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Ministry of Higher Education

Science Diplomacy Supporting Climate Change Action in SADC

Lusaka, 16-20 April 2018

Post-Conference Press Release

SASSCAL held its first Science Symposium from 16 to 20 April 2018 in Lusaka, Zambia. With more than 300 delegates in attendance, representing 13 countries, the Symposium was hailed very successful in terms of the relevant sessions and quality of the presentations. The symposium was hosted by the Zambia Ministry of Higher Education and funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).



SASSCAL Science Symposium group picture

Under the theme *Science Diplomacy Supporting Climate Change Action in SADC*, the Symposium was held to conclude the first phase of SASSCAL's Research Portfolio (SASSCAL 1.0) by presenting major scientific achievements in research, capacity development and service provision to the diversity of SASSCAL stakeholders.

The Symposium was preceded by a Science Policy Forum on 16 April 2018 which was attended by high level government representatives, diplomats, heads of academic institutions, the SASSCAL Governing Board and the academia. The Forum presented a platform for the delegates to engage in dialogue on challenges of climate change affecting the Southern African region, as well as gain insight into research being carried out under SASSCAL 1.0.



Pictured (top left): Science Policy Forum Panel from left Dr Domingos da Silva Neto-Angola Board member, Mr. Ephraim Mwepya Shitima- Zambia Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Dr Yonah Seleti -South Africa Board member, Mr Abraham Nehemia-Namibia Alternate Board Member, Dr Wilfried Kraus-Germany Federal Ministry for Education and Research representative

Pictured (top right): delegates at the Science Policy Forum

In her keynote address, the Zambia Minister of Higher Education, Honourable Prof Nkandu Luo applauded SASSCAL for hosting the symposium *'on an important subject affecting everyone which cannot be avoided'*. The Minister acknowledged that previous efforts to address the effects of climate change had been institutional, individual and even national but SASSCAL *'has taken a regional approach'*. *'Climate change cannot be addressed by a single country, it has to be addressed through collective action'* she added. Honourable Prof Nkandu Luo commended SASSCAL for its regional approach which will allow for more decisive action towards climate change challenges.

A speech presented on behalf of Honourable Anna Shiweda the SASSCAL Deputy Board chair, detailed Namibia's experiences of Climate Change. In the speech, Honourable Anna Shiweda stated that *'the normal peak rainfall season in places like Namibia has been February to March but this year no rain was falling. Yet April came with showers scattered all over the place leading to flooding in some areas such as Kunene river basin'*. Both Honourable Prof Nkandu Luo and Honourable Anna Shiweda agreed that climate change is now a reality - a reality that calls for a regional response. Both Ministers commended SASSCAL for organising the symposium that provided a platform for the academia, policy makers and other stakeholders to have a dialogue on climate change as well as sharing of research findings. They challenged researchers to deliver tangible solutions over and above conference presentations and scientific publications to communities that are most affected by climate change.

Dr Wilfried Kraus, the Deputy Director General Sustainable Climate and Energy, Germany Federal Ministry for Education and Research representative, stated that *'SASSCAL is a very good investment and with the continuation of production of excellent basic science and information and services that benefit society, Germany will be committed to the SASSCAL for the next 10-20 years'*. Dr Wilfried Kraus informed the Science Forum delegates that the first technical programme through SASSCAL 1.0 included the provision of skills for capacity building in the regional programmes. *'Capacity building is the best investment as it results in people who will take responsibility in their countries in future'*. He concluded that through institutions like SASSCAL, *'Africa will have the capacity to contribute more to the climate change debate world-wide'*. In her concluding remarks, Dr Jane Olwoch, SASSCAL Executive Director stressed the value of partnerships in responding to climate change as it also supports the UNFCCC principle of "Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities".



Pictured from left are: Honourable Prof Nkandu Luo, Dr Wilfried Kraus and Dr Jane Olwoch

The Symposium was officially opened by Honourable Prof Nkandu Luo on 17 April 2018, with more than 300 delegates in attendance. The Minister thanked SASSCAL for hosting the symposium which ‘will promote dialogue between policy makers, scientists-academia and other stakeholders on issues of climate change’. The symposium will ‘showcase the relevance of SASSCAL to the community we serve’ she added. Honourable Prof Nkandu Luo applauded ‘people that are behind the establishment of the regional initiative’ because ‘climate change is a very important topic, which is a reality, a new science issue on the table’, she said.

The Symposium format comprised of a science-policy forum, thematic sessions with Keynote Speakers, oral and poster presentations, panel and panel discussions and workgroup sessions. More than 150 scientific papers were presented during the SASSCAL Science Symposium based on the SASSCAL 1.0 research portfolio. SASSCAL 1.0 set the agenda for knowledge generation in the fields of climate change and adaptive land management. The presentations were focused on identifying appropriate interventions, opportunities for integration and collaboration within the SASSCAL 1.0 themes of:

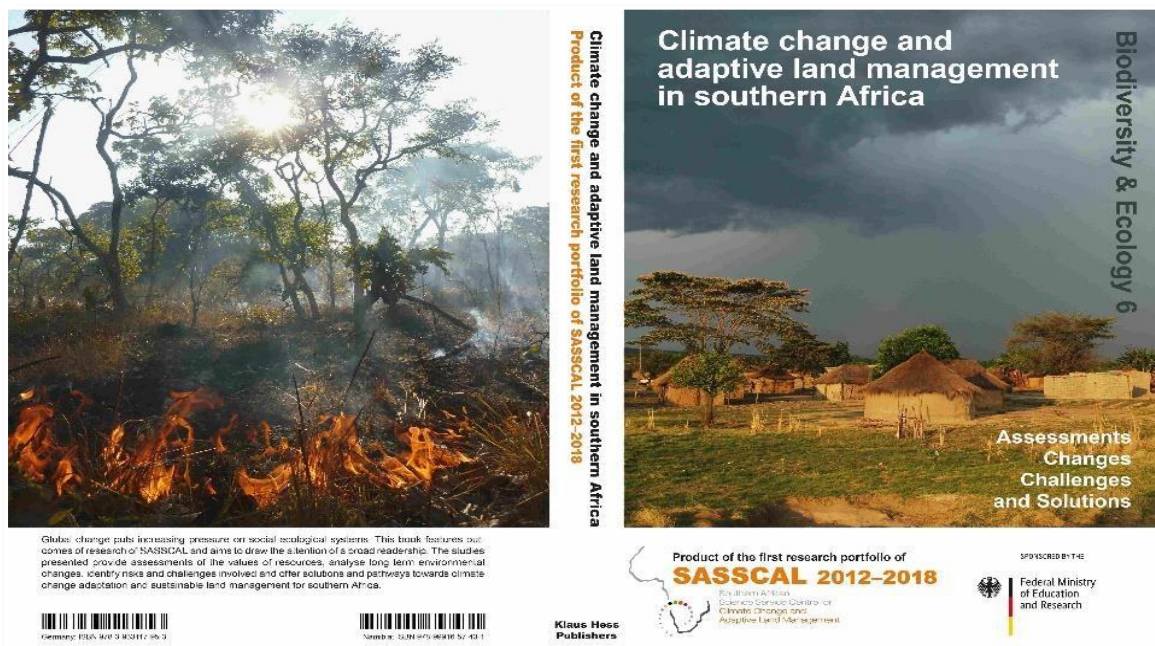
- Water-Climate-Food Nexus
- Biodiversity – Climate-Food Security
- Forest Conservation-Climate-Livelihoods
- Agriculture-Climate-Food Security
- Data, Technology and Infrastructure
- Adaptive Land Management
- Capacity Development in SADC

All papers presented during the Symposium will be made available for download via the SASSCAL website (www.sasscal.org).



Impressions from the Symposium

The technical highlight of the symposium was the launch of the SASSCAL Book on 18 April 2018. The Book is the culmination of SASSCAL 1.0 research which supported a Research Portfolio comprising of 88 projects. Altogether, more than 500 individuals and over 80 academic, governmental and non-governmental institutions were involved in the research tasks. The Book is available online (http://www.biodiversity-plants.de/biodivers_ecol/vol6.php) as well as from selected retail outlets.



The cover page of the SASSCAL Book

In recognition of the excellent research work results from young scientists, the closing ceremony was marked with awards. The awards were based on the actual research, the findings as well as the presentation skills under the following categories:

- Best Conference Paper – José João Tchamba – ISCED/Huila, University of Évora, Portugal (Award issued in absentia)
- Best Conference Poster – Nkosilathi Bernard – Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Botswana
- Best student Award – Kefentse Mogwera – University of Botswana-Okavango Research Institute, Botswana



Pictured (left to right) are the SASSCAL board chair Mrs Jane Chinkusu (Zambia) and SASSCAL Executive Director Dr Olwoch presenting awards to Nkosilathi Bernard, Kefentse Mogwera and Mr Chipilica Barbosa who collected the award on behalf of José João Tchamba.

The Symposium also presented a platform for identifying opportunities for research integration, regional research and capacity development strategies and agendas. As such, SASSCAL also hosted three expert side events in collaboration with some of its partners during the symposium:

- I. The Extreme Climate Index (ECI) hosted by ARC/XF, SASSCAL and CSIR
- II. SEACRIFOG Stakeholder consultation workshop hosted by SEACRIFOG
- III. Launch of the National Hydrogeological map of Zambia hosted by the BGR and WARMA

The Symposium confirmed that SASSCAL has achieved its objectives in terms of research, capacity building and provision of services under SASSCAL 1.0. SASSCAL is an acknowledged partner that aligns research, capacity development and service agenda with regional partners. Its regional approach is necessary to address transboundary ecosystem services and functions. This will be achieved through partnerships with research and academic institutions and remains key to SASSCAL success. Research contribution from SASSCAL significantly impacts the region, thus, SASSCAL received strong commitment from its stakeholders. The future is bright with the approval of the SASSCAL 2.0 Strategy, Science Plan and soon to-be-launched research call.

Impressions from the Symposium



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