GLOBAL UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP ON ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY (GUPES)
THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: INPUTS FOR RIO+20
1600-1700 hours, Green Room,
22 February 2011, Tuesday
UNEP HQs, Gigiri

Mr. Mahesh Pradhan, the new Head of the Environmental Education and Training Unit at UNEP chaired the Green Room Event (on margins of the UNEP Governing Council). Prior to inviting panelists, he took the opportunity to provide an update on the new directions of EETU, focused around three pillars namely: Education, Research and Training, as well as a cross-cutting pillar on Networking.

- **Prof Li Fengting** of the UNEP-Tongji Institute of Environment for Sustainable Development (IESD) highlighted universities as key resources for knowledge and that *Applied Research* was very important for developing countries. In the case of China, the central government allocates substantial finances to fund applied research. Universities could also play a leading role in development of 'Green Industries' in the context of fast growing economies by developing and demonstrating 'Green technologies'. He highlighted the need for 'Green Universities/Sustainable Campuses'.

- **Prof Gitile Naituli** of Multimedia University in Nairobi, Kenya highlighted the experience of Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability into African Universities (MESA) and the related ESD efforts in Africa such as innovations in university curriculum development and community engagement. He reiterated that MESA had successfully reactivated community engagement as a core business of participating African universities. He also stressed the need to establish lateral links with secondary and primary schools for greater impact. He attributed the success of MESA to its unique approaches: Innovation, infusion, and systems approaches as well as policy response.

- **Prof. Maria Ivanova** of the University of Massachusetts Boston, USA discussed the role of universities in bridging the research/science/knowledge/policy and practitioner gap, for which a key e solution was *Community Engagement.* She shared an interesting quote: the philosophy of the current classroom translates into the philosophy of future governments. She shared a motivating story of the College of King William and Mary in the USA whereby greening of campus was undertaken.

- **Kepha Bosire** explained KCB's *Green Agenda* and the Sustainability Management Programmes. He highlighted the shortage of qualified and appropriately trained and qualified manpower, limited knowledge on the subject of sustainability, lack of exposure, competing interests and limited resources as key challenges constraining most businesses from elaborately implementing sustainability management programmes. He challenged universities to endeavor to produce graduates who meet and can appropriately and contextually respond to the manpower needs of the businesses today. Specifically, he cited the need for holistic competencies in sustainability terms, responsiveness to job needs, applied competency and action oriented graduates. He also introduced participants to the Corporate Alliance for Environment and Sustainability (CAFES), a partnership with UNEP.

Contributions from the floor included the following:
- The need to adopt and implement the concept of 'Green Universities';
- The need to measure, monitor and continuously evaluate progress in terms of sustainability in the universities and workplaces, in terms of Sustainability audits and Sustainability reporting;
- The need to 'Green Curricula' ie integrate environment and sustainability across the curricula of different faculties, schools, courses and programmes, specifically business schools;
- The need to foster closer collaboration between universities and businesses & industries;
- The need to make universities more relevant to policy implementation and to have university research and knowledge products influence policy formulation processes;
- The need for adequate resources/funds for university research;
- The need to develop appropriate and functional models aimed at bridging the gap between Research/Science/Policy/and Practicners.