

URANGA ENTITY INSTITUTE

A PROJECT UNDER THE URANGA DEVELOPMENT ACTION GROUP

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Press Release

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Statement of the Uranga Entity Institute (UEI) on the World Wetlands Day

Commercialize the Water Hyacinth Plant in the Lake Victoria Basin

Kisumu, 2 February 2008- On this World Wetlands Day, the UEI is reiterating that thousands of Kenyans residing in the lake side city of Kisumu are sinking into poverty due to the perennial problem of water hyacinth which has greatly hampered economic activities.

Many youths have resorted to the informal bicycle taxi of '*boda boda*', washing of vehicles in the lake shores among other environmental degrading activities which largely contribute to water pollution and posing a serious health risk to the society in general. As fish stocks are being depleted and the taps have gone dry due to administrative constraints by the City authorities; coupled with the post election violence that rocked the City, poverty levels are on the increase.

Considering that the city is stretched due to lack of proper sanitation as untreated sewage is being emptied in the Lake Victoria, it is just a matter of time before an outbreak of water related diseases especially cholera. With meagre family earnings and increased dependency for those in salaried employment, mass hospitalization due to diarrhoeal diseases would seem a luxury. Pockets of Kisumu estates have once witnessed this happening and it would be detrimental if the same is repeated.

On a visit to the shores of Kisumu, the UEI's Wilson Rading Outa called for the development of factories to process, harvest and commercialize the water hyacinth in order to create quality jobs for the local population and to facilitate access to the fish stocks. "Innovation is the way forward and economically empowered people will not destroy wetlands as they are healthy people who understand and appreciate the vital marine ecosystem", Mr. Outa said. Noting that the Luo community is synonymous with the fish eating culture, respected for their intellectual acumen and providing innumerable professors and many other professionals mythically arising from the perceived eating of the head of tilapia fish, sustenance of the same would be difficult if we fail in the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

The theme of the day being **Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People**, the degradation of water catchments areas and inland wetlands (rivers, lakes, ponds, marshes, mangroves, coral reefs e.t.c.) are a risk to the major economic activities of fishing and farming contributing not only to the food shortage but also poor diets and unhealthy nutrition. "With the global food prices at an all time high and likely to rise, the protection of marine environment will ensure that we have adequate food protein", Mr. Outa concluded.

Green in Mind, Green in Soul, Green in Life
Green Approaches for Sustainable Development

The Uranga Entity Institute (UEI) is an independent broad based public policy research project operated by the Uranga Development Action Group (UDAG). The UEI carries out its activities through advocacy, training and information dissemination. The UEI promotes the view that innovation and culture are an integral part of environment sustainability and crucial to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). For further information, please contact Wilson Rading Outa at: (+254) 020 780569 or wilsonrading@yahoo.com