

**REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL INPUTS TO UNFF8**

**Regional/Sub-regional Organisation: The African Forest Forum (AFF)**

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**A. Common issues in the four topics:**

1. Knowledge of the forest cover

This is a vital prerequisite for any meaningful resolution of issues under the four topics. The extent and nature forest cover for the majority of the African natural forests remains unknown. Most countries lack the resources and capacity to undertake forest mapping and forest inventories, although there are efforts like the Congo Basin countries there is an Observatory for Forests that seeks to redress this.

2. Planning for and Monitoring forest change

This follows from 1 above, in that without the knowledge of the forest extend and nature it is impossible to plan for and monitor how the forests are changing.

3. External drivers of deforestation and forest degradation

The major underlying causes of deforestation lie outside the forest sector. Poverty, poor agricultural technologies, macro-economic policies, lack of appropriate and affordable clean energy technologies combine to accelerate forest degradation and deforestation, thereby limiting the ability of poor rural and urban communities to adapt and take mitigation measures

4. Insufficient political will and national government commitment to global level commitments.

There has been a lot of talk in various fora change in policies and legislation, at national, regional and global levels on the issues implicit in these four topics, but action on the ground remains wanting, largely because of insufficient resources to undertake sustainable forest management.

5. Weak/inadequate exchange of information between sectors

There has been considerable progress in exchanging information among interested parties. However, this continues to be a problem between different economic sectors at all levels.

6. Weak forest administration

Forest sectors of most African countries have been increasingly marginalized, in the last two decades, largely through the on-going political and economic reforms. Forestry institutions have been significantly weakened. There is a growing trend of lack of confidence and morale in government forestry institutions, accompanied with increasing illegal forest activities under their responsibility. Present forest management calls for significant re-orientation for policy makers and for forest managers. It calls for promotion and support for new actors in the forest sector. Above all, it calls for new knowledge and skills for forest managers and administrators. Human capacity building, to adopt and internalize the significantly changed approaches to forest management, is urgently required by most countries in the continent. This is especially true with respect to

mainstreaming relevant international conventions and agreements, like the Non-Legally Binding Instrument (NLBI) on all types of forests. In addition, consideration should be given to post-conflict country situations.

7. Common African position on many forestry related issues.

At the regional and global levels, Africa has not strategically presented its case with one voice in many forestry related international negotiations, with the recent exception of those at UNFF. At the national level there is need for good coordination of sectors that deal with forestry related issues.

8. Insufficient funding

Over the years ODA and national government funding to the sector have, in many cases, decreased in real terms. However, the demands made on the sector have increased tremendously; necessitating increased funding for its emerging functions like poverty alleviation, climate change mitigation, provision of international public goods, in addition to supplying traditional forest products to an enlarged market.

9. Lack of technical capacity (expertise, technology).

New and emerging requirements on forest resources require new skills, like in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Even supplying an enlarged market with traditional forest products requires improvements in technology and capacity.

10. Informal character of most forestry activities/business.

Most forestry harvesting, processing and trade activities in Africa take place in the informal sector which is not organised, lacks a voice/champion and does not feature in national plans and accounts. This could, for example, partly explain the weak intra-regional trade amongst African countries.

11. There is inadequate gender mainstreaming in forestry.

**B: Key issues specific to each topic that require attention in the short term**

**1. Forests and climate change**

General:

The African forestry sector has not played a significant role in climate change negotiations, despite the fact that forests play an important role in carbon sequestration, in addition to forests accounting for about 20% of global carbon dioxide emissions. Worse still, Africa is not speaking with one voice on carbon issues. Further, it would appear that more interest and resources are channeled to the rain forests that support about 50 million people to the almost exclusion of low carbon forests (dry forests) that cover the bulk of the continent, support over 500 million people, and are therefore key for poverty reduction. Also most impacts of climate change are felt in non-forestry sectors such as agriculture, livestock husbandry, wildlife and tourism and water. There is slow progress on irrigated agriculture, and this, when combined with insufficient or lack of water for the same, dictates extensive agriculture in the short to medium term, leading to more deforestation and forest degradation. The over-reliance on old and polluting

technologies in factories, transport and other sectors is likely to continue due to slow economic growth and modernization in many countries.

Specific issues:

- (a) Scanty or lack of reliable and accurate information on carbon stocks in the forests.
- (b) Absence of a technical methodology for determining carbon stocks in the context of forest degradation; most methods based on deforestation.
- (c) There are no mechanisms and programmes to monitor impact of climate change in forests and trees.
- (d) Scanty or lack of national action plans for adaptation and mitigation that adequately incorporate forestry interests.
- (e) There is scanty human resources capacity in the African forestry sector to guide trade in carbon.
- (f) Inadequate or lack of an integrated approach to socio-economic development that sufficiently takes into account the linkages between forestry and other sectors in the context of climate change.
- (g) Insufficient participation of forest experts and related institutions in activities of the UNFCCC, UNCCD and related processes and frameworks.

**2. Reversing the loss of forest cover, preventing forest degradation in all types of forests and combating desertification, including low forest cover countries**

General:

Many rural poor rely on agriculture, livestock husbandry and harvesting of non-wood forestry products. There are very few other livelihood support opportunities, especially in times of agricultural crop failures.

Specific issues:

- (a) Inadequate/weak forest law, enforcement and governance  
Several initiatives have come up to contain these weaknesses, including AFLEG that has mainly been implemented in the COMIFAC countries and FLEG chapters/processes being developed for the East African Community and the South African Development Community (SADC) countries. While the promotion of democracy has seen more stakeholder participation in forestry that has led to improved governance in some cases, poor coordination and conflicting approaches have also emerged in other cases.
- (b) Insecure/unclear/undefined land, forest and tree tenure  
Lack of clear ownership of these resources expose them to overexploitation as well as constrain investments in them.
- (d) Poor access to finance for forest plantations, out grower schemes and woodlots.  
These hold potential to augment supplies from natural forests and therefore reduce pressure on them, if other weaknesses like the absence of tenure are addressed.

**3. Forests and Biodiversity Conservation**

Some of the issues include:

- (a) Inadequate implementation of conservation programmes.

- (b) High costs of managing protected areas and the necessary financing is not readily available.
- (c) Little attention paid to biodiversity outside protected areas.
- (d) Inadequate/lack of economic incentives for biodiversity conservation.
- (e) Problems in balancing biodiversity conservation and the livelihood needs of forest dwellers.
- (f) Poorly developed and/or limited markets and value addition for products and environmental services.
- (g) Threats to biodiversity conservation include agricultural expansion, unsustainable forest management, and bio-energy production.

#### **4. Means of implementation for sustainable forest management**

Some of the issues identified under 1-3 also apply to this section. However, the notable issues include:

- (a) Lack of an integrated approach to socio-economic development that sufficiently takes into account the linkages between forestry and other sectors.
- (b) Proliferation of stakeholders/interests in forestry and increased demand on forest products and services, making it difficult for a single sector to handle; the forest sector is gradually evolving into a rural development sector.
- (c) Proliferation of planning frameworks and similar processes, at national, regional and global levels, that are outstripping the capacity of the weak forestry institutions, leaving them with little room and resources for implementation of their plans on the ground.
- (d) Limited experience and lessons and mixed results from evolving/potential approaches to forest management such as Joint Forest Management-JFM, Community Based Forest Management-CBFM, Integrated Conservation and Development Programmes and Projects-ICDPs to guide their wider adoption.
- (e) Inadequate/lack of economic incentives for good forest management, use and conservation.
- (f) Balancing SFM and the livelihood needs of forest dependent communities; especially the indigenous people.
- (g) Funding dedicated to SFM within ODA mechanisms is limited and difficult to access. This is even more difficult when all the ODA support, from some sources, goes to national budget support. This prejudices SFM due to high priority accorded to other sectors of the economy. However, in some cases the problem is one of low absorption capacity of ODA due to weak administration.
- (h) Inadequate support for research and education. There is declining interest in forestry education and employment.
- (i) Inadequate support to emerging networks and institutions that are promoting research, development and knowledge sharing in African forestry.
- (j) Inefficient secondary production and value addition from natural forests due to obsolete technology and machinery
- (k) Weak intra-African trade in forest products and services.
- (l) Marginalisation of women and the youth in forest management and decision making.

## **SECTION II: CHARACTERISTICS OF REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Multi-stakeholder dialogues and partnerships**

Between 2003 and 2008 a pan-African project by the name “The Sustainable Forest Management in Africa (SFM)” was implemented with one of the outcomes being the African Forest Forum (AFF). Both the SFM and AFF have provided technical back up to African delegates to UNFF sessions, through a Technical Support Team (TST). Among the key activities undertaken with respect to support to African delegates to UNFF sessions are:

- A meeting organized in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2004, of some African delegates to UNFF to strategize on UNFF5 in 2005.
- At UNFF5 the Technical Support Team (TST) facilitated the coalescence of views and positions among African delegations; and eventually contributed to the formation of the African Group (AG) as a negotiating block in UNFF sessions.
- In 2006 support was given to the production of a discussion document: “Some ideas to support African delegations in negotiations on a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests. A voluntary contribution by the Technical Support Team in preparation for UNFF”. At stake in the UNFF7 was the choice between a legally and non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests.
- The document was discussed in Bata, Equatorial Guinea, November 27-28, 2006, by focal persons to UNFF from the COMIFAC countries and guided strategizing for UNFF7.
- The TST was sponsored to the Ad-hoc Experts Group meeting in New York, Dec.11-15, 2006.
- Financial resources were secured from the Government of Netherlands, through UNFF Secretariat, that made it possible to organise, with the COMIFAC Secretariat, a UNFF7 preparatory meeting in Libreville, Gabon, April 3-4, 2007
- The TST was sponsored to the UNFF7, New York, April 16-27, 2007, where the African Group made a commendable contribution to the finalization and adoption of the “Non-Legally Binding Instrument on all types of forests-NLBI” and the “Multi-Year Programme of Work-MYPOW”
- The TST has in 2008 produced an “Action plan for the TST to support African delegations to the UNFF VIII Session, New York, 20 April to 01 May 2009”.

With the establishment of the African Forest Forum (AFF) in 2007 through SFM II, the TST is now a committee of the Governing Council of the AFF and has specific terms of reference to guide its activities. It intends to support African delegations, in a similar manner, to UNCCD and UNFCCC.

The SFM project implemented four sub-regional workshops in Africa that brought together 124 participants from 39 countries as a means to promoting sustainable forest management through the information generated by the project, in addition to prioritizing relevant issues in the sub-regions. The reports and policy briefs from the project as well

as the structure of the African Forest Forum are posted on the AFF website:  
[www.afforum.org](http://www.afforum.org)

### **Extent of consultation in preparing these inputs**

These inputs were drafted by the Technical Support Team of the AFF. They were shared with participants to a “SADC Directors of Forestry Meeting” held in Windhoek, Namibia, on July 28-29, 2008. They were also shared with participants to a workshop on “Climate Change and Variability in Africa: The African Forestry Sector Response” held in Nairobi, Kenya, on September 23-25, 2008. They ~~have, been~~ shared with the Secretariats of ECOWAS, COMESA, EAC, COMIFAC as well as the African Union Commission.

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