

# REPORT OF PARTICIPATION IN THE COP21, CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE IN PARIS, FRANCE

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## Preamble

Responding to an invitation by the African Climate Policy Center (ACAPC) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) on a Call for proposals to host a side event at the African Pavilion during COP21/CMP11 in Paris from November 30<sup>th</sup> December 12<sup>th</sup> 2015, I put in an application. The Call listed the partners of the African Pavilion as the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA). Based on the Thematic Areas for display that were listed in the invitation letter, I chose "Climate-Smart Agriculture and food security" as the sub-theme for my display and to show a Documentary film entitled "*System of Rice Intensification (SRI): Growing More Rice with Less Water. Experiences from Kenya*". I submitted my application on-line, including a synopsis of the film, and a weblink for pre-viewing the film. I also applied on-line for participation in the main Climate Change conference (COP21).

I received positive confirmation that my application had been accepted, by the organizers, and further, that that my registration for the Sustainable Innovation Forum 2015 (SIF15) had been accepted to participate in the conference in Paris, France. However, both the SIF15 organizers and the UNECA stated that they were not sponsoring participants. I therefore requested Cornell University's System of Rice Intensification Programme for travel sponsorship. My application was accepted and the Travel Sponsorship approved. I was sent US\$3494.04 by Cornell University to facilitate my travel, accommodation and subsistence while travelling in Paris for this Conference. This report offers some basic insights on what I saw, did and lessons learnt. This is presented as follows:

- 1) Screening of the SRI film at COP21
- 2) Video interview of my SRI work and COP 21
- 3) Attending the Exhibitions (Espaces Generations Climat)
- 4) Participating in TerrAfrica Side meeting (on Sustainable land Management in Africa)
- 5) Participating in the Sustainable Innovation Forum 2015 (SIF15)
- 6) Lessons Learnt
- 7) Acknowledgements

## Annexes

- 8) Photos taken during the two weeks (attached as a zip folder)
- 9) Accounting for funds received (submitted as a separate Annex)

### **1) Screening of the SRI film at COP21**

My communications with UNECA, before departing Nairobi for Paris, revealed that all films under the African Pavilion were being screened together in one room. The Coordinator for this was Mr. Lars Jørgensen, to whom I submitted the film in soft copy, and later in on USB once in Paris. Thus, the SRI film was screened among others (and not in its own booth as I had expected). The attendance was good and the audience appreciated. However, it was not possible to collect data on this since the films were running one after the other.

### **2) Video interview of my SRI work and COP 21**

I was requested by journalists from the University of Queensland for an interview on SRI (System of Rice intensification) and my participation and observations of the COP21 Climate Change Conference. I gave this interview which I sent to Prof. Norman via '*Wetransfer*'.

In the interview I described SRI, what it is, its niche in water savings, increasing food production and climate change adaptation/resilience. I also described our work on SRI in Kenya. I then gave opinions of the Climate Change conference. I said that negative impacts of climate change can be reversed, drawing lessons from the successes of reducing HIV spread in Africa through behavioral change, and also reducing acid rain in Europe through environmental awareness and action. The same can happen to turn climate change menace to a success story.

### **3) Attending the Exhibitions (Espaces Generations Climat)**

I visited the exhibition Centre (Espaces Generations Climat) at which various climate change innovations were on display. The Center also had meeting rooms for various forums, including film screening rooms. I viewed as many displays as I could and attended some of the presentations e.g. there was a Forum hosted by ICRAF at the Center. Among the innovations that interested me were on energy, water savings, agriculture and youth. I met the Journalists who video-taped my interview at this pavilion.

### **3) Participating in TerrAfrica Side meeting (on Sustainable land Management in Africa)**

This was a one-day meeting organized by NEPAD's NPCA as a side event on 4<sup>th</sup> Dec 2015, which I participated. The meeting was meant to conduct a review of lessons learned from experiences of the GEF Strategic Investment Program (SIP) for Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in Sub-Saharan Africa under the NEPAD - TerrAfrica Partnership programme. The TerrAfrica Programme was closing its functions in 2015 in about 37 African countries where it has been operational over the last ten year. This meeting, attended by most of the member countries, was to identify ways forward in the light of new international issues such as climate Change and the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

#### **4) Participating in the Sustainable Innovation Forum 2015 (SIF15)**

This was an invite-only Forum which I attended between 7<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> December 2015 at Stade de France, in north Paris, France. It was a very interesting Forum addressed by among others; Dr. Achim Steiner - Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson - President of Iceland, and Dr. Ernest Moniz - Secretary of Energy, USA. Through the various presentations, energy was mostly discussed. The Session for sustainable agriculture and water was also interesting. During Group discussions, I attended the Climate Change Education group (based on previous invitation). The SIF15 also hosted some exhibits on Climate Change innovations.

#### **5) Lessons Learnt**

By participating in COP 21, attending the presentations, viewing the innovations on display and participating in various meetings, I gained a lot of knowledge, for instance: The role of countries in negotiating their strong positions to safeguard development/industrialization, while others are negotiating for gaining from the various carbon funds that have been developed or are under discussion. The energy nexus is really ahead of agriculture, environment etc in terms of innovations that are being rolled out. For instance, Iceland has industrialized purely on clean energy, or the fact that all buses in Scotland run on Hydrogen, while 30% of their cars are now electric. There were also displays of electric cars (BMW) and motorbikes. Innovations in agriculture are shifting to greenhouse farming and hydroponics, to the extent that Iceland is self sufficient of vegetables. In Africa, sustainable land management (SLM) had been successfully implemented through GEF-funded TerrAfrica Programme covering rainfed agriculture, but had not been linked to climate change adaptation programmes. This could be the next nexus. Aware that SRI is still too unknown to many decision makers and farmers in Africa, we could enlist SRI as an SLM technology (and push for GEF to include irrigated agriculture in its next phase). On Climate education, the large multinational companies were too inward-looking, discussing about training of their staff. I pointed out the gaps in Africa in curriculums in Universities and schools, stating that we are not bringing up climate-sensitized children and youth. There is need to support institutionalizing climate education in schools and tertiary education. Africa is still a net carbon sink, but this could change very soon if agriculture and energy continue to rely on natural resources exploitation. SRI is one intervention that could make great inroads towards climate change adaptation and resilience in the world.

#### **7) Acknowledgements**

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Cornell University and in particular, the SRI program for the sponsorship to attend the COP 21 and the SIF15 in Paris, France. Special thanks to Prof. Norman Uphoff for his continued support and encouragement to carry the torch of SRI, not only in Kenya, but to the world. Many thanks to other colleagues at Cornell, including Olivia Dent and Erika Styger, and all who have assisted in one way or other. THANK YOU.