



CYNESA
CATHOLIC YOUTH NETWORK FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
IN AFRICA

Réseau de Jeunes catholiques pour un environnement durable en Afrique

**A YOUTH SUMMIT CONCEPT PAPER PREPARED BY THE
CATHOLIC YOUTH NETWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY IN AFRICA**

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**ON CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

MISSION STATEMENT:

“To create a roadmap, drawing from Catholic social teaching, for youth-led sustainable development in Africa.”

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Introduction

Young people today long for a way to make a difference in the world. They live at a critical time in the history of the world. The impacts of climate change are real and are taking their toll on the earth and its people. Youth worry about their future in a world where rain forests and oceans, clean water and air are threatened, and where rising temperatures create bigger storms and longer droughts.

The Catholic Church has always been a voice of hope in trying times. The Church's social teaching sheds light on a situation like climate change through Scripture, Catholic social teaching and the movement of the Holy Spirit. Catholic youth can be empowered to draw on our tradition and the Spirit to confront the threat of climate change with creativity, reflection, learning and action. When faith, knowledge, morality and compassion meet an issue...things begin to happen! Inspired by Blessed Pope John Paul II's 1990 message for World Day of Peace, in which he called for the need to upscale ecological awareness and to find fitting expression in concrete programmes and initiatives, young Catholics from Kenya, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and South Africa, drawn from and representing university chaplaincies and parish groups, joined up to respond to this invitation, and to set up the Africa-wide *Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa* (CYNESA) in January 2012.

This Concept Paper outlines an initiative conceived by the young Catholics of the African continent to address the gaps and grey areas in African-led efforts in the realization of environmental sustainability.

Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA)

As the immediate heirs to poor leadership and therefore to this unsustainable future, Africa's current youth population has an urgent responsibility to ensure that its communities, countries and the continent at large act as frontrunners for a safe, sustainable and productive future for them and their children. Taking advantage of social media to communicate and give shape to this initiative, these young people have now identified the mission of CYNESA as being the platform through which young Catholics across Africa can offer a response to the twin challenges of environmental degradation and climate change, from the perspective of Catholic social teaching on care for creation, paying attention to the most vulnerable. CYNESA is therefore well positioned to organize this summit.

The concept of this plan is to bring together the core team of CYNESA, to discuss the environmental challenges in Africa, and to fashion out the best way forward towards a Catholic youth response.

Networking and collaboration are key elements of CYNESA's operation; hence CYNESA will partner with like-minded youth-led initiatives both in Africa and beyond to make this groundbreaking summit happen.

Situation Analysis

Africa is endowed with rich natural resources. The question is "are the vast resources being protected for the future and for Africa's benefit?" Whilst the North and Eastern African countries are engulfed with droughts and famine we know there are massive underground water resources and water storage potential. The Sahara region through solar energy and the Highlands of Ethiopia through Hydro Electric Power could power the whole of Africa. As much as we think large, we also need to think small; about the promotion of beehives, of

sustainable forest use, of micro water storage and power generation schemes and the many other community level activities.

The Summit

The Summit will be a platform for the discussion and reflection on Catholic social teaching on care for creation. It shall address the needs of both the African Youth and the continent at large, with emphasis on its vast natural resources and potentials. It will culminate into refining of CYNESA's objectives and mission, an organizational structure and an action plan. This Summit will provide members with an excellent opportunity to meet face to face and do something positive for Youth, the Continent and to plot the way forward for the coming decades.

Summit Mission

To create a roadmap, drawing from Catholic social teaching, for youth-led sustainable development in Africa.

Summit Main Objective

To provide a platform for discussion in order to address the problems faced by African Youth and to deliver recommendations, inspired by and drawing from Catholic social teaching, for sustainable development on the continent.

Summit Goals

- A. To mobilize and create a pool of young Catholics, ready to steer the continent towards a smart, sustainable and inclusive future.
- B. To provide a stimulating environment for participants to discuss the potential of Africa and to showcase the innovations and entrepreneurial potentials.
- C. To refine and ratify the network's charter.
- D. To discuss and formulate a long-term action plan.
- E. To provide participants with the opportunity to expand their skills and knowledge of the continent for the advancement of opportunities and solutions to challenges in the continent.
- F. To network with youth and other professional participants, and to learn from each other and share experiences.

CYNESA has developed the themes of this Summit from the major environmental problems that affect Africa in general and more specifically African Youth. The thematic concern of the Summit shall address;

- Sustainable Development and Climate Change
- Catholic social teaching on care for creation
- Networking and advocacy for environmental sustainability

Expected Participants

This Summit shall bring together a total of 30 young Africans between the ages 18-35 years. It is prudent for emphasis to be placed on the African Youth as they are the pillars of transformation and progress in our societies. Experts in the field of Catholic social teaching, sustainable development, climate change, networking and advocacy will also be invited.

Methodology

The Summit will be conducted on participatory lines with liturgies, short plenary inputs, speakers' presentations, reports discussions, committee meetings and followed by general and small group discussions. It would also include video shows (*documentary slides*), establishment of a "follow-up committee" to see the implementation of the recommendations. The culmination of the Summit will be a day-long excursion and community service within the host country to appreciate the African Culture and to enhance social networking and bonding. This Summit will be conducted in a manner that promotes social interaction, learning and appreciation of one another.

Selected participants, with priority to delegates from outside Kenya, will be invited to participate (subject to accreditation by the United Nations Environment Program) in the United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA), which will be held at the United Nations complex in Nairobi, immediately after the Summit. The UNEA will offer CYNESA delegates an unprecedented opportunity to experience environmental policy making at the international level, exposure to advocacy techniques and networking opportunities with government officials, international and local environmental experts, members of faith groups and civil society organizations.

Date and Venue of the Summit

The Summit would be held between the 16th to 20th June 2014. The United Nations Environmental Assembly will follow immediately after, June 23rd to 27th 2014, and preceded by a Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, June 21st to 22nd 2014.

Coordination

The Summit shall be coordinated by a Secretariat made up of volunteers from CYNESA and partnering organizations. However, the Secretariat shall work hand in hand with the various committees that shall be formed to oversee the preparation and realization of the summit. The Committees shall comprise, but not limited to:

- 1) Communication and Publicity
- 2) Logistics and organization
- 3) Financial
- 4) Legal and Administration

Partnership

We believe that it is better to collaborate than to compete. Synergy and cooperation are essential for positive and enduring changes on the African continent. By collaborating, we can turn off the tide of indifference and inaction in Africa. The changes that are happening in Africa and across the world call for a large number of organizations and young visionaries to

get involved to work together and help create a new vision to put us on a path towards a sustainable and inclusive future.

Funding

The Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) has offered seed funding for the CYNESA Summit. The Secretariat is approaching other international Catholic organizations for additional funding.

Expected outcomes

CYNESA envisages achieving the following;

- An upsurge in Catholic youth participation in sustainable development and other societal issues in Africa
- A better understanding of the concept of sustainability and the roles of Catholic youth in the future society
- A clearly defined roadmap for sustainable development in Africa
- Strengthened network of Catholic youths and organizations dealing with environmental sustainability in Africa
- A re-energized youth ready to take head-on the challenges of our society

Conclusion

The main challenge will be funding for follow-up activities. However, we are convinced that the realization of the African Dream remains with youth and its natural resources, and that this summit is key to its future. CYNESA is committed to the attainment of real sustainable development and hereby calls on likeminded individuals and organizations to join hands in the realization of this dream.