

Preface and Acknowledgements

A fundamental objective for organising the international conference on *indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in Africa and their relevance to sustainable development* is to help highlight IKS as an essential ingredient in the formulation and implementation of development policies and programmes in Africa and the developing world in general. UNESCO's Convention on Cultural Diversity advises development agencies to take into account cultural diversity in their development policies. The papers contained in this book systematically analyse the conceptual underpinnings of IKS and illustrate how they can contribute to advance sustainable development in Africa and the developing world. Researchers, teachers, students, policy-makers, administrators, development agents and non-governmental organisations will find this book most useful. Readers are encouraged to send any suggestions they have to the editors of the book.

Quite a number of organisations and individuals contributed immensely in diverse ways to make the organisation of this conference a success. We would first of all like to extend our highest appreciation to the Flemish Inter-university Council (VLIR) for providing the organisers with a grant of •20,000.00 to subvent the cost of the conference. The Ministry for Administrative Affairs, Foreign Policy and Tourism of the Flemish Community contributed •1,600.00 for defraying part of the conference costs while UNESCO Head Office in Paris provided USD 1,000.00 towards the printing of the conference proceedings.

We would also like to thank the Rector of the VUB and the International Relations Department of the university for providing the organisers with •600.00 to pay the accommodation of two resource persons from University of Ghana, which is a bilateral cooperation partner of the VUB. We are also most grateful to the University, particularly the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy for providing the conference venue and facilities at no cost.

We extend our warmest regards to His Royal Highness Prince Laurent of Belgium for finding time to participate in the second day of the conference. He effectively impressed upon the participants the essence of traditional knowledge systems in development decision-making. His attendance gave the conference serenity and extra value. Despite his very busy schedule, Prof. Dr.

Benjamin Van Camp, the Rector of the VUB, found time to deliver a very impacting keynote address of the conference. He sees a place for research on indigenous knowledge systems and recommends the setting up an IKS Centre in the VUB to promote research on the subject.

A number of international organizations sent resources persons to contribute to the debate with their own resources. These include the World Bank Head Office in Washington DC, the UNEP and WIPO Offices in Brussels, and IUCN Office in Gland, Switzerland.

We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the numerous resource persons who spent their precious time to prepare and to travel to Brussels to deliver and discuss papers at the conference. In addition, eight researchers and postgraduate students prepared and exhibited posters that added more scientific colour to the conference. They include Albert Ahenkan, Justice Bawole, Dorcas Mbuvi, Sara Mulder and Gisella Cruz Garcia. The participation of the Chiefs and Queen Mothers of the Ghanaian Community in Belgium was another spectacular element of the conference. We thank Mr. Kwaku Acheampong, President of Ghanaba VZW and its members for their most useful co-operation.

Ms Caroline Braibant and Ms Vera Matser handled the conference secretariat in a very professional manner. They spent several days and nights to make sure that the daily programme and administrative tasks were executed in time. They communicated very effectively with the resource persons, participants and conference sponsors. Mr Fantaw Mengiste Negash, the ICT Manager of the Human Ecology Department, very effectively managed the ICT facilities during the conference. The formatting and layout of the conference proceedings ready for publication was most efficiently done by Mr Vu Van Hieu. We thank you all for the dedicated work. Several individuals from the VUB, University of Ghent, and Katholiek Universiteit Leuven offered their services as secretaries, rapporteurs, hostesses and ushers in order to make the practical organisation of the conference efficient. They include the following:

CHAIRPERSONS

1. Prof. Dr. Luc Hens, Head of Human Ecology Department, VUB

2. Prof. Emmanuel Akyeampong, Head of Department of African History, Harvard University, USA
3. Thore Hem, NORAD, Oslo, Norway
4. Prof. Rik Pinxten, University of Ghent, Belgium
5. Prof. Han Verschure, Katholiek Universiteit Leuven, Belgium

DISCUSSANTS

1. Mr Ricarte Abejuela III (Philippines)
2. Dr. Kwame K. Domfeh (Ghana)
3. Dr. Farid DAHDOUH-GUEBAS (Belgium)
4. Mr. Bertus Haverkort (NL)
5. Jean Hugé (Belgium)
6. Dr. Ikechi Mgbeoji, York University, Canada
7. Mr. Gonzalo Oviedo (IUCN)
8. Ms. Lucia Stacey, Roskilde University
9. Prof. Mike Singleton, UCL
10. Mr. Daan Van Tassel (Belgium)
11. Prof. Dominique Vellard, Univ. of Nantes, France

CHIEF RAPORTEURS

1. Dr. Farid DAHDOUH-GUEBAS, VUB
2. Ms. Marianna Douka, Aegean University, Greece
3. Dr. Kwabena Adu-Poku Univ. of Goettingen (Germany)

RAPORTEURS

1. Mr. Ricarte Abujeula III (Philippines)

December 2006

2. Mr. Albert Ahenkan (VUB)
3. Mr. Justice Bawole, (University of Ghana Business School)
4. Ms. Angela Bekkers (Netherlands)
5. Ms. Caroline Braibant (VUB) and
6. Dr. Kwame K. Domfeh (University of Ghana Business School)
7. Ms. Leen Holvoet (Belgium)
8. Ms. Dorcas Mbuvi (Keyna)
9. Dr. Ndangwa Noyoo (South Africa)
10. Ms. Nadejda Petrova (VUB)
11. Mr. Maarten Van Opstal (Belgium)

SECRETARIES, HOSTESSES AND USHERS

1. Mr. Albert Ahenkan
2. Ms Dao Binh (VUB)
3. Caroline Braibant (UCL)
4. Mr. Vu Van Hieu (VUB)
5. Ms. Vera Matser (VUB)
6. Ms. Dorcas Mbuvi (VUB)
7. Ms. Lea Noël, (VUB)
8. Ms. Maria Pinilla (VUB)
9. Ms. Lebogang Seitshiro (VUB)
10. Ms. Esther Twumasi (VUB)

The secretariat of the Human Ecology Department provided the conference organizers with vital administrative and accounting services. We especially wish to thank Ms Priscilla Van Ruckelen, Mr. David Proot and Ms Jennifer Ahimbisibwe for their selfless services. Finally, we thank all the participants of the conference for the very interactive way they contributed to the discussions. It is to you that we dedicate the proceedings of the conference.

Emmanuel K. Boon and Luc Hens
Editors