

'People and Pollution'

Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue at the
United Nations Environment Assembly 3

Felix Dodds

Foreword

This edition of 'Perspectives', reports on the discussions and recommendations from the multi-stakeholder dialogue, 'People and Pollution', held at the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) on the 5th December 2017.

I served as the moderator for the dialogue, which represents part of UN Environment's commitment to deliver on the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development outcome document: 'The Future We Want'. This document calls for "the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and exploring new mechanisms, to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society" within the framework of its decision to strengthen the role of the United Nations Environment Programme as the leading global environmental authority.

Stakeholder engagement has been an important component

of the development of UN Environment since its inception at the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment. The concept of 'Major Groups' was pioneered by the first UN Environment Executive Director, Maurice Strong, when he was Secretary-General of the Earth Summit in 1992. He recognized that categorizing all non-government actors under the term NGO or civil society meant that not all voices were being heard. He understood that in policy discussions it is vital that women are able to provide a gender perspective, that youth can present the views of the next generation, that indigenous peoples are given the opportunity to talk about environmental impacts on their land, and that local and subnational governments

can help inform national governments of the challenges to implementation at the local level. In 2004, UN Environment recognized the need to hear the voices of a broader range of stakeholders – beyond the nine Major Groups. This was also reflected by the UN as a whole in the 2030 Agenda.

Multi-stakeholder dialogues in other forums could also be used to inform the development of UN Environment's own approach to embedding stakeholders in the workings of UN Environment Assembly and UN Environment. The UN Commission on Sustainable Development from 1998 to 2001, is an interesting example. The first two days of each session were given over to

four multi-stakeholder dialogues on issues that Member States were going to negotiate, enabling them to draw useful lessons into policy decisions. This approach might be worth considering for future UNEA sessions.

The development of the Sustainable Development Goals provides a good illustration of how governments, the UN and relevant stakeholders can contribute their expertise to negotiations, encouraging them to engage in the implementation of these goals and targets. Multi-stakeholder partnerships will play a critical role in helping to implement UNEA decisions, particularly if stakeholders are engaged in the development of those decisions.



Felix Dodds

A City of Bonn International Ambassador, Senior Fellow at the Global Research Institute and Senior Affiliate at the Water Institute at the University of North Carolina.

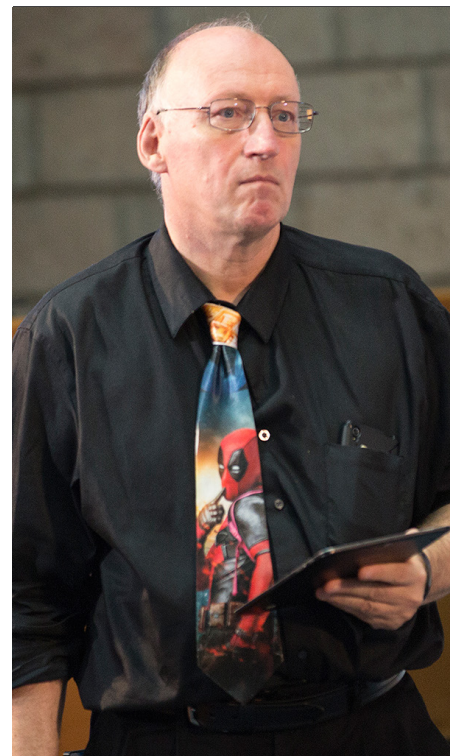


Photo by IISD/ENB Mike Mururakis

Summary of the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue

The topic of the multi-stakeholder dialogue was 'People and Pollution'. The dialogue was made up of two sessions with a total of five panellists, including two Champions of the Earth. The panellists talked about how pollution affects the lives of their communities, and offered some solutions to these problems and suggestions of how these might be applied in different contexts. The dialogue focused on root causes of different aspects of pollution, citing connections to poverty, the rule of law, women's rights and human rights. Respondents included government ministers and a broad range of stakeholders.

Pollution is ubiquitous: it is in what we eat, it is in the air we breathe, it is in the water we drink. Pollution is not just an environmental problem but is also a social, economic and health issue. Pollution affects people all around the world; however, the most vulnerable, including women, children and those in poverty, suffer the most.

Therefore, addressing pollution contributes to all dimensions of sustainable development: tackling poverty, improving health, creating decent jobs, and protecting our natural resources and biodiversity.

Takeaway messages from the dialogue:

- The implementation of global agreements is critical.
- There is a clear need for multi-stakeholder and multi-level collaboration.

- Member States need to further develop mechanisms to enhance coherence and efficiency.
- Too often laws are ignored; increased capacity support is needed in many developing countries to support the implementation of national laws.
- Governments can do a lot more to incentivize sustainability – a prime example being the carbon tax. They can also establish recycling targets and develop innovative schemes.
- Green Public Procurement needs to be expanded at all levels of government.
- Circular economy is an important approach and in which we need to take out the chemicals from nature – perhaps through a spiral economy would be one where byproducts form a component to

another and a platform for other initiatives.

- Data and monitoring underpins all approaches to addressing pollution and should be at the core of multi-level partnerships.
- Building public awareness of the problem will mobilize political will.
- Voluntary commitments are a good first step, but are not enough. More regulation is needed at the international and national level.
- Extended producer responsibility should be built into all products.
- Sustainable products should be made more affordable through government incentives.
- Clean industry and other stakeholders should work together in multi-stakeholder partnerships to promote innovative solutions and help build local capacity to address pollution.
- Addressing corruption in both the public and private sector underpins all approaches to addressing pollution.
- UNEA needs to provide clearer input to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). This should include UNEA-4 addressing the environmental contribution to the Heads of State HLPF in 2019.



Introduction

The multi-stakeholder dialogue at the 2017 session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, which took place on 5 December, provided an opportunity to discuss how pollution affects people and the initiatives that have been taken to tackle it.

The interactive dialogue built upon the Leadership Dialogues that were held earlier in the day between governments and public sector organizations, incorporating the voice of Major Groups and stakeholders.

Theme

The multi-stakeholder dialogue focused on the topic of 'People and Pollution'. Building on the campaign for pledges to beat pollution and the discussions held during the Assembly and preceding Leadership Dialogues, it examined the root causes of different aspects of pollution, including the connections to poverty, the rule of law and human rights.

The dialogue discussed how pollution affects people's lives and the solutions that might be applied across a variety of contexts. The

real-life stories of the participants grounded the discussions in reality and celebrated lifestyle champions.

The multi-stakeholder dialogue approach allows for extensive interaction between government and non-governmental participants in a non-formal environment, providing the opportunity to speak openly and to raise challenges. The audience is encouraged to contribute to the discussions.

The Dialogue

Felix Dodds, the co-director of the 2018 Nexus Conference on Food-Water-Energy-Climate, was the facilitator for the multi-stakeholder dialogue. **Ambassador Marie Chatardová**, the President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), delivered the opening comments. She underlined the importance of the engagement of Major Groups and other stakeholders, and the vital role they play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. She reminded us that pollution impacts on all of us, whether we are politicians or citizens.

Session 1 of the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue: How Does Pollution Affect Us?



The first session opened with three presentations.

The first presentation was given by **Halima Hussein**, a Kenyan lawyer working with Natural Justice: Lawyers for Communities and the Environment.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is a great pleasure to join you this evening for the multi-stakeholder dialogue of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly. I am a community lawyer working with an organization called Natural Justice, and we use the law to support local communities as a means of alleviating the impacts of environmental degradation, including pollution, on their health and livelihoods, and on well-being more generally.

My work is challenging – not solely because of the continued pressures facing many local communities in Kenya and around the world, but also because the existing laws designed to protect communities and their environment are not upheld.

To illustrate this – I will first provide a brief background on Kenya and the Government's desire to fast-track development to propel it from being a developing country to a middle-income nation by 2030; second, I will tell you about these development projects and their polluting impacts on communities; and lastly, I will demonstrate how the rights given to local communities under the Constitution and statute law are often not upheld. After which, I hope, you all

will have more compassion for the Sisyphean task ahead of me and other lawyers in Kenya and around the world who are fighting for the rights of local communities and, hopefully, be inspired to join us in demanding that nations uphold the international treaties and domestic laws designed to protect each and every citizen.

First – Kenya is a land of extreme inequalities. Less than 10,000 individuals control nearly two thirds of Kenya's \$67 billion economy and half of Kenya's 48 million population survive on less than \$2 a day. It isn't just income – there is a disparity of 16 years in life expectancy between different regions in Kenya.

In light of this, my country is currently pushing an ambitious development plan. A plan that is heavily focused on increased energy production, and large-scale infrastructural and industrial development. I understand the motivation for such a plan as it's a means of dealing with poverty and inequality, and transforming Kenya into a country that provides a high quality of life to all its citizens.

However, for this to occur, we must balance the potential for economic growth with the real



Photo by IISD/ENB Mike Mururakis

impacts – including in the form of pollution – that these projects will bring to communities surrounding these areas. These are never easy decisions to make. Ideally, both the benefits and impacts of such projects would be shared across the country. Unfortunately, it's unempowered, marginalized communities that bear the brunt of the environmental burdens even though these are the very people our development agenda insists it is seeking to uplift.

In my work, I have seen all too often how our laws are often ignored: first, in making decisions to award projects, and second, ensuring that projects comply with laws during their operations. And in this lies a huge problem – as it's these very laws – our strong and progressive Constitution and environmental laws – which do promote the sharing of benefits to all citizens

and the minimization of the impacts of pollution, particularly on our most vulnerable citizens.

I will share with you three examples of cases we work on with community members affected by development projects.

The first is the recently proposed 1,050MW coal-fired power plant in Lamu County, on the northern coast of Kenya. The Lamu Coal Plant is not the first, nor is it the only large-scale industrial project that is threatening the coastal communities.

A modelling study based on the specifications of the plant found that over its operating life of 40 years, it will adversely affect 460,000 people living along its emissions path and will be responsible for 1,600 premature deaths and 800 low birth weight births. Furthermore, the Government is pushing this project when the local community that is reliant on fishing and tourism are opposed to it due to the threat to their livelihoods.

Such significant impacts were not adequately assessed in the Environmental Impact Assessment, nor are they necessary when considering the advice from energy experts, hired by the Ministry of Energy and Petroleum, that such additions to our energy grid are not needed.

The Lamu Coal Plant provides a perfect example of the challenges in upholding existing laws, which had they been observed, would have shut down plans for this plant, in the face of threats of pollution to the lives and futures of the local communities.

The second example is the construction of road infrastructure from Isiolo to Moyale towns in northern Kenya. This is a project that people of that area have longed to have for over 30 years. The road has been constructed, but not without significant levels of avoidable pollution impacting local communities.

We saw these when contractors set up a stone-crushing site for road materials adjacent to a town. This led to dust storms frequently sweeping through the town – every 30 minutes at some parts of the year. These led to respiratory illnesses and affected the daily life of community members. Further, water points – so vital for the well-being of thousands of people in the arid north – were polluted by waste from road construction, including sewage from contractor's camps.

Such pollution impacts are completely avoidable and were, in fact, violations of both law and the specific licence conditions given to the project proponent. These acts of non-compliance with law lead to higher levels of pollution and therefore greater impacts on those living in close proximity to project sites.

The last example I wish to share relates to the levels of pollution affecting communities living close to salt producing factories on the coast of Kenya.

While there are undoubtedly benefits from this industry, we are again seeing numerous instances of legal non-compliance that result in high levels of pollution on those closest to projects. To each of the salt factories operating, communities have complained about the impacts of pollution.

For instance, water holes – the only free water sources available to people – have been destroyed or contaminated. Some villages are now forced to purchase water with the little money that they have. This occurs despite specific legal orders not to damage key water sources of local communities.

Salt factories can also generate significant levels of dust. Therefore, Environmental Impact Assessments and environmental licence conditions will usually order buffer zones be installed between a salt pan and a village. However, we have continually seen project proponents' failure in constructing these. In one case, a school was closed for

a number of days as the factory failed to install a buffer zone and the levels of dust from the salt factory made schooling impossible given the health risks to children.

It is painful to see such impacts, whose burdens escalate to become dangerous problems affecting the health and wellness of local communities, and which would have easily been prevented and alleviated through enforced laws and licence conditions.

So why – when we know of the impacts such pollution can have – were they not enforced? Why is it that, even despite numerous complaints of community members to regulatory bodies, these problems are often ignored? It can seem to these citizens – and we have heard this many times – that their lives and their dignity are not worth the same as those benefiting from these projects.

While we must continue to explore development, it must be done in a sustainable manner – and this categorically means that compliance with laws must occur. It's something that my organization and I are working towards with many committed community members and also regulatory officials. Failure to observe and enforce existing laws contributes to this pervasion of inequality in our society, where communities such as those I've referred to are forced to bear the burdens of pollution – when they are completely avoidable – and not benefit from the rewards that some of these projects can bring.



The second presentation was given by **Sascha Gabizon**, the Executive Director of Women in Europe for a Common Future. She also co-facilitates the Women's Major Group at the UN, ensuring the participation of over 1,000 Women's organizations in Sustainable Development Goals policy processes.

You asked the question of how pollution affects me personally, my community, and what the effects are of pollution. I will start with a testimony from my youth, about the pollution of a chemical factory near my home.

I grew up near a chemical plant, which was dumping untreated wastewater full of pollutants into a nearby pond. Next to the plant were community vegetable gardens, but people were getting ill. That is when the community, my mother and our neighbours created an environmental organization and started a long struggle to get the chemical plant to stop polluting our environment. This was in Holland, in the 1970s. We all had very high levels of dioxin in our blood. Dioxin is one of the worst killer toxins, linked to cancer. Even after the chemical plant was closed, or moved to a developing country (that often happened), many people in the neighbourhood developed cancer. Luckily my family was spared, but the father of my partner later died of it.

It is very sad that first we have to have many victims before action is taken to stop a polluting industry or a polluting product. Often 30, 50 years may pass and millions die as a result of the pollution, as we have seen with lead in petrol, with asbestos and with terrible chemical pollution such as Minamata and Bophal.

And we have still not learned our lessons. You probably read the UNEA messages coming into the building today saying that there are 200,000 deaths from immediate pesticide poisoning every year! 100,000 deaths from chrysotile asbestos every year. The Lancet has reported that we are talking about 9 million deaths EVERY YEAR because of pollution.

Cancers can take years to show, and then it is often too late to show the cause is from the chemical or asbestos plant or incinerator in your neighbourhood.

And many of these deaths are children. I was very moved by the testimony from the coastal community here in Kenya, where a lead smelter was built. First the community was glad, as it brought jobs, but now 200 children and 80 adults have died. And now they are sad that the smelter was ever built.

How many children have brain damage from lead poisoning? And why did it take us so long to start phasing it out of paints, petrol, and stopping these polluting lead smelters.

Reports on pollution show that those who have least income, those who are most marginalized, often live on or near the most polluted sites – strangely enough you don't find any billionaires living on waste dumps. This is of course a terrible form of discrimination.



Photo by IISD/ENB Mike Mururakis

The worst are persistent pollutants such as the oil spills in the Niger Delta, or Uranium mines or the nuclear accidents such as Chernobyl and Fukushima, which have made areas as big as Luxembourg uninhabitable for centuries.

And a major problem is that the companies responsible for the damage, mostly don't pay for it – for example, the nuclear operators accountability is limited by law and they can avoid paying for insurance.

Because that is the new reality. Even when the companies are proven to be responsible for the death of workers and neighbours, they will put loads of pressure on governments not to be held responsible or pay, or the polluting business will be moved to a lower income country.

Since the time I lived near the chemicals plant, levels of dioxins and other POPs (persistent organic pollutants) have gone down in my country, but not enough. And hundreds of similar hazardous chemicals have been added by chemical industry.

Now the toxic chemicals are directly in the products which we buy: the non-sticky frying pans and electronics full of PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) and PFOS (perfluorooctane sulphonate); and the flame-retardants, Bisphenol-A and phthalates in children's toys and plastics.

The problem with these toxins is that we don't see them, and the current laws, even in Europe where we have a very advanced chemical legislation, do not

protect our health. The chemical and pesticide industry need to be made accountable and pay into a global fund to pay for damage to the victims and cleaning up their products from our environment. Let them take the pesticides out of our drinking water, and the plastic waste out of our fields and oceans.

Currently, in our organization we are working with partners in Africa and Asia on social and gender impacts of pollution from plastics, e-waste and industrial waste, working with

the secretariats of the international chemicals conventions. There are lots of young and innovative social entrepreneurs and community cooperatives who have already developed alternative, non-polluting solutions. These are the groups we should support and have here at UNEA, not the big fertilizer and chemical companies. We need the social environmental entrepreneurs, the NGOs and the civil movements to help us make the great big leap towards a pollution-free planet.



The final presentation for the first session was by **Olga Speranskaya**, the co-Chair of the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN), a global network of non-governmental organizations working towards a toxic-free future. Olga Speranskaya's work focuses on the design and implementation of the IPEN global strategy, aimed at addressing pollution sources, and domestic and international chemical safety policies and processes, with a particular focus on the effects of pollution on the lives of women.



Photo by IISD/ENB Mike Mururakis

Yesterday a Memorandum of

milk to the nursing baby. Exposures

assess the level of mercury in

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_14444

