

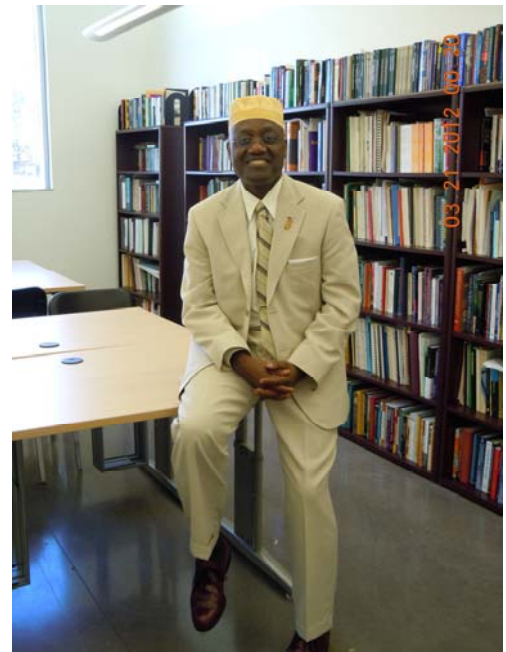
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

My Dear Friends and Colleagues:

The accelerated changes occurring in Africa's ecosystems (water, air and land) owing to the alteration and modification of the environment deserve the attention of the academic world as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations. The rate and magnitude of the changes occurring in the biomes of Africa are alarming and the agents of change are quite obvious---it is humans who are exacerbating the decline in quality and quantity of environment, the decline in the biodiversity and the deterioration in the quality of life of people in the urban and rural places of Africa.

African governments and development agencies understand the necessity to operationalize the concepts of sustainable development and sustainability in the economic development strategies of the region. Such development strategies are needed to preserve and conserve the most pristine and beautiful areas of Africa while providing opportunities for economic growth and development. For Africa, it is imperative to have a balanced growth which fosters development and protects the environment. In both cases (Economic growth and environmental protection), the emphasis is on poverty reduction.

The conservation of Africa's natural resources must continue to be the focus of national governments, local governments, international organizations, and the private agencies. There are lessons to learn from Western perspectives of land protection and resource conservation. There is also a very important aspect of blending the Western perspectives with a strong indigenous knowledge system from Africa so as to make the strategies for economic development and conservation to work. Many Africa's park, scenic vistas and wildlife should continue to be considered national treasures. The economic success of African countries should enhance the ability of the countries to put natural areas aside for recreational and scientific purposes. African countries, regardless of cultural differences should be able to adopt Western techniques in order to manage their natural areas, market the natural areas for tourism and research purposes and modify those techniques to work in the African setting. One must understand that conservation is not a difficult concept to transfer. It is "acting" on conservation that is most difficult. The current plight of the African wildlife can be reduced if the International Union for the Conservation of



Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) guidelines are instructive in the development processes. The guidelines call for a) the legal protection of ecological systems as permanently protected areas b) the effective protection that is fully funded so as to provide the manpower necessary to protect the wildlife c) ensuring a minimum size of 1000 contiguous hectares with distinct use zones d) alteration of natural resources due to exploitation without a balanced conservation and protection must be prohibited and e) Tourism and scientific uses of the natural resources must be encouraged.

It is generally believed that in many protected areas in Africa, the managers are beginning to recognize the significance of these guidelines and are embracing them in their protection plans. Economic development and growth are possible with sound environmental protection. Some of the papers in this issue bring this argument forward. Other papers in this issue are no doubt significant in the debate about sustainable development and sustainability in Africa. We are grateful for your continued support and encouragement as the contributors to this issue of the JSDA delve further into expanding the debates on development in Africa.

With warm regards,

Valentine Udoh James, Ph.D.: CEI; CAQS
Professor of Environmental Management, Planning and Policy
Certified Environmental Inspector
Certified Air Quality Specialist
Clarion University of Pennsylvania