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### **Benin's stance on Climate Change**

The issue of climate change is one that affects the whole world and it is one of the most pressing issues our planet has to offer. There are numerous reasons for the cause of climate change and the developed countries are mostly to blame. The impact that climate change has on the development of West African cities, like Cotonou, threatens the city's economy and structure, as well as coastal and lagoon ecosystems. Benin understands that these issues that these cities are facing are not uncommon as many cities face similar issues around the world. To help prevent further damage to ourselves and our planet, the world has to work together to create long lasting solutions and to put this issue ahead of others, as it so deserves.

### **The Impacts of Climate Change on human health and human lifestyle**

In Benin, like most other coastal nations, a high proportion of the population and the largest city are on the coast. In Benin's case, half the nation's population (over 3 million inhabitants) is on the coast and in the city of Cotonou, in the Gulf of Guinea. The location is important to the city's economy but it does mean that there is an increased vulnerability to a rising sea- level. Which would lead to potential catastrophic impacts to the economy, the population and natural systems. The medium and long-term consequences of the rising sea level are already threatening vulnerable communities. Benin's economic potential also depends largely on that of Cotonou, which hosts a large number of tertiary sector activities and trading centres of international importance. Along with supplying financial resources to the country and the

municipality. Coastal fishing is also a major part of the Cotonou economy, providing a livelihood for more than 15,000 people, who would all be heavily affected by the rise in sea level. A GIEC/IPCC report predicts: “The rising sea level... will have a detrimental effect on coastal human settlements, especially in the Gulf of Guinea...” This is relevant to Cotonou as a rise in sea level could trigger a number of climatic phenomena such as coastal and riverbank erosion, flooding and saltwater intrusion into Lake Nokoué. Each of these hazards undermines human systems (land use, livelihoods and human settlements) and disrupts the functioning of coastal and lagoon ecosystems. The bulk of the industrial area of Benin is in Cotonou which is exposed to coastal erosion. Consequently threatening industrial activities and the livelihoods of around 1,500 people working in more than 30 state enterprises (brewery, textiles, gas, agricultural development, cement works and many others), as well as private or small scale enterprises. Although industrial activities are not very developed, they make a considerable contribution to the national economy.

The disappearance of infrastructure along the coast is also a major threat to Cotonou and other major cities along the Gulf of Guinea. Infrastructure to the south of Cotonou that is threatened with disappearance includes: the buildings of people living around Cotonou Lagoon, the self-governing port of Cotonou and its handling facilities, a number of hotels dependent on the self-governing port of Cotonou, the fishing port, the presidential buildings, the international conference centre; and the international airport. The loss of these significant buildings could be highly damaging to the daily city functions and to the people.

People's health is also at risk with a rising sea level. A risk of resurgence of endemic tropical diseases as a result of the development of breeding grounds for anopheles mosquitoes, which spread malaria and tsetse fly larvae, adapted to saltwater, as well as other threats to health amplified by climatic variability and change. Another health threat would be an increase in cardiovascular and cerebral diseases related to high saline levels in the water, increased mortality rates, especially among elderly people, pregnant women and children could occur. This situation would exacerbate the poverty and the precariousness of the living conditions of

inhabitants and have serious consequences for the city's economy and, indeed, the entire country, jeopardizing the achievement of development objectives. Many of the impacts that would and have happened to the cities of Benin, have also occurred in many other cities around the world and there must be a global interaction on how countries and cities can adapt.

It is a matter of urgency to find ways for people and ecosystems to adapt so that they become less vulnerable. Passive measures call for the adoption of decisions or attitudes to avoid or alleviate the negative effects of a rising sea level and coastal erosion. For example, sandy sediments may be taken from well-stocked areas to areas that are deficient in sand, and beach rocks may be used to protect the shoreline. Active measures, involve building structures either along the coast or out into the sea. There are two types: lengthways structures such as breakwaters, seafront walls and beach defences; and transverse structures, such as groynes, that are constructed of different materials (wood, concrete, etc.) and that run perpendicular to the coastline. Many nations are going to have to use a version of these methods and sharing and gathering information would benefit everyone.

### **Climate Change Refugees**

Benin has always aided when it can in international affairs and would be willing to accept a number of climate change refugees. As long as other nations are willing to do the same, since many of Benin's cities could be affected by the rising sea level. That they are not heavily investing fossil fuels and showing action regarding climate change. With that, security checks will occur and they will be done as thoroughly as possible, but given the situation these checks may have to be adjusted. However, Benin would like to see the same reaction and aid from the international community.

Steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

The western nations have been a large and main contributor to climate change, therefore the \$100 billion dollar a year fund, to aid underdeveloped and developing countries is reasonable. These developing countries, including Benin, are highly vulnerable to climate change and many of the industries that drive their economy will be affected. Which would stunt the growth of the nation all together. The money would allow nations to invest in reusable energy sources, promoting awareness and research all in the hopes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. What is done with this money should also be shared with the rest of the world since sharing information will be vital in saving the planet. The net- zero emissions will become a reality if this money can be invested and if our western nations take this issue seriously.

## **Conclusion**

Actions against Climate Change must be taken. Numerous developing countries will be highly affected and their progress can be dramatically changed. The time to turn a cold shoulder is over and the entire international community must realize this and take action. Some of the actions that Benin supports to aid developing countries on the topic of human health include: using impregnated mosquito nets to protect against malaria, developing more widespread vaccination against tsetse fly, developing health insurance and mutual health insurance companies, desalinating water to use for drinking; and recycling rainwater. 2 other solution to adapt to a changing world include the technological adaptation through the installation of protective groynes to stabilize the coastline; and the relocation of activities, infrastructure and communities. Benin looks forward to applying and researching these and other solutions to help our countries and our planet.

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