



PAN AFRICAN CLIMATE JUSTICE ALLIANCE

For immediate release

PACJA IN WHIRLWIND CAMPAIGN IN US

New York City, 23rd March 2014

For a week now, the Pan African Climate Justice (PACJA) Secretary General Mithika Mwenda has been in the United States as part of the coalition's effort to build linkages with civil society counterparts in rich countries to compel their leaders to genuinely tackle the growing challenge of climate change. The tour dubbed "one struggle, many fronts", and supported by US-Africa Network, kicked off with two public events at George Washington University and Howard University, based in Washington, DC on March 21 2014. The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) jointly hosted a strategy meeting with PACJA, aimed at evaluating the achievements of a similar meeting held last year. The meeting brought together around 30 participants from key US organisations, including, among others, Oxfam America, Action Aid USA, Green Peace, and US-Climate Action Network.

Speaking during the meeting held at the *Financial Freedom Centre* at NAACP on Friday 21st March 2014, Mithika underscored the importance of unity among civil society, emphasizing that this is only way to defeat the challenge of climate change. "We need to forge unities both from the North and the South, between generations, among all peoples, rich and poor...and that is why I sincerely thank US-Africa Network for facilitating this tour, and NAACP for the continued commitment to convene diverse groups wherever we are in town." Said Mithika.



Brandon Wu (third left), from Action Aid USA, stressing a point during the PACJA strategy meeting at NAACP

William Lawrence, the Climate Justice Coordinator of US-Africa Network, who is coordinating the tour, said that when he met Mithika during the previous visit in September 2013, he was inspired by the work of the Alliance and thought that having African activists once more to speak to young people and universities would help his network in building a climate justice movement in the United States. “We are also campaigning for a fossil-free USA as the problems we are facing have their root cause from over-reliance on oil,” He said, “ Mithika is joined in this tour by Emem Okon, the Executive Director of *Kebetkache Women’s Development and Resource Centre* in the restive Niger Delta of Nigeria and she will share with us the struggles rural women go through on daily basis amid a globalized world.” “By hearing from Mithika and Emem I’m sure we will understand both the voices of local women struggling to survive while at the same understanding the Africa’s exciting collective movement to seek climate and economic justice”



Mithika (left) and Emem (right) speaking at Howard University

Emem narrated how the multinational companies originating from the United States such as Chevron and Exomobil have destroyed the Niger Delta environment and thus the livelihood of women and children while exploiting oil which

has brought more miseries than benefits to Nigerian people. “ To us women having such oil in our community has turned out to be a curse than blessings,” she said, “ we have been dispossessed and due to the patriarchal nature of our society women have suffered most.”

The next stop was the New York City, where the largest Environmental Network, NYC Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA) members were on hand to receive the team at the

Offices of UPROSE, a grass roots, multi-ethnic, intergenerational community-based organization dedicated to developing indigenous leadership dedicated to environmental and social justice in the City. UPROSE Executive Director, Elizabeth



Yeampierre, expressed joy that African people are making efforts to link with the rest of the global community to address climate change. “We are pleased to meet PACJA and thank you for selecting us in your tour,” she said. The NYC-EJA Executive Director, Eddie called for inclusion of grassroots people in the efforts to address climate change, and drew many similarities between PACJA and NYC-EJA. Both are networks valuing deep ownership of the people from diverse backgrounds, he noted, adding that the only way to solve global problems like climate change is the bottom-up mobilisations making those at the frontline of calamities part of the solution.

On Sunday 23rd March 2014, the team attended

the service at the historic Riverside Church in New York City, where the renowned Rev. James Forbes, preached and thanked them for choosing to pray with the NYC Riverside congregation. New York City Mayor, who spoke during the service, said that climate change is one of the global challenges which should be confronted. The team had an interactive session with the Church’s “Beloved Earth Community”, where they shared the objectives of their tour and African stories. The West Harlem Environmental Action (We ACT), was the next to host the team after the Sunday service, where they *PACJA team with NYC-EJA members at UPROSE Offices, New York City* shared issues of common concern.

The tour, which will see PACJA visiting other US States such as Michigan (Detroit), Illinois (Chicago), California (San Francisco) and Georgia (Atlanta) will end on 4th April 2014, and will expand the ongoing alliance building with demand for international agreements and the US national policies that will result in limiting of temperature rise to the levels recommended by science. The tour also seeks to share African civil society views on solutions to climate change that undermine the pursuit a better planet and human dignity, such as carbon trading, market-based approaches to forests, soil and water as well as highlighting the historical responsibilities of industrialized countries and US leadership in this endeavor, with the vexing question on

whether US can still meet its obligations as part of her fair share of the global carbon budget that takes into account historical per capita emissions.

And with its eyes on 2015 when the global community expect to conclude discussions on the New Climate Change Agreement, the team will seek long-term collaboration with US grassroots movements and organisations that are already on the ground mobilizing to exert pressure on leaders attending the UN Secretary General's High Level Summit on Climate Change, scheduled to take place in New York on 23rd September 2014. Of particular interest to this emerging PACJA-US Civil Society collaborative initiative is the African Leaders' Summit which will be hosted by President Obama in Washington, DC in August 2014, where there is consensus that key decisions concerning Africa's development will be discussed.

For more information please contact:

Dr. Kiyimba Joseph, Advocacy & Communications Manager, Pan African Climate Justice Alliance(PACJA), Tel +254-20-8075808, Mobile: +254-718-776-004, Email: kiyimba@pacja.org and/or Will Lawrence, US-Africa Network Climate Justice Coordinator, Mobile +1517.648.4558 Email: lawrence.will@gmail.com

You can also follow Mithika on twitter on @pacja1 or mithika_mwenda