

Harnessing Africa's Natural Resources for Sustainable Development

Kariuki Muigua

Table of Contents

Abstract..... 1

1.0 Introduction..... 1

2.0 Natural Resources and Sustainable Development in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges..... 3

3.0 Way Forward..... 10

4.0 Conclusion 14

References 16

Harnessing Africa's Natural Resources for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Natural resources play a key role in the Sustainable Development agenda. They lay the foundation of social and economic development. Responsible use of natural resources is therefore key for Sustainable Development. The United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges that social and economic development depends on the sustainable use and management of the planet's natural resources. This paper discusses the need to harness Africa's natural resources for Sustainable Development. The paper posits that Africa is endowed with natural resources which can unlock Sustainable Development throughout the continent. It argues that Africa has not effectively harnessed its natural resources for sustainability. The paper examines some of the key challenges in the natural resources sector in Africa and how these challenges hinder the attainment of Sustainable Development. It also proposes reforms towards effectively harnessing Africa's natural resources for Sustainable Development.

1.0 Introduction

Natural resources play a pivotal role in Sustainable Development¹. The use of natural resources has long been considered a fundamental element of both human rights and economic development². Natural resources are often viewed as key assets driving development and wealth creation³. It has been noted that the use of natural resources relates to all three dimensions of sustainability: social justice, environmental

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¹ Muigua, K., 'Natural Resources and Environmental Justice in Kenya' Glenwood Publishers Limited, 2015

² International Institute for Sustainable Development., 'The Sustainable Use of Natural Resources: The Governance Challenge' Available at <https://www.iisd.org/articles/deep-dive/sustainable-use-natural-resources-governance-challenge> (Accessed on 04/04/2024)

³ Ibid

conservation, and economic development⁴. The sustainable use of natural resources strives for balance between these dimensions: maintaining the long-term use of resources while maximizing social benefits and minimizing environmental impacts⁵.

Natural resources play a vital role in the life of human beings which may be classified as economic, social and cultural⁶. Economically, natural resources are not only a source of food and raw materials but are also a source of income for individuals and the state⁷. Socially, natural resources like water bodies play recreational role amongst others and also contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of individuals⁸. Culturally, it has been noted that communities especially in Africa attach importance to some natural resources that may be revered as shrines, dwelling places for ancestors and sacred sites where rites of passage and other cultural celebrations take place⁹.

The United Nations Environment Programme posits that natural resources are the foundation of social and economic development¹⁰. As a result, abundant natural resources are often regarded as a great advantage for a country's economic and social development, while resource shortage is associated with underdevelopment¹¹. Responsible use of natural resources is therefore key for Sustainable Development. The United Nation's *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*¹² acknowledges that social and

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Muigua. K., 'Natural Resources and Environmental Justice in Kenya' Op Cit

⁷ Costanza. R., 'The Ecological, Economic, and Social Importance of the Oceans.' *Ecological Economics*, Volume 31, No. 2 (1999)

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Muigua. K., 'Natural Resources and Environmental Justice in Kenya' Op Cit

¹⁰ United Nations Environment Programme., 'Sustainable Natural Capital' Available at <https://www.unep.org/regions/asia-and-pacific/regional-initiatives/supporting-resourceefficiency/sustainable-natural> (Accessed on 04/04/2024)

¹¹ Bridge. G., 'Natural Resources' *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, 2009., pp 261-268

¹² United Nations General Assembly., 'Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1., Available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf> (Accessed on 04/04/2024)

economic development depends on the sustainable use and management of the planet's natural resources¹³.

This paper discusses the need to harness Africa's natural resources for Sustainable Development. The paper posits that Africa is endowed with natural resources which can unlock Sustainable Development throughout the continent. It argues that Africa has not effectively harnessed its natural resources for sustainability. The paper examines some of the key challenges in the natural resources sector in Africa and how these challenges hinder the attainment of Sustainable Development. It also proposes reforms towards effectively harnessing Africa's natural resources for Sustainable Development.

2.0 Natural Resources and Sustainable Development in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges

Africa is a continent that is rich in natural resources. These resources range from arable land, water, oil, natural gas, minerals, forests and wildlife¹⁴. The continent holds a huge proportion of the world's natural resources, both renewables and non-renewables¹⁵. It has been noted that Africa is home to approximately thirty percent of the world's mineral reserves, eight per cent of the world's natural Gas and twelve per cent of the world's oil reserves¹⁶. In addition, it is estimated that Africa has forty percent of the world's gold and up to ninety percent of its chromium and platinum deposits¹⁷. Further, it has been pointed out that the largest reserves of cobalt, diamonds, platinum and uranium in the

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ United Nations Environment Programme., 'Our work in Africa' Available at <https://www.unep.org/regions/africa/our-work-africa#:~:text=Collectively%2C%20the%20continent%20has%20a,oriented%2C%20climate%20resilient%20and%20sustainable> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

world are all in Africa¹⁸. Further, Africa holds almost sixty per cent of the world's arable land and ten percent of the planet's internal renewable fresh water resources¹⁹.

Africa has been classified as a major producer of many key mineral commodities in the world, with bountiful reserves of vital metals and minerals including gold, diamond, cobalt, bauxite, iron ore, coal, and copper available across the continent²⁰. For example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) produces over seventy per cent of the world's cobalt; DRC and Zambia together supply nearly ten per cent of global copper; Botswana and South Africa produce a significant amount of diamond; while Ghana and South Africa are significantly endowed with gold deposits²¹. The continent is also emerging as a production hub for 'rare earths' with significant deposits being available in the continent especially in Eastern and Southern countries²². Rare earths have direct technical applications and can be used to facilitate the production and refinement of common high-technology products including smartphones and monitors to energy conversion systems such as wind turbines, photovoltaic panels and electrical machinery and even military equipment including lasers and radar²³. It has been noted that access to a steady supply of rare earth elements is key to the national security and economic viability of many countries across the world²⁴.

Africa's natural resources potential is therefore enormous. Natural resources comprise the continent's largest form of wealth²⁵. It has been noted that in most African countries,

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Statistica., 'Mining Industry in Africa - Statistics & Facts.' Available at <https://www.statista.com/topics/7205/mining-industry-in-africa/> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

²¹ Ibid

²² Italian Institute for International Political Studies., 'The Scramble for Africa's Rare Earths: China is not Alone.' Available at <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/scramble-africas-rare-earths-chinanotalone-30725> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ United Nations Environment Programme., 'Our work in Africa' Op Cit

natural capital accounts for approximately fifty percent of total wealth²⁶. Harnessing these resources can play a key role in fostering Sustainable Development in Africa. Natural resources play a vital role in financing social amenities, infrastructure, energy, industry, and governance among other key sectors of African economies²⁷. The abundant natural resources in Africa are therefore able to trigger social and economic development²⁸. It has been argued that with the right approach, Africa's natural resources can be used to make the transformation from low-value economies that rely on exports of primary commodities to ones with a substantial labor-intensive manufacturing base²⁹. The ongoing discoveries of natural resource in the continent such as oil, minerals, and gas offer a new source of revenue for advancing human development and supporting African countries on the path to self-sufficiency³⁰. Revenues from such natural resources can be directed towards improving social outcomes as well as creating more and better jobs and business opportunities³¹.

It has been argued that natural capital could be the key to unlocking Africa's development potential and for pulling millions out of the poverty trap³². According to the United Nations Environment Programme, developing appropriate strategies and partnerships that are truly responsive to country needs can enable Africa tap into its natural capital base and use it as a gateway to investments in reversing environmental

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Muigua. K., Wamukoya. D., & Kariuki. F., 'Natural Resources and Environmental Justice in Kenya.' Glenwood Publishers Limited, 2015

²⁹ African Development Bank Group., 'Africa's Natural Resources: The Paradox of Plenty.' Available at <https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/%28E%29%20AfricanBank%202007%20Ch4.pdf> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

³⁰ African Development Bank Group., 'Delivering on the Promise: Leveraging Natural Resources to Accelerate Human Development in Africa' Available at <https://www.afdb.org/en/topics-and-sectors/initiatives-partnerships/african-natural-resources-centre/delivering-on-the-promise-leveraging-natural-resources-to-accelerate-human-development-in-africa> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

³¹ Ibid

³² United Nations Environment Programme., 'Is Africa's Natural Capital the Gateway to Finance Its Development?' Available at <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/africas-natural-capital-gateway-finance-its-development> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

losses and accelerating development³³. UNEP further notes that Africa's prudent harnessing of natural resources through value addition can ensure timely, prioritized and adequate financing for programmes aimed at achieving sustainable socio-economic development³⁴.

The need to sustainably harness natural resources for development is enshrined under the United Nation's *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*³⁵. It sets out the need to protect the planet from degradation through sustainably managing its natural resources so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations³⁶. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges some of the major challenges in the natural resources sector including natural resource depletion and adverse impacts of environmental degradation including desertification, drought, land degradation, freshwater scarcity and loss of biodiversity³⁷. It also acknowledges that social and economic development depends on the sustainable use and management of the planet's natural resources³⁸. The 2030 Agenda urges all countries to embrace sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources for development³⁹.

Africa's union *Agenda 2063*⁴⁰ also sets out the importance of harnessing the continent's natural resources for Sustainable Development. Agenda 2063 acknowledges that Africa's natural resources play a critical role for vast segments of Africa's population who depend on the continent's biodiversity, forests and land for their livelihoods directly or indirectly⁴¹. In addition, it points out that Africa's natural resources also make a direct

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ United Nations General Assembly., 'Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' Op Cit

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Africa Union., 'Agenda 2063' Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-framework_document_book.pdf (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁴¹ Ibid

contribution to economic development through tourism, agriculture, logging among other activities⁴². One of the key aspirations of Agenda 2063 is fostering a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and Sustainable Development⁴³. This aspiration sets out the goal of transforming Africa's economies through beneficiation from the continent's natural resources⁴⁴. It also seeks to enhance environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities in Africa through sustainable natural resources management⁴⁵. It has been noted that using Africa's natural capital as a getaway to wealth creation and investments will allow for actions towards achievement of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Africa Union's Agenda 2063 through financial, economic, social and environmental contribution⁴⁶.

The *Cairo Declaration*⁴⁷ also sets out the need to harness Africa's natural resources for Sustainable Development and poverty eradication. The Declaration acknowledges that Africa's natural capital is crucial to supporting human, animal and plant life, in addition to its considerable capacity for wealth creation⁴⁸. It urges African countries to increase productivity in the use of natural resources in enhancing economic and social benefits for poverty reduction, job creation and Sustainable Development⁴⁹. In addition, it calls upon African countries to integrate natural resources into national planning in order to secure their sustainability and contribution to economic development and environmental stability⁵⁰. It identifies priority areas for sustainable use and management of natural

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ United Nations Environment Programme., 'Our work in Africa' Op Cit

⁴⁷ Cairo Declaration on Managing Africa's Natural Capital for Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication., Available at <https://nairobi-convention.org/clearinghouse/sites/default/files/Cairo%20Declaration%20on%20Managing%20Africa%E2%80%99s%20Natural%20Capital%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20and%20Poverty%20Eradication.pdf> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

resources in Africa including disaster risk reduction, combating desertification, addressing air pollution and hazardous wastes, and confronting climate change⁵¹.

The *Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa*⁵² also notes that the historical pattern of natural resources exploitation in Africa has failed to promote sustained growth, environmental integrity and improved social capital. It notes that economic growth and human well-being in Africa will be threatened if concerted actions are not undertaken to halt and reverse the degradation and loss of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, and to enhance society's ability to adapt to climate change and environmental risks and scarcities⁵³. In order to ensure the contribution of natural capital to sustainable economic growth, the Declaration encourages African countries to integrate the value of natural capital into national accounting and corporate planning and reporting processes, policies, and programmes⁵⁴. It also urges African countries to build social capital and reduce poverty by transitioning agriculture, extractive industries, fisheries and other natural capital uses to practices that promote sustainable employment, food security, sustainable energy and the protection of natural capital through protected areas and other mechanisms⁵⁵. The Declaration also requires African countries to embrace ecosystem restoration measures, as well as actions that mitigate stresses on natural capital⁵⁶.

Despite the importance of natural resources in the Sustainable Development agenda in Africa, it has been noted that a significant share of natural resources in Africa is used unsustainably while others are lost through illegal activities, meaning that the stream of benefits generated from these resources is being reduced over time⁵⁷. According to

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa., Available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/champions/gaborone-declaration-botswana-en.pdf> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ United Nations Environment Programme., 'Our work in Africa' Op Cit

UNEP, Africa loses an estimated USD 200 billion annually of its natural capital through illicit financial flows, illegal mining, illegal logging, the illegal trade in wildlife, unregulated fishing and environmental degradation and loss among others⁵⁸. It has further been pointed out that natural resources industries in Africa, and especially extractives, have developed as 'enclave economies', generating wealth that is exported rather than shared, or ploughed into the areas where it is needed most, in meeting human development challenges and building infrastructure⁵⁹. Agenda 2063 also notes that the continent's natural resources such as biodiversity, land and forests are facing increasing challenges including biodiversity loss, land degradation, desertification, and deforestation⁶⁰. It has also been pointed out that the environmental impacts of extracting natural resources in Africa have impeded the Sustainable Development of the sector⁶¹. In some African countries, resource extraction has been associated with economic stagnation, lack of adequate capacity, including capital, skills and technology, and weak democracy⁶². Extraction of natural resources in Africa is also associated with resource-based conflicts, environmental degradation and human rights violations⁶³. It is necessary to address these concerns in order to effectively harness Africa's natural resources for Sustainable Development.

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ African Development Bank Group., 'Africa's Mineral Wealth: A Blessing or a Curse?.' Available at <https://blogs.afdb.org/this-is-africas-hour/post/africas-mineral-wealth-a-blessing-or-a-curse-12336> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁶⁰ Africa Union., 'Agenda 2063' Op Cit

⁶¹ Abe. O., 'Leveraging Natural Resources for Sustainable Development in Africa' Available at <https://www.afronomicslaw.org/2019/07/30/leveraging-natural-resources-for-sustainable-development-in-africa> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Muigua. K., 'Exploited, Poor and Dehumanised: Overcoming the Resource Curse in Africa.' Available at <https://kmco.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Exploited-Poor-and-Dehumanised.pdf> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

3.0 Way Forward

In order to effectively harness Africa's natural resources for Sustainable Development, it is necessary to foster sustainable investments in the natural resources sector⁶⁴. Extraction of natural resources in Africa including oil, gas, and other minerals is mostly conducted by Multinational Corporations (MNCs) which have been accused of failing to comply with sustainable responsible exploitation of resources to support environmental conservation and sustainable growth and development⁶⁵. The activities of some of the MNCs operating in Africa have resulted in environmental degradation, conflicts, and human rights abuses⁶⁶. In addition, it has been noted that MNCs often implement various strategies such as legitimization, transfer pricing and tax avoidance to deprive African countries well-endowed in natural resources from benefiting fully from their legitimate, mandated and legal share of their natural resource endowments⁶⁷. It is therefore necessary for African countries to review and enter into favourable resource extraction agreements with foreign Multinational Corporations (MNCs) operating in the continent in order to safeguard the national interests as far as benefit sharing and economic growth is concerned⁶⁸. There is need for such agreements to ensure respect for human rights, compliance with national laws including environmental conservation, nationalization of property or revocation of contracts in case of breach of obligations by MNCs and adherence to Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) requirements⁶⁹.

⁶⁴ Muigua. K., 'Multinational Corporations, Investment and Natural Resource Management in Kenya' Available at <https://kmco.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Multinational-Corporations-Investment-and-Natural-Resource-Management-in-Kenya-Kariuki-Muigua-November-2018.pdf> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁶⁵ Ajibade, L.T & Awomuti, A.A. 'Petroleum Exploitation or Human Exploitation? An Overview of Niger Delta Oil Producing Communities in Nigeria' *African Research Review* Vol. 3 (1), 2009. Pp. 111-124

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Henri. A., 'Natural Resources Curse: A Reality in Africa.' *Resources Policy*, Volume 63, October 2019

⁶⁸ Muigua. K., 'Exploited, Poor and Dehumanised: Overcoming the Resource Curse in Africa.' Op Cit

⁶⁹ Muigua. K., 'Embracing Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Principles for Sustainable Development in Kenya.' Available at <https://kmco.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/EmbracingESG-Principles-for-Sustainable-Development-in-Kenya.pdf> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

It is also necessary to embrace the idea of sustainable mining in Africa⁷⁰. Sustainable mining aims to optimize environmental performance with economic and social impact of mining activities⁷¹. Sustainable mining is of utmost importance in Africa in order to ensure that the abundant mineral resources in the continent are able to trigger social and economic development⁷². Embracing sustainable mining can help Africa harness its mineral resources to unlock economic and social development while fostering environmental conservation and confronting the threat of climate change⁷³. The ideal of sustainable mining in the continent is set out in the *Africa Mining Vision*⁷⁴ which seeks to achieve transparent, equitable and optimal exploitation of mineral resources in Africa in order to underpin broad-based sustainable growth and socio-economic development. The Africa Mining Vision recognizes the need for a sustainable and well-governed mining sector in Africa that effectively garners and deploys resource rents and that is safe, healthy, gender and ethnically inclusive, environmentally friendly, socially responsible and appreciated by surrounding communities⁷⁵. The African Mining Vision identifies opportunities for sustainable mining practices in Africa and the need to uphold the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for mining-affected communities in order to effectively address the social and environmental impacts of mining⁷⁶. It is therefore necessary for African countries to actualize the Africa Mining Vision and embrace sustainable mining practices such as sound labour practices in the

⁷⁰ Muigua. K., 'Embracing Sustainable Mining in Africa' Available at <https://kmco.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Embracing-Sustainable-Mining-in-Africa.pdf> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁷¹ Pan African Resources., 'Sustainable Mining.' Available at <https://www.panafricanresources.com/sustainablemining/#:~:text=Sustainable%20mining%20refers%20to%20the,generations%20can%20also%20be%20me t> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁷² Muigua. K., Wamukoya. D., & Kariuki. F., 'Natural Resources and Environmental Justice in Kenya.' Op Cit

⁷³ Africa Business., 'African Sustainable Mining Piques Interest of Global Players.' Available at <https://african.business/2023/09/apo-newsfeed/african-sustainable-mining-piques-interest-of-globalplayers#:~:text=While%20clean%2Denergy%20mines%20are,large%2Dscale%20projects%20in%20South> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁷⁴ Africa Union., 'Africa Mining Vision.' Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/30995-doc-africa_mining_vision_english_1.pdf (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Ibid

mining sector, community participation and engagement while undertaking mining activities, and environmental conservation⁷⁷. Realizing sustainable mining can enable Africa to effectively harness its mineral resources for Sustainable Development⁷⁸.

In addition, it is vital for Africa to harness its green minerals for sustainability⁷⁹. Africa holds significant deposits of green minerals that are key to the global transition to a net-zero future⁸⁰. These minerals include cobalt, lithium, copper, manganese, graphite, and vanadium among others⁸¹. They are useful in making electric vehicle batteries and solar panels which are key in replacing fossil fuels in the global energy mix⁸². It has been asserted that Africa can tap into opportunities presented by the African Continental Free Trade Area to develop regional value chains for its green minerals⁸³. Investing in training and capacity- building is also key in realizing the full benefits of such minerals⁸⁴. Harnessing Africa's green minerals can foster decarbonization of African economies and strengthen the continent's response towards climate change⁸⁵.

It is also imperative for Africa to harness its renewable sources of energy to fast- track energy transition in the continent towards Sustainable Development⁸⁶. The continent is endowed with renewable sources of energy such as wind, solar, hydro, bioenergy, ocean

⁷⁷ Muigua. K., 'Embracing Sustainable Mining in Africa' Op Cit

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ SDG Action., 'From Resource Curse to Blessing: Harnessing Africa's Green Minerals' Available at <https://sdg-action.org/from-resource-curse-to-blessing-harnessing-africas-green-minerals/#:~:text=Africa's%20green%20minerals%20include%20cobalt,the%20tip%20of%20the%20iceberg>. (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ United Nations., 'African Countries Urged to Prioritize Green Value Chains for Minerals' Available at <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/february-2023/african-countries-urged-prioritize-green-value-chains-minerals> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Muigua. K., 'Fostering Energy Justice in Africa' Available at <https://kmco.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Fostering-Energy-Justice-in-Africa.pdf> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

tidal waves, and geothermal energy sources⁸⁷. These sources of energy have become increasingly important as the world faces the challenge of mitigating the negative impacts of climate change and reducing the dependence on finite and polluting fossil fuels⁸⁸. Africa has the potential to build a cleaner and greener future by increasing access to clean energy through sustainable and environment friendly solutions such as green and renewable sources of energy in order to ensure that the region is not left behind as the world moves towards zero-emission fuels⁸⁹. Exploiting the vast reserve of renewable energy sources on the Continent could help increase electricity generation capacity in Africa and accelerate the transition to low-carbon and zero-emission energy sources⁹⁰. It is therefore crucial to harness Africa's renewable sources of energy for Sustainable Development.

Finally, there is need to strengthen environmental governance in Africa⁹¹. Sound management of the environment and natural resources in a sustainable and transparent manner can be the engine for Sustainable Development as well as a platform for peace and justice⁹². Unsustainable exploitation of Africa's natural resources by its growing population, and the laxity by authorities to effect and implement sound regulations to tame abuse and over exploitation of these resources is creating environmental challenges in the continent including deforestation, land degradation, desertification, loss of biodiversity, pollution, and climate change⁹³. Embracing sound environmental

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Verma. A., 'The Role of Renewable Energy Technologies in Sustainable Development.' Available at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/voices/the-role-of-renewable-energy-technologies-insustainable-development/> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁸⁹ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development., 'Improving Energy Access Key to Meeting Development Goals in Africa.' Available at <https://unctad.org/news/improving-energy-access-keymeeting-development-goals-africa> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Muigua. K., 'Embracing Sound Environmental Governance in Africa' Available at <https://kmco.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Embracing-Sound-Environmental-Governance-in-Africa-1.pdf> (Accessed on 05/04/2024)

⁹² Muigua. K., 'Securing Our Destiny through Effective Management of the Environment.' Glenwood Publishers Limited, 2020

⁹³ Muigua. K., 'Embracing Sound Environmental Governance in Africa' Op Cit

governance is therefore key in ensuring sustainable use and management of Africa's natural resources for development⁹⁴. It is therefore necessary to strengthen environmental governance in Africa by promoting environmental rule of law at national and regional levels, strengthening national environmental legal and institutional frameworks, and embracing civic and community engagement in environmental management⁹⁵.

The foregoing among other approaches are vital in harnessing Africa's natural resources for Sustainable Development.

4.0 Conclusion

Natural resources play a key role in Sustainable Development. They are the foundation of social and economic development⁹⁶. Abundance of natural resources is associated with a country's economic and social development, while resource shortage is associated with underdevelopment⁹⁷. Africa is endowed with natural resources including arable land, water, oil, natural gas, minerals, forests and wildlife which can trigger Sustainable Development in the continent⁹⁸. Natural resources could be the key to unlocking Africa's development potential and for pulling millions out of the poverty trap⁹⁹. Prudent harnessing of natural resources through value addition can ensure timely, prioritized and adequate financing for programmes aimed at achieving sustainable socio-economic development in Africa¹⁰⁰. However, the continent's natural resources have not been effectively harnessed and are facing increasing challenges including biodiversity loss,

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ United Nations Environment Programme., 'Sustainable Natural Capital' Op Cit

⁹⁷ Bridge. G., 'Natural Resources' Op Cit

⁹⁸ United Nations Environment Programme., 'Our work in Africa' Op Cit

⁹⁹ United Nations Environment Programme., 'Is Africa's Natural Capital the Gateway to Finance Its Development?' Op Cit

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

land degradation, desertification, and deforestation¹⁰¹. It is imperative to efficiently harness Africa's natural resources for development. This can be realized through fostering sustainable investments in the natural resources sector¹⁰²; embracing sustainable mining¹⁰³; harnessing Africa's green minerals for sustainability¹⁰⁴; promoting renewable sources of energy to fast-track energy transition in Africa¹⁰⁵; and strengthening environmental governance¹⁰⁶. It is necessary and possible to effectively harness Africa's natural resources for Sustainable Development.

¹⁰¹ Africa Union., 'Agenda 2063' Op Cit

¹⁰² Muigua. K., 'Multinational Corporations, Investment and Natural Resource Management in Kenya' Op Cit

¹⁰³ Muigua. K., 'Embracing Sustainable Mining in Africa' Op Cit

¹⁰⁴ SDG Action., 'From Resource Curse to Blessing: Harnessing Africa's Green Minerals' Op Cit

¹⁰⁵ Muigua. K., 'Fostering Energy Justice in Africa' Op Cit

¹⁰⁶ Muigua. K., 'Embracing Sound Environmental Governance in Africa' Op Cit

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Africa Union., 'Africa Mining Vision.' Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/30995-doc-africa_mining_vision_english_1.pdf

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