



Dr. Fred Muhumuza, an academic at Makerere University, Uganda, makes his presentation at the recent 11thW&E JSR, held Mestil hotel

MUK Don reveals how Water Sub-sector is a cornerstone for Wealth Creation and Industrialization

A senior academic from Makerere University, Dr. Fred Muhumuza, has emphasized the critical role played by the Water sub-sector in promoting Wealth Creation and industrialization in Uganda.

Dr. Muhumuza was presenting a key note address at the just concluded 11th Government of Uganda/Donour's Joint Water and Environment Sector Review held at Mestil hotel, Nsambya, Kampala.

The veteran academic stated that the thing that underlies the proposed focus of the National Development Plan11 is to enhance household income and improve the quality of life by focusing on resource-led industrialization of the economy.

"Increasing demand for water due to population and economic growth, is expected to increase due to expansion of industrial water usage including the process of electricity production," Dr. Muhumuza stated. He further stated that water as a means of transport is yet to be fully exploited and yet it remains the cheapest means of moving bulk items.

Globally, a biggest number of movable items are transported on water; for instance, imports from Asia and Europe to the African continent like cars, trucks, machinery are imported through vessels.

The participants of the JSR concurred with Dr. Muhumuza's assertions since full utilization of the water transport could significantly reduce traffic jam on some of roads.

Indeed, the issue of the role of water and environment in promoting other sectors was widely talked about as one of the other important achievements.

There have been policy reviews to account for national interest in Transboundary Water Resources, the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA), for the sustainable management and utilization of the shared

Nile basin water resources, was signed by six (6) countries (Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, Burundi and Uganda).

Cabinet approved Uganda's ratification of the CFA in June 2019 bringing the total number to five countries that have since ratified.

Dr. Muhumuza further appealed to stakeholders in all national development committees, Ministries, Agencies and Departments, private sector, civil society, to join hands and support all initiatives aimed at promoting the Water and Environment sector.

He cited how the Water and Environment sector is more central to preserving and promoting tourism and infrastructure.

The Makerere University lecturer cited inadequate management of water systems as one of the critical issues creating risks to investments in other sectors, such as transport, energy, agriculture and industry.

During the same Joint Sector Review, it was revealed that the percentage of Uganda's area covered by wetlands is estimated at 8.9% and a total of 734 hectares of wetlands were restored in the Financial Year 2018/19 up from 487.4 hectares.

Over the years, Uganda's tree cover has immensely declined i.e. from 24% in 1990 to 12.4% in 2015. Forest plantations establishment has increased by 51480ha over the last 5 years, at a rate of 2.96%.

Indeed, it was further revealed in the Joint Sector Review Report that inadequate financing to the sector remains a major challenge and affects the fulfilment of core functions.

"As a result, the targets under the Strategic Sector Investment Plan (2018-2030), the second National Development Plan and Presidential Directives (e.g. one water source per village) are unlikely to be met," the Report states.

Dr. Muhumuza further revealed how there is growing evidence that power generation in the country is being undermined by

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reduced volumes of water in water bodies.

This is what he based on to argue that establishment of energy infrastructure like power generating projects highly depend on the water and investment, and thus urged all stakeholders to look at how the two sectors have shared interests.

On Sanitation and Hygiene, Dr. Muhumuza said it is the major role of government, civil society, private sector, NGOs to keep educating and sensitizing the general public. He urged planners and developers both in government and the public to consider hygiene and sanitation on public highways and institutions.

"We have seen cases of magnificent buildings here with nice designs and furniture yet there is no consideration for clean toilets and drainage channels which shows that matters of sanitation and hygiene are taken lightly" Dr. Muhumuza stressed.

Regarding rain-water harvesting, he urged government to provide incentives to the producers of plastic containers (tanks) for both households and institutions, to enable them to produce bigger plastic tanks so that much volumes of water can be harvested.

He advised government to consider providing free rain-water harvesting containers to the vulnerable and elderly persons, like how Ministry of Health has a Programme that offers free mosquito nets.

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