

## 24<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

### Written statement by Peace Society of Kenya

*Agenda item 5: Principles of effective governance for delivery of equitable and sustainable development for all*

#### **The Issues of Sustainable Development in Kenya**

Sustainability is a convoluted word, one that invokes images of humans living harmoniously with nature; or a system that benefits people, planet and profit. The most comprehensive definition of sustainability refers to practices that allow the current population to meet their basic needs, without jeopardizing the needs of future generations. The topic of sustainable development has become ubiquitous in the last 30 years (Kenya. 2020), yet how to achieve such a goal, or whether it is even possible, remains a major unknown.

Currently, there is no country that meets the basic needs of its population, while also using sustainable levels of resources. Therefore, the business as usual practices will not provide a sustainable socio-ecological system and alternative strategies are needed to promote a balance between societal needs and the environment. Yet sustainable development is far from straightforward and management practices, even though well-intentioned, such as restoration and conservation initiatives can hinder recovery of natural systems and even lead to declines in human population size and well-being. Nonetheless, the United Nations (UN) makes continuous and considerate efforts to overcome current and future sustainability challenges. The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets represent a major achievement in the development of sustainable practices on a global scale. However, there is no quantifiable strategy to achieve sustainability nor the goals; although interconnected, the goals provide no details on their synergies and trade-offs when it comes to overall human and ecosystem well-being. Two recurrent themes in the literature on SDGs relate to uncertainties surrounding interactions. Reducing poverty and feeding the population are major challenges facing many African nations, but it has been argued that first other issues need to be addressed, such as access to clean water and improved. UN are intricately linked with synergies between energy access, food production, medical facilities and water treatment .Climate change policies and renewable energy. Urban ecosystems, sustainable consumption and infrastructure development. Trade-offs often relate to socio-economic and environmental sustainability, as raising environmental standards can prove costly and beyond the capacity of smallholders. This trade-offs between socio-economic sustainability and environmental sustainability can have detrimental effects on the desired outcome, by either hampering the well-being of the human population or forcing individuals to relocate and by causing environmental degradation to spill over into other regions, ultimately undermining the environmental policy.

In the 1970s the Limits to Growth predicted that continuous growth would reach its limit in the 21st century resulting in a collapse of non-renewable resources, agricultural land and the

capacity to absorb pollutants. The model investigated feedbacks between population, industrial production, food supply, pollution and non-renewable resources, concluding that the pursuit of growth at the expense of the environment would lead to an uncontrollable decline in population and industrial capacity. However, I suggested that economic and ecological stability could be attained by reducing consumption and redistributing wealth. More than a decade later, the concept of sustainability as we know it today appeared in the Brundtland (1987) report, highlighting the need to maintain both present and future generation's ability to access resources. The debate continues over 'sustainable growth' and the role of technology and population planning, with more coupled human–environment models using socio-ecological indicators and investment in sustainable development. Following the introduction of the UN SDGs there have been numerous models analyzing the synergies and trade-offs between goals and measuring indicators or quantifying achievement of goals. Of the models mentioned, only a handful explicitly model human population as a function of well-being and the feedbacks with resource use. A recent article by Crist et al. (2022) warns that population size must be reduced through improved human rights to ensure long-term well-being for all life on Earth, suggesting that population size and social infrastructure is critical in modeling sustainability.

To better understand the challenges of sustainable development in our global socio-ecological system, we analyze the 17 UN SDGs using a simplified model with two regions – a lower income region and a higher income region, resource inequality, and potential human biases. Our model cannot mimic the exact targets of the UN SDGs, but it is able to provide key components of change that contribute to sustainable development and gives insight into why some well-intentioned policies and solutions have undesirable consequences.

## **For Governance**

The idea of governance has attracted significant attention from various stakeholders, consumers, and experts. The increasing emphasis on transparency and the shared commitment to combat corruption has greatly influenced both the business and public sectors.

To support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), I have suggested incorporating ecological, social, and economic aspects into effective governance for sustainable development. The United Nations Development Programme has highlighted the crucial role of governance in driving the development agenda beyond 2015, drawing on over a decade of experience in addressing development obstacles. There has been a shift in perspective, positioning governance as the central driving force in the pursuit of the SDGs. It is argued that governance plays a pivotal role in enabling the necessary inclusive and people-focused transformation.

Argues that governance structures often prioritize certain interests, especially political ones, within institutional processes. This focus on specific interests can hinder the promotion of the common good, thereby impeding equitable social development and inclusive growth. Furthermore, those charged with ensuring effective governance tend to prioritize short-term gains driven by their tenures of service, sacrificing the long-term sustainable plans and approach necessary for progress.