

## **SRI2022 Session proposal entitled ‘Cities working toward urban resilience and sustainability: stories from Africa’**

**Proposer: UComNetSus-Africa research Consortium**

**Theme: Cross-cutting (for all themes): African science and innovation**

*One of the key objectives of SRI2022 is to showcase the richness of African science and innovation in sustainability. From tested local solutions to advanced academic research, the African continent has a wealth of knowledge and innovation to offer to the wider world. In addition, SRI2022 is hoping to strengthen the inter-African dialogue and networks by offering an inclusive platform for increased visibility and collaboration.*

**Session type:** Dialogue (60-90 minutes)

**Proposed topic:** Cities working toward urban resilience and sustainability: stories from Africa

**Session moderator:** Dr. Peter Wangai (Kenyatta University)

**Panel discussion:** Dr. Olufemi Taiwo (Georgetown University)

### *Abstract*

Africa is increasingly becoming an ‘urban’ continent. This is because it is estimated that over 50% of the population will be living in urban areas by 2030, that is just eight years away. With an average rate of urbanisation in Africa currently about 4%, which is double the global average rate of 2%, the Sub-Saharan Africa is much affected by the demographic and morphological changes, and that over 90% of the global urbanisation will take place in the region. With the urbanisation dynamics, the future sustainability of the continent remains dire. Therefore, a consortium of experts and researchers are working on a project “Building Urban Community Networks for Sustainable Cities in Africa’ (UComNetSus-Africa), that is funded by Belmont Forum. Six cities from five countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa were selected as case studies. These cities include Lagos, Kumasi, Kigali, Dar es Salaam, Mombasa and Nairobi. In the past six months, the research consortium has rigorously conducted multi-stakeholder workshops, meetings and media discussion forums on the challenges facing the selected cities and charting a way forward through a sustainability path. The session focuses on problems related to public space, water and air pollution, sanitation, solid waste, and energy supply in the selected cities. The early findings point to a promising trajectory that within Africa’s cities, lies innovative initiatives that can potentially be scaled up, to build synergies towards a sustainable future for African cities.

### **1. Description**

African cities face a myriad of sustainability problems. Through intra-city dialogues and stakeholder engagement workshops in the case studies, five problems in African cities, which are mutually inclusive and crosscutting, were identified as; public space, water supply and sanitation, solid waste management, water and air pollution, and energy supply systems. See figure 1:



*Figure 1: Five thematic areas of concern in African cities*

## 2. Presentations

Following successful stakeholder engagement workshops, the consortium members have been assigned specific crosscutting sub-themes for presentation during the SRI2022. The list of sub-theme presentations and respective presenters are indicated as follows:

- I. Conceptualization of public space in Africa: experiences from Kigali, Rwanda (**Dr. Josephine Malonza**)
- II. Impacts of increasing waste volume on ocean biodiversity and ecosystem services along the coastline of Mombasa city, Kenya (**Dr. Margaret Owuor**)
- III. Viability of local solutions and solid waste management strategies: outcome of a stakeholder engagement in Dar es Salaam city, Tanzania (**Mr. Shabani Soah**)
- IV. Rethinking the energy systems in the fight against climate change in Lagos, Nigeria (Mr. Olusola Adeoye)
- V. The role of technology in tracking water and air pollution in cities: a survey of actors in air and water quality monitoring in Nairobi, Kenya (**Dr. David Mugo**)
- VI. Mass media and public engagement in long-term goals for sustainability of Kumasi, Ghana (**Dr. Benjamin Campion**)

### **3. Presenters**

The above presenters are all early career researchers in Africa from different academic disciplines. They have confirmed their commitment to orally present the topics during the SRI2022 congress in South Africa. Since this is a funded project, we will liaise with Belmont Forum and Future Earth to augment the small budget we have so that all presenters can physically attend the congress.

### **4. Justification**

As consortium members of the UComNetSus-Africa project, we take every opportunity in the 2-year period of project implementation to showcase the research and innovations available for sustainability of African cities. This is because it is rare to have an externally funded project that is fully driven by African experts and researchers. It is a platform to elevate the novelty of African researchers on issues that affect African most. On the one hand, our prayer to host the session onsite is driven by the urge of interacting one-on-one with great minds of global innovators and researchers who have a passion for Africa research. Our consortium will also be meeting physically for the first time since the proposal development stage of UComNetSus-Africa to date. As a team, we want to widen our network for future partnerships necessary for building synergies around responsive sustainability pathways. On the other hand, many early career researchers in Africa have the will but no means to meaningfully engage the international research community on Africa's social, economic and environmental challenges. Therefore, by designing a hybrid session, we hope to reach out to those young researchers who are limited to attend the session onsite in Pretoria, South Africa. From our recent engagements in the project, we realize a strong interest that will go beyond the timelines of the project. Along this grain of argument, we strongly believe that the Onsite/Hybrid means of delivering our session will be the best model, and any support accorded to us to realize the plan, is highly appreciated in advance.

### **5. Session time plan**

After the presentations, the panel moderator will invite comments or questions from the audience in the order in which they express interest to speak. The time plan for the session is as follows:

- The session will take a total 86 minutes
- Each presentation will take 5-7 minutes
- The transition from one speaker to the next will take 1.5 minutes.
- The panel discussion will take 30 minutes
- The session moderator will make a 5- minute conclusion.

### **6. Output**

The outputs for the session will be a take-home package, comprising of:

- A digital folder with all presentations
- A digital album of selected fieldwork photos with captions

- A list of relevant contacts for the project, including but not limited to the project website, physical address of the project, the details of the project personnel, contact for the project partnering institutions, et cetera.

### **7. Impact**

The impact of the session will be long-term and will set an attractive stage for interested scholars and practitioners to build careers and transform people's lives along sustainability paths. The lessons will shape the trajectory of the ongoing research work by the UComNetSus-Africa research consortium.

### **8. Dissemination**

For dissemination, the consortium members will go for a retreat to write a report of lessons learnt. The report and other outputs will be open-access through the UComNetSus-Africa's website and Twitter account, as well as professional platforms such as LinkedIn, ResearchGate, et cetera.