subregion supported economic growth well beyond set targets. Macroeconomic reforms, led by the World Bank and other development partners reduced barriers to trade and liberalized prices and markets previously subject to State control. Improved management of monetary and fiscal policy produced stability and brought down inflation. Against the backdrop of impressive results in macro-economic management, some countries in the subregion became the first beneficiaries of the highly- indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative which reduced foreign debt to sustainable levels.

The economic transformation in the subregion has seen the share of output from the agriculture sector decline and the share from services and industry rise. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the population is still dependent on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods and there has been limited transformation in the sectoral composition of the labour force.

In line with the key elements of the main means of implementation outlined in the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action on aid effectiveness and the Istanbul Plan of Action for Least Developed Countries, the Eastern African subregion pledges its commitment to pursue the following objectives with the support of the international community:

- (a) To strengthen national and regional institutional, legal and policy frameworks for Sustainable Development;
- (b) To strengthen regional integration initiatives and blocs such as the African Union (AU), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Community (EAC);
- (c) To increase efforts to mobilize local and international resources necessary to facilitate the subregion's transition to a green economy;
- (d) To progressively reform the education system and curricula to enhance the knowledge and skill-base necessary for Sustainable Development;
- (e) To pursue measures to increase access to technology in line with the Bali Declaration; and
- (f) To invest in the development of integrated national and regional infrastructure to enhance regional integration and trade.

The Eastern African subregion is confident that Rio+20 is a unique opportunity for the world to advance the principle of a green economy. It believes that the conference will meet its objective of securing renewed political commitment for Sustainable Development and will pave the way for greater public participation, public-private partnerships and provide a roadmap for addressing new and emerging challenges.

VII. Conclusion and Key Messages

Although the subregion has progressed in integrating the pillars of sustainable development, a number of weaknesses and challenges still remain and must be addressed. The key challenges relate to the lack of financial resources to foster sustainable development, in view of a weak private sector and limited public sector resources. This also as the donor commitments have not been forthcoming. Yet the transition to a green economy requires the following additional resources, new technologies and human and financial resources;

- (a) Although the subregion has recorded commendable levels of economic growth and wealth creation, poverty levels remain high. Poverty eradication requires rapid economic growth, industrialization and job creation. The subregion therefore needs to gear up local and attract and foster foreign direct investments;
- (b) The subregion, though endowed with a rich natural resource base, currently accesses the least amount of global environmental financing due to lack of technical capacity to develop bankable projects. Special windows for international financing need to be dedicated to the subregion to address mounting financing needs;
- (c) The international community will have to step up access to technology and technology transfer that is affordable and suitable to the African context in line with the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building (e.g. solar, small and mini hydros and other technologies);
- (d) The Green Economy is a welcome development that the region is willing and ready to embrace. The development should, however, not be used as a justification for new barriers to trade, aid or access to finance;
- (e) Land use planning, urban planning and infrastructure development are needed as well as concrete actions and best practices. These practices must be stepped up to enable the subregion to embrace and benefit from the transition to a green economy;
- (f) Institutional mechanisms to monitor and ensure integration of the three pillars of sustainable development in an integrated and balanced manner need to be established and where they exist strengthened and positioned where they will have the muscle to influence policy and decision-making;
- (g) Countries need to recognize the contribution of the natural resource base to economic growth and social transformation and integrate natural resource accounting into national economic statistics and reporting. This will provide an informed basis for countries to increase the percentage allocation of their national budgets to sustainable development.

Bibliography

Cavendish, W. and Campbell, B. M (undated). *Poverty, Environmental Income and Rural Inequality: A Case Study from Zimbabwe*. Centre for International Forestry Research, Indonesia.

EAC (2011). *East African Community Facts and Figures 2010*. East African Community Annual Publication, Arusha, Tanzania.

EAC Parliament (2011). *The East African Community Budget Speech*. EAC Parliament, Arusha, Tanzania.

ECA (2011). *Tracking Progress in Macroeconomic and Social Development in Eastern Africa*. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Subregional Office for Eastern Africa. Kigali, Rwanda.

IFPRI (2001). *Development Pathways and Land Management in Uganda: Causes and Implications*. Environment and Production Technology Division Discussion paper No85 International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington DC.

IMF (2010). *World Economic Outlook 2010*, International Monetary Fund, Washington DC.

UN (2009). *UN Millennium Development Goal Report 2009*. United Nations, New York.

UNECA (2011). *Economic Report on Africa 2011*. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

UNEP (2010). *Africa Water Atlas*. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Nairobi, Kenya.

UN Millennium Project (2005). *A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*. United Nations, New York.

World Bank (2010). *Outlook for Remittance Flows 2010/11*. The World Bank, Washington DC.

WRI in Collaboration with UNEP, UNDP and the World Bank (2005). *World Resources 2005: The Wealth of the Poor-Managing Ecosystems to Fight Poverty*. World Resources Institute in Collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. World Resources Series. World Resources Institute, Washington DC.

ECA (2008). *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa III: Towards Monetary and Financial Integration in Africa*. Addis Ababa, Economic Commission for Africa.

Daily G.C. (1997). *Nature's Services: Societal Dependence on Natural Ecosystems*. Island Press, Washington DC.

MEA (2005). *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Report*, Island Press, Washington DC.

Myers R.A. and Worm B (2003). *Rapid World Wide Depletion of Predatory Fish Communities*. *Nature* 423:280-283.

Rosegrant, M.W., Cai X.M., and Cline S.A., (2003). Will the World Run Dry? Global Water and Food Security. *Environment* 45:24-36.

Sachs J.D. and Reid W.V., (2006). Environment: Investments Towards Sustainable Development. *Science* 312-1002-1002.

Schneider S.H., (2001). What is Dangerous Climate Change? *Nature* 411:17-19.

Loucif S.J. and Rubin D. (2011). US-Sub-Saharan Africa Trade Profile 2010. US Department of Commerce. International Trade Administration.

