



Conference: Environment and Citizen Participation

Ms N'DA KONAN Florence expressed her gratitude with respect to the honour of being invited to attend the 20th IOPD conference. She embraces the spirit of the fundamentals of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Sustainable Development. The Rio Declaration states that the best way to deal with environmental issues is to ensure the participation of all citizens. And it is that participation of all the citizens that attracted her attention in that definition. While addressing the audience in the first part her presentation, she focused on how the environmental issue is translated into action and at the level of the cities, and then the need for surveying all citizens so as not to leave anyone by the wayside. Doing it with all citizens is a principle of action that was stated in 1992 and has been turned into law in some countries, but not in all countries. Participation in some countries is based on voluntary action. But increasingly participation is coming to the forefront and organisations such as the IOPD are advocating it and affirming that participation is essential.

Thus, the 'how' still poses many problems: how to intensify this participation? How to involve the public in technical management? How to involve the whole public?

For this purpose, the speaker took into account the specific contexts, cultures, identities, vulnerabilities and strengths of the public and territories, which are also part of the answer to the methodological questions. As the conference was placed under the SDG n°11, the right to the city, and the SDG n°16, peace and justice,

Mrs N'DA introduced through this conference the SDG n°13 which fights against climate change.

In the face of climate change and for the success of sustainable development, we must act massively, starting today, because each greenhouse gas released into the atmosphere lasts a minimum of 30 years. In most cases, CO₂ lasts 100 years, and there are also gases that last 200, 300, 400 or even several hundred years. The speaker therefore introduced SDG 13 in connection with her theme on the environment.

In doing so, she used a visual that was developed on the basis of the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, which helps to understand the challenges of climate change. She defined and gave the causes of climate change. These are the greenhouse gases that we have too much of in the atmosphere because of anthropogenic actions; in particular agriculture (food, land use), industry (employment, production, consumption), transport (mobility).

The consequences of this phenomenon of climate change are perceived at different levels:

- The warming of the atmosphere,
- Warming of the oceans,
- Melting of glaciers, ice caps and sea ice.

However, in the context of this conference, we have identified two impacts, namely the disruption of the water cycle and rising sea levels. Combined with the increase in heat, these two (2) impacts lead to the risk of health problems such as heat waves, fires, drought, cyclones, floods and submersions with major risks. Added to this is the loss of fresh water resources and the decline in agricultural yields. Thus, in order to develop and design a city, we must take into account all our activities that are at the origin of climate change, because "the construction of cities destroys habitats". As the modalities of the city are not happy conditions for the living, it is with good reason that the theme of this conference, "Cities, Sustainable Territories and Participatory Democracy", questions all these issues

of MDG 13, which impact on the success of all the other MDGs. As an illustration of these actions, Ms N'DA made use of several anecdotes.

The first was about a Native American legend. "One day, the legend says, there was a huge forest fire. All the terrified, dismayed and powerless animals watched the disaster. Only the hummingbird was active, fetching a few drops of water with its beak to throw on the fire. After a while, the armadillo, annoyed by this ridiculous agitation, said: "Hummingbird, you are not crazy? You won't put out the fire with these drops of water! And the hummingbird replied, "I know that, but I'm doing my part.

The second example was about Yacouba Sawadogo, a Burkinabe farmer who is reviving and improving the Zai, an agricultural irrigation technique that has been lost since the 1950s.

The third example was that of Greta Thunberg. At the age of 11, she was left on the street one night to make a demand, saying that since the adults were not doing anything, someone had to step up. She was joined by two (2) friends. Today, Greta is received at the United Nations and federates crowds.

The lesson to be drawn from these three examples is that those three people have knowledge and a desire to act. Hummingbirds inspire and influence. The technique revalorised by Yacouba Sawadogo is now recognised by researchers and has been integrated into the techniques of Water and Soil Conservation.

As proposals, the speaker recommended actions that can influence people around them and public and private organisations.

According to Ms. NDA KONAN, in order for everyone to understand their impact and change their view of their environment and their daily lives, it is urgent to democratise and share knowledge and to strengthen the capacities of all stakeholders. Furthermore, the speaker did not fail to give a few essential guidelines for inclusive participation: reaching out to your audience, knowing your audience, inspiring, supporting, valuing, etc.

According to her, the challenges to be met are to

-Define a target and rules to mitigate climate change and limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2100

-Recommend an order of magnitude carbon footprint per capita per year estimated at 2t CO₂e/human/year by 2050.

At the level of a city/territory, for the speaker, it is necessary to be able to think of the future as a system. A sustainable city that wants to be nurturing, fights against urban sprawl and land artificialisation, and promotes education and training. It is also a city that is able to offer security, attractiveness, and fight against traffic congestion and air pollution.

In terms of the exchanges, the first speaker made a contribution by suggesting a state mandate with well-defined guidelines for mayors and regional councillors. Then, going in the same direction, the current president of the OIDP stressed the importance of a terms of reference drawn up by the municipal council and its constituents.

A third speaker argued that investment in education and training was indeed needed. As for the fourth, he believes that local preference could help to reverse the trend in order to respond to the problem the speaker elaborated on.

For some Ivorian mayors, global strategies for environmental preservation should take into account the realities of each country and even of local communities.

In conclusion, Ms N'DA proposed the use of bicycles in African countries and particularly in Côte d'Ivoire to fight against CO₂ emissions.