

Urgent call to establish a new UN Convention for Conserving River Deltas (UN-CCRD)

The African Centre for Climate Actions and Rural Development Initiative (ACCARD), Nigeria's Bayelsa State Government, the Institute for Environmental Diplomacy and Security at the University of Vermont, the Consortium for Capacity Building at the University of Colorado, Transboundary Water In-Cooperation Network (TWIN), Water Environment Forum from Pakistan, Center for the Advancement of Public Action (CAPA) at Bennington College; Vietnam National University from Vietnam, among others governmental, science and local community stakeholders across the different continent are championing the call for a convention or special recognition for the protection of Deltas globally.

The “DeltasUnite initiative” is a collaboration for the protection of disappearing Deltas held a hybrid side-event at the United Nations Headquarters 2023 Water conference titled *“Integrative Highland to Ocean (H2O) Action for Disappearing Deltas: Towards a UN Convention on Conserving River Deltas.”*

It is seeking a UN convention for the conservation of river deltas similar to the operational conventions for climate change, desertification, and wetlands. With a concrete policy action bringing together key stakeholders representing local communities, academia, government and private sector.

Highlighting the concerns for river deltas communities and highlands to lowlands watercourses (corridors) worldwide. It identified accelerating sea level rise, saltwater intrusion from the oceans, rapidly melting glaciers, increasing dams and shifting rainfall patterns in the highlands to adversely affect global deltas. Conservation of inland and ocean facing deltas is therefore critical to offsetting the deadly and worsening climate crises to save lives of millions of vulnerable people facing these crises.

The convention will address continuing loss of deltas to check human migration, exacerbated poverty, hunger and engender communal conflicts as well as new disease outbreaks. With serious future implications for the peaceful coexistence of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), South Asian and South-East Asian countries with shared transboundary water resources. Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) especially women, young people, and the elderly – remain the most vulnerable and mostly affected by these impacts, who have contributed least to cause global climate change.

Ocean-facing deltas in industrialized countries will equally be affected by sea level rise and salt-water intrusion. Due to the common but differentiated responsibility of countries in causing the global climate change, participants made a strong case for greater collaboration for the industrialized countries to work closely with developing and small

inland states to protect disappearing deltas, globally. The event suggested amongst others, indigenous and academic knowledge sharing and exchange, substantial financing (for responses in terms of mitigation and adaptation). To deepen community stakeholder's participation and the development of community scientists, intergenerational integration as game changer in governance, were among innovative actions preferred for transformative actions for the conserving river deltas.

Underscoring the urgency and need for greater action for setting up a “special convention” or “recognition” to UNite Delta countries and communities, will contribute to global climate regulation, food security and biodiversity conservation. The NEW UN-CCRD suggest to;

- (1) Greater multi-stakeholders' collaboration between the global north and south for the cleanup the present damages (e.g., loss of mangroves to aquaculture, urbanization and sea level rise) to build better climate resilience and response strategies.

This is necessary because current UN conventions do not focus on delta conservation with multi-scale lens. The new UN-CCRD provide for a unique win-win opportunity for both mitigation and adaptation to the global climate change fight through academic knowledge sharing, investments and community participation and directly benefitting from REDD initiative.

- (2) The UN-CCRD novel science knowledge to community action partnerships initiative, for the conservation of river deltas across the globe. Will support and trained citizen (community) scientists for the deployment of locally adaptive and innovative technologies such as water sensor networks, weather monitoring systems, crowdsourcing apps, to generate streams of data for deploying *community-centric multi-hazard early warning early action systems*. This specific community driven and natured solutions, green infrastructure design, ecological restoration of riparian areas and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

- (3) UN-CCRD will work towards establishing global standards for access to clean water, work towards agreeing upon water quality standards in river deltas. Facilitate the emergence of DeltasUNITE, cooperative transboundary agreements in each river basin, from highlands to oceans, to regulate the pollution entering waterways in both upstream and downstream communities.