

CONCEPT NOTE

4th Annual Colloquium Department of Political Science Education University of Education, Winneba

Theme: Politics, the Environment, and Our Common Future: Ghana at a Crossroads?

Introduction

Ghana stands at a critical juncture. Blessed with abundant natural resources – from the forests and the marine to mineral wealth and arable lands – the country faces severe environmental challenges that threaten its development and well-being of all Ghanaians: a true definition of the “resource curse syndrome”. Aside climate change and related issues like the erratic rainfall patterns, coastal erosion, and rising temperatures, the country is also threatened by other critical ecological concerns, including the galamsey (illegal mining) menace, deforestation, plastic pollution and unsustainable waste management, which pose direct threats to public health, environmental security, and economic stability. Indeed, addressing these challenges is not merely a technical issue but a deeply political one. This colloquium, **Politics, the Environment and Our Common Future: Ghana at a Crossroads?** seeks to critically examine the intersection of Ghanaian political structures, policy choices, and environmental sustainability. It mainly aims at fostering a candid, solutions-oriented dialogue on how to secure just and prosperous future for all Ghanaians.

Rationale

The gap between environmental policies on paper and their actual implementation is a matter of urgent public concern in Ghana. This gap is driven by a complex mix of factors, including political will or the lack of it, electoral cycles, economic pressures, governance challenges, and powerful vested interests. The consequences of inaction are already being felt across the country, from the polluted waters of the Pra River to the disappearing beaches of Keta. This colloquium is necessary to move beyond siloed discussions and create a multi-stakeholder platform for proffering workable policies and practical solutions or actions aimed at addressing these set of wicked problems. It will bring together the key actors – policymakers, traditional authorities, civil society, academia, industry, and the youth – to dissect the root causes of environmental governance failures and collaboratively identify pathways for transformative action in addressing the marauding environmental and related challenges in the country.

Overall Goal: To catalyze a national conversation on strengthening environmental governance in Ghana and to develop a concrete set of actionable recommendations for aligning political action with ecological imperatives for a sustainable common future.

Specific Objectives

1. To analyze the impact of Ghana’s political economy, including the role of natural resource extraction and electoral politics on environmental degradation.
2. To scrutinize the effectiveness of existing environmental institutions, laws, and regulations, and identify key bottlenecks in enforcement.
3. To explore the critical role of traditional authorities and local governance structures in land and natural resource management.
4. To highlight community-led innovations and grassroots movements that are successfully promoting sustainability and resilience.
5. To formulate actionable policy recommendations and strategies for a just transition towards a green economy that creates jobs and protects ecosystems.

Target Participants/ and Audience

1. Members of Parliament, Ministers of State, and Officials from key agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, the Forestry Commission, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, and the Water Resource Management Commission.
2. Traditional Rulers – members of the National House of Chiefs, the Regional House of Chiefs, and other Local Chiefs – and Community Leaders.
3. Academics and Researchers from Ghanaian Universities.
4. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Environmental Activists.
5. Reps from the Private Sector (Mining, Agriculture, Manufacturing, Renewable Energy).
6. Youth Leaders and Student Groups.
7. International Development Partners.

Expected Outcomes

1. A “Ghana Call to Action” document with specific, time-bound recommendations for government, traditional authorities, the private sector, and civil society.
2. A published set of colloquium proceedings to inform academic and public discourse.
3. Strengthened networks and commitments for collaboration among key stakeholders.
4. Increased media coverage and public awareness on the political dimensions of environmental issues in Ghana.

Subthemes for the Colloquium

1. The Political Economy of Natural Resource Management

Focus: The economic and political incentives driving environmental decisions, with a deep dive into mining, forestry, and fisheries.

Key Questions:

- i. **Galamsey and Governance:** Beyond condemnation, what are the political, economic, and social roots of illegal mining and what holistic solutions can address them?
- ii. **The “Resource Curse” in Practice:** How can Ghana better manage revenues from natural resources (oil, gold, cocoa) extraction to fund sustainable development while simultaneously encouraging environmental protection?
- iii. **Enforcement vs. Livelihoods:** How can we reconcile the need for strict enforcement of environmental laws with the urgent need for job creation, especially for the youth?

2. Climate Change, Vulnerability, and National Policy

Focus: Ghana’s preparedness and response to the impacts of climate change.

Key Questions:

- i. **Implementing the National Climate Change Policy:** How effective are current national adaptation and mitigation strategies? Are they reaching the most vulnerable?
- ii. **Coastal Erosion and Urban Flooding:** What are the political and planning failures exacerbating these crises in cities like Accra, and what integrated solutions are needed?
- iii. **Climate Finance:** How can Ghana better access and effectively utilize international climate finance (e.g., Green Climate Fund) for tangible local projects?

3. Traditional Authority, Local Governance, and Environmental Stewardship

Focus: The evolving and crucial role of Chiefs, Earth Priests, and local assemblies.

Key Questions:

- i. **Custodians of the Land:** How can the authority of traditional leaders be strengthened and supported to combat environmental degradation at the local level?
- ii. **Collaborative Governance:** What are the most effective models for collaboration between traditional authorities, local government assemblies, and state agencies?
- iii. **The Green Ghana Project:** A case study on the role of political leadership and community buy-in in reforestation efforts.

4. The Politics of Urbanization and Waste Management

Focus: The environmental crisis in Ghana’s rapidly growing cities.

Key Questions:

- i. **The Plastic Waste Problem:** What political and systemic changes are needed to move beyond piecemeal solutions to a comprehensive circular economy for waste?
- ii. **Land-Use Planning and Corruption:** How does political interference in land-use planning add to environmental risks, such as building on wetlands and waterways?
- iii. **Sustainable Cities:** What would it take to make Ghanaian cities more liveable, with integrated public transport, green spaces, and effective sanitation services?

5. Pathways to a Just and Green Economy

Focus: Envisioning and planning for sustainable and equitable economic future.

Key Questions:

- i. **Beyond Agro-Exports:** How can Ghana leverage political will to invest in climate-resilient agriculture and value addition to reduce vulnerability?

- ii. **Renewable Energy for Development:** What policies are needed to unlock Ghana’s vast solar, wind, and biomass potential for energy security and job creation?
- iii. **Green Jobs and Skills Training:** How can the national educational curriculum and vocational training be aligned with the needs of a future green economy?

This Ghana-focused structure ensures the colloquium addresses the most pressing local issues while connecting them to the global theme of politics and the environment, making the discussions immediately relevant and actionable for participants.

Call for Abstract

Submission of Abstract: March 31, 2026 – June 30, 2026

Communication of Decision: July 15, 2026

Submission of Full Manuscript (for Consideration for Publication) August 31, 2026

Submission of PowerPoint Presentation: August 31, 2026

Main Event: September 2, 2026

Submission of Final/Revised Manuscript (for Publication): October 31, 2026

All abstracts should be sent to: gaaidoo@uew.edu.gh

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